WRITING, REPRESENTATION, AND NARRATIVITY IN EXPLORATION LITERATURE: A LITERARY APPROACH TO HEINRICH BARTH'S *TRAVELS AND DISCOVERIES*

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August, 2000

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this Thesis has been written by me and that it is a record of my own research work. It has not been submitted in any previous application for a higher degree. All quotations are indicated and all sources of information are suitably acknowledged by means of reference.



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Ibrahim Bello-Kano

August, 2000.

CERTIFICATION

This Thesis entitled *Writing, Narrativity, and Representation in Exploration Literature: A Literary Approach to Heinrich Barth's Travels and Discoveries* by Ibrahim Bello-Kano meets the regulations governing the award of Doctor of Philosophy in Literature of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria and is approved for its contribution to knowledge and literary quality.

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DR. SANI A. ALIYU — Aug. 2000

Head of Department — Date

Dean, Post-Graduate School — Date

DEDICATION

This Thesis is dedicated to:

My mother, Hajja Binta Mohammed Bello, for being the *plenitude* and *presence* in the texture of my life

And

The memory of my dear departed son, Abubakar Bello. Our brief moments together are unforgettable.

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In the analysis of [social] forms... neither microscopes nor chemical reagents are of use. The force of abstraction must replace both

---- K. Marx, *Capital* (vol. I), p. 19.

It does not matter whether the world is conceived to be real or only imagined; the manner of making sense of it is the same

---- H. White, *Tropics of Discourse*, p. 98.

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Glossary of Terms

Absence

In its ordinary or popular sense, *absence* means lack, void, incompleteness, or emptiness. In deconstructionist forms of criticism, it designates non-existence, and the distantiating and transforming processes of language use or "meaning". In this sense, *absence* implies constraints, contradictions, non-saids, and non-sayables which may or may not manifest themselves in textual terms.

Accretive Knowledge

This is a form of knowledge that presents itself as an objective body of statements or "information", when in fact it was produced within the context of denigration and debasement. Such "knowledge" invariably projects its scientific character, and is largely unconscious of its anecdotal and fictitious condition of possibility.

Aestheticism

Aestheticism is used in this Thesis to refer not to the negative theology of the *l'art pour l'art* (art for art's sake) associated with Romanticism, but rather to the secular cult of beauty, the reliance on artistic models for comprehending the world and for evaluating or explaining human action, events, or behaviour.

Aporia

An *Aporia* is a non-passage (deep and inescapable conflict), break, fault-line, or, simply, an inherent contradiction. *Aporia* is a built-in omission, opposition, or discontinuity that marks a structure of resistance to the allegedly rigorous conceptuality which is said to organize the products of Reason, or rational thought. In this sense, *Aporia* is the absence of a pattern, and is thus akin to *absence* or contradiction (effacement).

Chromatism

This is the essentialist distinction between people based on the colour of their skin.

Deictic/Deixis

This is a linguistic term for elements of language which specify or denote temporal location, as in time, space, and interpersonal relations. Examples of these are *this, that, here, there, we, you, tomorrow, yesterday*. These also indicate the

spatiotemporal location (the orientation) of the speaker, or, in exploration writing, the authorial narrator.

Demiurgic Subject

The *demiurgic subject* is the supremely creative ego, which may also be the *ego cogito*, the speaking (and thinking) subject of writing, reference, and so on, which is embodied in the concept of the authorial narrator and of the explorer-writer.

Differánce

This term (note the **á**) was coined in 1968 by Jacques Derrida (1930--). It denotes a sense of deferral, of difference differed. Its other meaning is deferment (to defer and to differ). It is used by Derrida to convey the notion that the play of signification is, and can only be, constantly deferred, never fully achieved. It refers to the endless spillage, slipping, and sliding of language and meaning. In Derrida's special usage, *Differánce* is neither a word nor a concept, but a radically unstable term which disrupts systematization, for example, a conceptual center or a logical origin.

Dissemination

This term describes the specific ways in which texts violate their own self-constitution or construction, fall to pieces, self-destruct, undermine themselves, and throw into relief their own system of logic or metaphysical ground. In this sense, *dissemination* describes *aporias* and *impasses* of meaning.

Fictionality

As a cognate term for fiction, *fictionality* does not necessarily require the willing suspension of belief on the reader's part. Neither does it overtly and directly stimulate this "willing suspension of belief". Rather it denotes a situation in which a text establishes a particular kind of rhetorical effect through the "causal agency" of authorial self-consciousness, as is the case in exploration texts. Fictionality here need not flaunt its own conditions of artifice, or literary self-consciousness.

Indexicality

Indexicality or *indexicalism* is a form of self-reference exemplified by the exploration text in which a first-person pronoun, an "I", causally establishes the present as the only reality through the narration of the events. In this sense, *indexicality* is a form of *fictionality*.

Intertextuality

This is the process by which texts "borrow" or "quote" from other texts. Indeed, a text is no more than a collage of raw materials drawn from other raw materials. These materials may be general or specific historical experiences, or inherited techniques, and the like. Thus the conventions, codes, and devices available to the writer belong in the last analysis to complex relations and relationships of cultural, ideological, and power systems in the wider social and discursive formation.

Logocentrism

Derived from the Greek term *logos* (meaning "word", and the associated implication of wisdom and rationality), *logocentrism* is the "metaphysics of presence", the notion that reality is, and can be, directly given to consciousness, or the subject, also called *parousia*. Other related senses of the term are the assumption of, or search for, a self-sufficient or originary starting-point which is said to be without contradiction. It also takes the form of the supposition that we could dispense with linguistic signs in writing on the argument that they might inhibit the *direct* contemplation of thought, or the source of meaning, wisdom, and truth. In short, *logocentrism* is the dream of a memory without a sign, or representation.

Metaphor

Metaphor (literally "transfer" or "name-change") designates a thing *for* another (thing). In *metaphor*, a thing X can be characterized in terms of its *similarity* to, or *difference* from, another, Y. In this sense, *metaphor* denotes all analogical relationships, as is the case in allegorical, metonymic, and synecdochic situations. In exploration literature, for example, symbolic narrativization of alien lands indicates the larger allegories of imperial and colonial relations between the alien culture and the explorer's home culture. From this perspective, allegory is an "extended metaphor". In *metonymy*, a kind of *metaphor*, an object is *indirectly* grasped as bearing a relationship to another, so that one, the part, is *reduced* to the other, the whole. It is the other way round in *synecdoche*, which indicates an integrative, rather than reductive, relationship of the part to the whole, i.e. the part standing for the whole. However, in exploration literature this function of synecdoche is mobilized in the service of *logocentrism* and denigration.

Play

Like différance, *play* resists hypostatization. It flaunts its own artifice and frivolity so as to signal its undecidability, its playfulness, its refusal to come to an *interested* stopping—or resting-place. In Derrida's usage, it affirms a world of signs without fault, truth, origin, and center. With *play*, the literary critic plunges, is plunged, into a world without completion, security, or presence.

Presence

This term denotes non-signified self-confirmation and self-sufficiency. In literary theory, it refers to the desire of an existent entity to be *present to itself*. Indeed *presence* is the demand that some entity, viz. author, narrator, authorial consciousness, and the like, be the center and guarantor of signification

Sign

A *sign* can be a word, for example "writing". A sign is a union of *signifier* (image or form) and *signified* (meaning, idea or mental concept). This means that the sign is, by nature, incomplete, and that "meaning" or *signified* can be grasped or interpreted only by the use of another sign (the latter being the interpretant of the former). This is why there is not a full signified, but only differences or deferment of meaning.

Signification

This may be characterized as the meaning or sense of an idea or notion. It also denotes representation, the re-invention of an object in language such that a thing *stands-for* a whole group of other things.

Transdiction

Transdiction is a form of "rhetorical" inference performed by explorers when they infer the *observed* from the *unobserved*. It is a form of stereotyping in which the "character" of the observed Other is re-presented or signified based on what is, or cannot be, observed about the Other. In this sense, the concept of "discovery" in exploration texts is a rhetorical property of *transdiction* because what the explorer really "discovers" is his own verbal practice *about* and *for* what he has failed to observe but what he thinks he has observed.

Transfactuality

This refers to the process whereby a referent functions as a generative mechanism. As a structure, a mechanism is, and actually exercises, the causal power of a generative agency which, however, may or may not be known. A good example is the "Sudan" in *Travels and Discoveries*. Although she existed as a historical formation, and had accordingly exercised a "referential" power of some sort in Barth's representations, she nevertheless now exists only as a signification, a re-invention, and thus as a textual space. To this extent, the "Sudan's" *transfactuality* is here no more than the signified content "transported" by Barth's text.

Transitive/Intransitive

The intransitive dimension is the domain of being, of the existentially given, which may or may not be known. The *transitive* dimension on the other hand is the domain of consciousness. This includes the domain of theoretical, cultural, and philosophical reflection. In Barth's text, the Sudan cannot be known in its *intransitive* dimension, but only apprehended as a transitive object.

ABSTRACT

This study presents a literary critical paradigm for the study of Heinrich Barth's monumental exploration (or travel) narrative of the Western Sudan. The literary approach is intended to fill in a missing gap in the canonical historical approaches to Barth's narrative. The study argues that Barth's empirical - descriptive technique is, in the last analysis, a literary-aesthetic device for the expression of the unfamiliar, the exotic and the threatening Other. The study also demonstrates that Barth's text, which has enjoyed great prestige within historical studies on account of its assumed factual reliability and logical and referential meaning, is an instance of aesthetic-rhetorical writing, and not historical biography. A close reading of *Travels and Discoveries* shows that Barth's "historical" moments are paradigmatically and causally literary and rhetorical moments, because the text's production of the real, such as the description of landscapes, mountains, rivers, and bodies inheres within the intersection of aesthetic, historical, metaphorical, geographical, and ecological discourses over which the writer-explorer has no absolute control. This study undermines the mainstream historical assumption of a distinct historical, as opposed to a "literary" Barth through the deployment of a problematic which conceptualizes Barth's textual practice as the coherent yet unstable unfolding of a Baconian-Romantic literary tradition in which the objects of visual perception are apprehended within the spheres of "metonyrnic observation" and of "creative imagination".

The study thus contends that Barth's "historicism" is a narrativizing and representational strategy which discloses the Other both as a plot structure within the aesthetic and narrativist rhetoric of 19th century ideology of the civilizing mission, and as a subject for the pleasure and marvel of the reading publics of the meaning-making projects of mid-19th century European Imperial cultures.

The study consists of seven chapters and an Appendix which contains Barth's lithographic engravings of some Sudanese scenes. Chapter One explores, in broad strokes, Barth's heritage within the rhetorical culture of Renaissance travel writing, and the universalizing will to absolute knowledge of the Post-

Enlightenment. It was this heritage that created the historical and discursive conditions of the modern European will to power, and which in turn produced the modern genre of exploration writing. The chapter also sets out the scope, delimitation, objectives, justification, and theoretical framework of the study. Chapter two contains a review of the historical literature on Barth and his book, such as biographies and scholarly books and articles by historians and anthropologists who have dominated, until recently, studies of exploration literature. The chapter also reviews recent works by literary critics and textualists on travel-exploration literature in order to keep abreast with the state of research, the paradigmatic and new interest in this new and expanding research field. A select review of related literature on narrativity (narrative and narration), and historical and symbolic representation was also undertaken. The principal arguments of the chapter are that it is needless to insist that the literary critic and the historian should bridge the gap between literary and historical texts. This is because there is no such divide. Any "historicalization" is necessarily and inescapably a function, instance, and play of narrativization, a meaning production or narrativity.

Chapter Three investigates the cultural and political rhetorics that have animated the reading and interpretation of Barth's influential narrative of the Western Sudan. Its central arguments are that Barth's Narrative was not, as the conventional academic wisdom assumes, written in the spirit of disinterested, scientific scholarship. Rather it is made to appear such by the rhetorical interpretive operations of its reading publics such as the Geographical Society, the leading periodicals, Lord Frederick Lugard, and academic historians such as Shultze, Kirk-Greene, Hodgkin, Ayandcle, Adeleye, and Usman, among a host of others. These reading publics or formations are themselves governed, like Barth's text itself, by a specific set of more or less contradictory cultural and political rhetorics; and that these rhetorics still under-determinc the contemporary reception of Barth. The chapter substantiates the contention that Barth's Narrative does not possess any intrinsic meaning-effects of its own, but those of its veritable reading or interpretive communities within a process of "productive activation".

Chapter Four examines Barth's literary strategies of presence, his visualist and objectifying model of the gaze. It offers an analysis of Barth's desire for plenitude in the form of his self-representation within arrival and departure scenes, and of gift-giving, linguistic and cultural appropriation of the indigenous life-ways. The subject of analysis in Chapter Five is the text's strategies of the representation of the indigenous landscape and body. It shows that far from registering the immediate presence of the local space, Barth's text only symbolizes it, that is, transfers or "translates" it from a concrete to a symbolic structure. Chapter Six is concerned with Barth's deployment of narrativity, the configuration of the events into the plot structure of beginning, middle, and end, complete with a central subject and a narrativist consciousness; and how narrativity both configures and dis-conflgures Bath's own textual-narrativisl appropriation of native space. Chapter Seven concludes the study and brings out the implications of Barth's overall *oeuvre*. It argues that although Barth prepared the way for Christian missionaries and colonial adventurers in *Travels and Discoveries,* writing is at the centre of his text, and that beyond and behind his text is an infinite productivity of the sign. The implication is that those referents or presences that the text names have always existed, and can exist only, as traces, supplements, and substitute significations.

CHAPTER ONE:

INTRODUCTION: CONTEXTS AND CONCEPTS

> Questions of 'meta-narrative' no longer concern just literary works, but the terms in which the post-Enlightenment West has traditionally couched its own imperial project -- Terry Eagleton (1996: 204).

1. The Salience of the Literary

This study analyses Heinrich Barth's *Travels and Discoveries in North and Central Africa* (1857) from a critical literary perspective. *Travels and Discoveries* is one of the most influential of the 19th century European exploration texts on the area between the Lake Chad in the east and Timbuktu in the west. This geographical area is variously called the Sudanic belt of West Africa, the eastern, central, the western Sudan or simply, the Sudan. Since its publication in 1857-58, *Travels and Discoveries*, which is also an account of the author's five-year travels in the Sudan between 1850 and 1855, has become a major source of the history of 19th century Sudanese societies.

Barth is, in other words, the most cited 19th century explorer-writer in West African historical scholarship, and has generally enjoyed, and still enjoys, great academic prestige within both conservative and radical historical circles. For example, Barth has been considered as the greatest traveller of modern times (Hourst 1899:1), the most authoritative historian of 19th century Bornu (Shultze 1913:24), Europe's greatest modern explorer-writer (Prothero1958: 324), the supreme Nigerian scholar and founder of Nigerian historical studies (Hodgkin 1975: 16-18), the founder of Hausa linguistic studies (Hair 1994:50), the non-imperialist,

and typically a man of Reason (Hiskett 1984:207), the least prejudiced and least culture bound of all the European explorers (Curtin 1964:381), the most intelligent of all the nineteenth century explorers of Africa (Davidson 1970:22), the diplomatist and humanist par excellence (Ayandele 1979:7), and an Africanist of the highest intellectual, perceptive and empathetic standing. (Kirk-Greene1971: v). The same estimation of Barth is found, with varying degrees of emphasis, in Bovill (1926), Cook (1942), Schiffers (1950), Boahen (1968), Feuser (1975), Hallet (1976), Usman (1982/85), McLynn (1993), Spittler (1996), and Smith (1997), to cite the most distinguished examples.

However, despite its use in historical and sociological studies, *Travels and Discoveries* has not received adequate critical literary or deconstructive study, while its author's textual practice or writing strategies have been largely ignored by scholars. This study is, therefore, a contribution to this task. It develops the proposition that Barth's *Travels and Discoveries* is the highly mediated product of the rhetorical culture of Renaissance humanism, the literary and disciplinary culture of German historicism, English empiricism, and Post-Enlightenment imaginary. The study also conceptualizes *Travels and Discoveries* as the product of a literary culture or "literature of contact" in which the European explorer produces, or encodes, the non-European as a literary (representational) and rhetorical (symbolic and narrative) "subject", and the non-European landscape and culture, as a *writable* and aesthetic (or an anti-aesthetic) order, via the explorer's reflexive, expository and performative voice (and point of view). It is argued that it is this process that under-determines Barth's self-conception as a storyteller, a discoverer, and a causally, textually,

narratorially and semantically efficacious agent, the literary-monadic authorial "eye/I".

Barth's rhetorical-narratorial strategies, and his text's literary qualities, or conventions of representation, cannot be ignored because Barth's book is both a literary text and a canon of major literary *writing* within the important genre of literary production variously called "exploration or travel writing", "travellers' tales", "narratives of discovery", "travel literature", or "literature of travel". Indeed the very idea of travel and of discovery, the semantic "delivery" of what the Other already knows, involves the allegorization of spatial and cultural processes, and the fictionalization of the matter-of-fact. On the whole, this study highlights and explains the literary conventions by which such a major treatise of historical-anthropological report about the Sudan as *Travels and Discoveries* was put together, or even conceived in the first place. However, this is not to *reduce* a complex, or a multi-dimensional process to a unitary one, the literary, but to demonstrate that there is not a rigid, absolute distinction between the historical and the literary, and that the literary permeates all and every instances of textual production, or, to use a Derridean metaphor, *writing*. Whether a text inscribes or approaches the world as transcendentally or empirically real or only as imaginatively or poetically invented, the manner by which it proceeds to make sense of the world is, and can only be, literary, or, what amounts to the same thing, figurative.

1.1 Barth's Résumé

Heinrich Barth was born on April 18, 1821 in Hamburg, in present day Germany, where he was brought up, much as a country child and a strict Lutheran, by orthodox Lutheran parents, Johann Christoph Heinrich Barth and Charlotte Caroline Zadow. Barth's father was a Thuringian peasant who managed to build up a Hanseatic trading business in Hamburg. After a rigorous early education characteristic of German academic discipline, Barth entered, in October 1839, the University of Berlin which had been founded in 1810, and was rapidly becoming a leading centre of German scholarship, and possessing some of the great minds of German intellectual culture, such as Hegel (who had died in 1831, but whose ideas were becoming increasingly popular), Ranke, Curtius, Muller, Boeckh, Ritter, Humboldt, the brothers Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, and so on. All these scholars had a decisive influence on Barth's discursive formation.

Between 1840 and 1847 Barth travelled widely in Europe and the Mediterranean coast. In 1844 he defended his second PhD thesis on the ancient commerce of antiquity, and in 1849 published his *Wanderungen durch die Kurstenlander des Mittel Meeres*... a narrative of his journeys or wanderings in the Mediterranean area and Asia Minor. Because of the academic and economic prestige then enjoyed by the English language and Britain respectively, it was common in the 19th century German provinces for a father to send his son to an English-speaking school, and to encourage him to read not only Latin and Greek but also Arabic. Barth's father may have chosen the same road for his son because by 1849 Barth had learned Arabic and English, and a host of other European languages.

Barth died on November 26, 1865 after a violent stomach trouble. A biographer remarked that he died in great pain. (For a detailed account of Barth's formative years, see Schubert 1897, Kirk-Greene 1962:1-5,and McLean 1993: 34-38).

1.2 **Mission to the Western Sudan**

Barth's career as a British explorer began in November 1849 when he and a fellow German, Adolf Overweg, joined an expedition[1], sponsored by the British Government, and led by the explorer James Richardson, to the Sahara and the Western Sudan. Barth was then a lecturer at the University of Berlin[2] The party set out for the Sudan via Tripoli early in 1850. But between March 1851 and September 1852 both Richardson and Overweg died. Thus only Barth remained to explore the vast area between the Lake Chad and Timbuktu, until 1855. In 1857-58 Barth published, with the help of a generous grant from the British Government, his massive exploration narrative, the *Travels and Discoveries in North and Central Africa.* This study is based on the 3-volume edition issued in 1965, and is henceforth referred to as TD1, TD2, and TD3 respectively.

Upon his return to Britain in 1855, Barth was honoured by the London Royal Geographical Society (he was awarded its highest medal, the Patron's Gold Medal), by the British Government (which honoured him with its highest award, "Companion of the Barth"); was given a generous pension, and hosted by Queen Victoria, and the Prussian Government, and personally by the Kaiser in Berlin. After a long residence in London, and intermittent bitter quarrels with the Royal Geographical Society, Barth moved to Berlin where he founded the Karl Ritter Institute in honour of his former teacher, and was appointed, in 1863, to the Chair of

Comparative Geography at his *alma mater,* the University of Berlin. In 1862, Barth elected president of the newly established Berlin Geographical Society.

Barth's travels in the Sahara and, especially, the Western Sudan took place, as Prothero (1958) emphasizes, against the background of successive efforts by Britain to chart the course of the Niger River. Fifty years before him, successive explorers, notable among them Mungo Park, Major Laing, the Frenchman Rene Caillie, and Denham and Clapperton, had attempted, with varying degrees of success, to map, and thus "write" (up) the interior parts of these regions. These expeditions were mostly sponsored by The African Association for the Discovery of the Interior Parts of Africa which was formed in 1788, and amalgamated with the Royal Geographical in 1831.

The most celebrated of these expeditions was Mungo Park's journey which took place between 1795 and 1805, in which he succeeded in establishing the direction of the flow of the River Niger. Park also succeeded in navigating a considerable part of the River's upper and middle sections. Park, however, lost his life at Bussa in 1805. Other explorers followed, notably Major Laing who got up to Timbuktu in 1822 but was killed there. In 1824 Clapperton, Denham, and Oudney crossed the Sahara, visited the Lake Chad area and disproved the hypothesis that the Lake was the great sink into which the Niger flowed.

On a subsequent journey, Clapperton, who was accompanied by Richard Lander, visited, via Badagry, Kano and Sokoto, and died at the latter place in 1827. Between 1827 and 1830, the Frenchman Rene Caillie visited Timbuktu and returned across the Sahara, and published a sensational narrative of his journey; while the

Lander brothers (John and Richard) journeyed by canoe on the Niger from Bussa, proving that the Niger flowed into the Atlantic Ocean at the Oil Rivers. Subsequently, no major expedition to the Niger or the Sudanic areas was undertaken until Barth's journey.[3] In the next two sections, the study explores in greater detail the historical and discursive contexts within which the ideology and practice of exploration literature emerged in Europe, and which, in substantial terms, constituted Barth's heritage.

1.3 The Inherited Tradition: Exploration as Conquest

In a discussion about the problems of historical continuity in human consciousness, Marx argues that the "tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living" (Marx 1969:398). This is doubly true in the case of Barth, for he has a heightened conception of himself as a Christian, an Englishman, a European, a Discoverer, and a host of other discursive and historical labels inherited from Renaissance humanism, Christian missionary discourse, and secular Romantic or post-Enlightenment rhetoric and epistemology. Barth's career and discursive practice should be understood as a mediated outcome of the inherited literary culture of the cognitive aggression and Promethean humanism pioneered by the Renaissance. For, to quote Marx again, human beings make history, not as they please, but rather "under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past" (1969:398). This insight has been borne out by recent research into the history and literary tradition or genre of post-Renaissance European exploration writing by, for example, Said (1978), Mills (1991), Pratt (1992), Rennie (1995), Spurr (1996), Eze (1997), Loomba (1998), Driver (1999), Duncan and Gregory

(1999), and Nicholls (2000). These studies demonstrate that it was in such narratives and textualities that European "identity-thinking" was born. In early-modern Europe, for example, explorers such as Columbus, Azurara, and Ogilvy used the genre and narrative conventions of exploration literature to survey, and not infrequently produce, cultural difference. These writers not only narrativized non-European peoples, cultures and lands, but also "wrote" up the journey as a metaphor for exploration and discovery. They also allegorized the non-European space itself. This is why exploration writing is a symbolic act, a practice and strategy of writing. In the text of exploration, both the journey and its symbolic representation, namely the textualization, narrativization and allegorization of the object of the journey itself, are, and must necessarily become, one and the same thing, that is, visual-fictional knowledge of another culture.

From the 15th century onwards, that is, since Columbus' celebrated journeys to, and accounts of, the New World, European exploration narratives began to encode new observations, and rework "attitudes" received from medieval times. These narratives were an amalgam of fiction, fantasy, fact, and hearsay. "The vast new worlds", writes Ania Loomba, "encountered by European travellers were interpreted by them through ideological filters, or ways of seeing, provided by their own culture. But the impetus to trade, plunder, and conquer these new lands also provided a new and crucial framework through which they would interpret other lands and peoples" (Loomba 1998:71). It was therefore in these accounts of other lands, and peoples that the Europeans' sense of cultural difference was mediated, codified, constructed, "fabricated", and introjected as a particular, linguistically-

based, discursively unified, naturally-given, historically fortified, narrativization of history, difference, and being. It was out of this that emerged the matter of fact distinction between Europe and non-European, the familiar and the alien, the superior and inferior).

An important recent study of the impact of exploration literature on post-Renaissance European thought shows that it was exploration writing which "contributed significantly to the perception of Europe as familiar and 'civilized', living in the Age of Light, while the peoples of other lands (Asia, Africa, America) were of 'strange' habits and mores. Savagery could then be physically located outside Europe, outside of light, so that Africa, for example, was considered the Dark Continent, and a *terra nulla*" (Eze 1997:5). In that sense, then, claims about Barth's special genius should be qualified by the consideration that he was following in the footsteps of distinguished precursors, and that there were larger material and social forces at work in the creation of the very *idea* or *rhetoric* of the exploration of an alien world.

Two complementary forces came together to produce the non-European as the subject of popular European imagination, and of the official discourse of Empire. These are Europe's growing material and scientific confidence (ship-building, conquest of new sources of wealth in the New World and other parts of the world, the growth of cities and the rise of small but important merchant/middle-class; colonial expansion consequent upon the voyages of discovery) and the corresponding rise of missionary discourse/the ideology of the civilizing mission of Europeans to the rest of the world.

In 1493, Pope Alexander IV issued a bull, the *inter caetera*, which authorized Christians to overthrow and bring to the Bible all barbarous nations, peoples and cultures. Previously, in 1452 and 1455, two bulls of Pope Nicholas V's, *Dum Deversas* (1452) and *Romanus Pontifex* (1455), had "already given the Christian kings of Portugal the right to dispossess and enslave for eternity Mahometans [Muslims], pagans [adherents of indigenous religions] and all black peoples in general" (cited in Mudimbe 1985: 152). In 1492, when Muslims and Jews were expelled from Spain, which also coincided with the conquest of what came to be called the New World, Christopher Columbus wrote to the Spanish throne:

> Your Highnesses completed the war against the Moors [blacks] after having chased all the Jews... sent me to the said regions of India in order to convert the people there to our Holy Faith. (cited in Shohat 1997: 90).

Thus began the early-modern form of missionary discourse that decreed the forcible conversion of the "heathens" (Muslims, Jews, Pagans and all black peoples) to the Christian narrative of salvation. The civilizing mission, in its early-modern beginnings in Christian ideology, was not simply a vision of peaceful conversion but the narrativization of the "heathen" under the sign of Salvation, Humanity, Order, and Truth which were thought by the Popes to be valid because they derived from a particular transcendental narrative, the story of salvation in its "European" form. This is why missionary discourse in all its guises is at one pole a particular narrativization of difference and at another a sign and a symbol of a "cultural model" or a "conversion" by which the Christian narrative of salvation would be

realized in the European conquest of the "Other". In short, a projected desire for supremacy.

An example of this is the attitude of Barth and Richardson to Islam. Barth in particular made disparaging comments about Islam; and, in the preface to his Narrative, holds Islam responsible for what he calls the sordid practices of Muslim slave raiding. On his part, Richardson was an ardent abolitionist who hated Islam, describing it as the "false [doctrine] of the imposter of Mecca ... the fake Prophet"; and that the "Christian Churches have left [West] Africa now these twelve centuries in the hands of Mohammedans ... If the Christian Churches wish to vindicate the honour of their wish to vindicate their religion, to diffuse its beneficent and heavenly doctrines ... there is now an opening via Bornu to attempt the establishment of that faith in the heart of Africa" (cited in Boahen 1964:179). Richardson saw himself, Barth and Overweg as "the explorers and geographers of Christendom" (Ibid: 181).

For example, Barth brought back to Europe a Margi and a Hausa lad, Abbega and Dorugu, who were presented to Queen Victoria and the Kaiser in Berlin, as exotic specimens of the "Negro". As Kirk-Greene and Newman have suggested, "Barth planned to educate the two boys in the Christian way of life, with the idea that they should return to northern Nigeria [sic] as lay missionaries to spread the gospel" (1971:5). This indicates that Barth is far from the scientific and disinterested (rationalist) scholar said of him by, for example, Kirk-Greene, Hodgkin, Ayandele and Davidson, among others. The episode of Abbega and Dorugu fits nicely within the plot-structure of the classic abolitionist-evangelistic

narrative in which the liberated slave is transported by a benevolent European master to Europe, where he would serve as house-servant or informer, acquire Christian education, and voyage back to his native land to convert his "heathen" brothers and sisters. This discourse of "conversion" was part of imperial Britain's desire to conquer the Sudan. As Mudimbe writes, the explorer and the missionary have historically both "expounded the model of African spiritual and cultural metamorphosis" (1985:151).

A more secularized form of this discourse of conquest and forcible assimilation of the "other" is found in the great 16th century writer, Francis Bacon (1561-1626), whose book, *The New Organon* (1620), successive British travellers, such as Denham and Clapperton, took along with them on their journeys. Bacon, who was inspired by the actual conquest of new lands by European voyages of discovery and the new confidence brought about by Renaissance humanism, inaugurated a new project for the conquest of the universe and a total reconstruction of knowledge for that very end. As Bacon's used to say, "truth and therefore utility are here the very same things" (Bacon 1960:51). Although Bacon's concept of "conquest of the universe" was couched in scientific lexicon, critics have pointed to its sources in the navigational narratives of the 16th century (Blumenberg 1983: 340). Indeed Bacon's famous metaphor for knowledge was the seafarer's "voyages of discovery", which he defined as not merely the ability to "survey [the new worlds] in [the scientist's] mind, but to enter them like a general taking possession" (Crowther 1960: 24). Bacon's project was developed as a complement to the missionary one: conversion would be regeneration. Bacon was thus, in a dialectical

sense, the discursive source of the modern missionary-secular idea of progress and of Europe's civilizational mandate in the guise of God's Reason. In Bacon's missionary-secular rhetoric, there was no essential contradiction between missionary discourse and the new ideology of conquest, as the subsequent history of Enlightenment rationalism and of the Romantic cult of the spirit demonstrates. So when Barth writes in the preface to his Narrative that he has always defended the "pure principles of Christianity against those of Islam" (TD1: xxx), or that he aspired to be the first Christian to enter Agadez, he is echoing Bacon's aggressive inductivism.

In a sense, then, it was Bacon, for example, that also inaugurated the idea, central to imperial encoding of otherness, of domination by means of the word, that is, of ruling the world by giving (it) names. It has been pointed out that whenever "Bacon describes paths to knowledge in the present, his language is filled with toil and violence" (Blumenberg 1983: 641). A call, for Bacon, is the same as "command":

> ... but [discovery] is a restitution and reinvesting (in great part) of man to the sovereignty and power (for whensoever he shall be able to call the creatures by their true names he shall again control them) which he had in his first state of creation (cited in Blumenberg 1985 : 642).

Bacon's image of man exercising power through the use of the word or by naming or reinventing was taken straight from 16th century exploration literature in which writing, literary authority, and inscription were derived from a deliberate extrapolation from a known (Europe) to an unknown (the *terra incognita*) structure,

as exemplified in the popular travel narratives of the voyages of Columbus, Magellan and Boemus. Pratt has argued that it was in "naming that the religious and geographic projects came together as emissaries claimed the world by baptizing landmarks and geographical formations with Euro-Christian names" (Pratt 1992: 33). The glimpses of foreign lands in seafarer's tales "nourished and gave wings to the imagination... of what was as yet undisclosed" (Blumenberg 1983: 373) Bacon's concept of "discovery" was, for this reason, a programmatic model of knowledge in which the unknown would be integrated into the system of the known, and in which the European explorer or traveller would have the power to define the Other. In this model, the unknown would not possess normative or cognitive rights of its own, but would only be the "Other" of the known. The known would be Europe and the unknown would be Non-Europe, itself a metaphor for the hidden, the unexplored, the exotic, the not-yet-seen, the image of that which lies beyond the postulate of visibility. In a word, the unknown would be the known's reserve, the "prerogative to be secured".

With Bacon, otherness, or at least the *idea* of it, was born as an allegorical space for the demonstration of Europe`s technical and analytical mastery of the world. For him, the *imagination* was primary, for, as he remarks in his *New Organon* (1620), without imagination a standstill would result. This conception of the primacy of imagination places a high premium on the imaginative-textual representation of the *terra incognita*. But this also meant the homogenization of the world itself: all would be Same, a Same which must dominate and possess its other

in a process which would be a restitution, a reinvesting, and a creation. Blumenberg has summarized Bacon's method thus:

> What an object 'imports' [as in artistic or semiotic reflection] first emerges only when it functions as a source of evidence to be assimilated by method, that is, not in what it is but in what it makes possible (Blumenberg 1983: 389).

Bacon's truly creative coupling of Reason and Imagination, instrumentalism and aestheticism, did set the stage, and was itself a staging, for an "assimilationist" textuality, or semiotic field, in which the "Other" would be absorbed by the same within a systematic typography which, Bacon thought, would lead to a universal disenchantment of the world. There is, then, a productive engagement with travel writing and contemporary voyages of discovery in Bacon's thought. For Bacon, as for Barth, the certainty of finding the *terra incognita* justifies the departure, a departure that is expected to usher in the "harvest time", the opening of the world by European "power", namely inscription, trade and conquest.

For Bacon, as for Barth, the dangerous and prohibitive voyages beyond the pillars of Hercules which animated classical writers such as Homer, Dante, Virgil and Petrarch lose their adventurousness, and become imaginative and creative, restitutive and reinvesting, the image par excellence of the voyage as a narrative, a story, a symbolic venture, a prelude to textual rebirth, a reading of the text of discovery, itself an artistic creation and learned sagacity (Crowther 1960:6). Interestingly, this conception of discovery as a form of artistic creation was common to early and late Renaissance thinkers. For Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519), the daring, the unexamined, the remote was a provocation for fantasy on the

part of the writer or traveller, and thus for artistic creation (Da Vinci 1883: 395). In his famous "Description of the Cave of Dunmore", the distinguished philosopher, George Berkeley (1685-1753), frames the cave as a linguistic artifact, a text, which he calls "a wonderfull place" (Berkeley 1948: 257-264). With Bacon, too, one finds a conflation of visuality and textuality, that is, both are represented as "readings" in pretty much the same manner for Barth. Pratt (1992) has pointed out that the European explorer begins to make "discoveries" the moment he steps off the ship merely because he is, by nature, a "seeing-man". True enough, Barth justifies his presence in Yola and Timbuktu (when asked to justify his presence) by claiming to be a traveller out to see God's creation. What Barth does not mention is that he is not only out to ***see*** but also to produce a ***writing*** out of his objects of optical and imaginative vision.

Bacon was therefore the first European thinker two centuries before Hegel, Schiller and the other 19th century German Romantics, to effect a synthesis of the Christian missionary discourse of conversion and the secular ideology of the civilizing mission of the European traveller, writer, or philosopher. Travel writing would not be the same again: Bacon gave systematicity to the idea held by Europe's rising merchants, cultural idcologists and the aristocracy, who funded the voyages of Columbus, Vasco da Gama, Warren Hastings and Mungo Park, that they were responsible for the world, and that it was their burden. That was the earliest beginning of the idea, popularized first by the abolitionists and then by Rudyard Kipling, of the non-European as the White Man's Burden. The same idea is conceptually embedded in the notion that Man, that is, the European male, alone is

the demiurgic subject, the creatively active being, and whose productive power, of technique, method and writing, is at one and the same time his motive power to appropriate and dominate the world in his own name.

Indeed this "conceptual revolution" by Bacon indirectly facilitated Barth's massive erudition, his minutest attention to detail, and his complicated semantic and literary range. It was Bacon's conceptual revolution that also stimulated the categorial rise of the rhetorical tropes of post-Renaissance travel narratives, such as surveillance, appropriation, aestheticization, classification, debasement, negation, affirmation, idealization, insubtantialization, naturalization and so on, which Barth deploys to great, yet crisis-ridden, effect in *Travels and Discoveries*.

In a dialectical sense, then, it was travel writing and the voyages of discovery that enabled Bacon's appropriative imaging of the Other, just as it was Bacon who enabled the travel narratives' subsequent reification and insubstantialization of the non-European subject. European cartographers would complete this process by inscribing Africa, for example, as a blank and blanketing space (the "Dark Continent"), available for European rectification, and awaiting discovery and inscription. The further development of the factory system, subsequent upon the fabulous profits of the slave-plantation economy, greatly expanded Europe's wealth, and with it, enhanced the profits and productive power of its merchants, industrialists and bankers, the rhetorical literary and semiotic power and confidence of its *literati*. For example, Barth insists in his Narrative that the Sudan needs the creative power of European technology, organization and sympathy; and generally regarded the Sudan as a benighted land. Yet he also

conceives her as a vast anti-aesthetic of neglect, awaiting a *beautifying* emergence from pre-history in the hands of Europe.

1.4 Barth's Post-Enlightenment Heritage: Reason as Rhetoric

It has been argued that the key formative factor in the self-conception, indeed the intellectual formation, of the German middle-class was the Enlightenment, known in Germany as the *Aufklarung*. This is because, as Dulmen argues, the "development of the Enlightenment and the emancipation of the (German) middle-class from pre-modern restrictions were interdependent processes" (1992:1).

Germany was in a unique situation among the key Western European countries between the 18th and the mid-19th century. She had the least developed modern economy, the weakest bourgeoisie, the most developed monarchical authoritarian form of government in the form of the "enlightened" despots such as Frederick the Great and Joseph II, and the most backward peasantry. (Epstein 1975:33). The *Aufklarung* significantly influenced the emergence of a strongly academicist German scholarship, and the centrality of the universities to all forms of knowledge-production. This was because Germany lacked, at this period, a large and influential *bourgeois* reading public which, in England for example, had had a decisively positive impact on literary production (Hauser 1968: 34-77). This might explain why literary production in the German provinces meant writing for a "motley reading public composed mostly of university professors, progressive bureaucrats, marginal intellectuals and a [small] bourgeoisie...all groups which did not make the same demand for literary quality" (Epstein 1975:33). This surely does

explain Barth's fascination with, and love for, the English language, which he devoted great energy to learn and which he found crucial for reaching an international audience (again, the English-speaking reading public).

However, the German Enlightenment also produced, at least for a brief period, and in spite of ferocious censorship and repression, a semblance of "civil" society before 1818. This meant the growth of a separate sphere of private interest characteristic of liberal bourgeois societies (Melton 1991:146). Hundreds of private associations emerged, the most famous ones being the Freemasons and the Illuminati. These societies were rationalistic and humanitarian, and deeply opposed to the monarchical-clerical order. They championed social mobility, equality before the law, an end to serfdom, the guild system of the towns, natural religions, aristocratic and clerical privilege, and the free market economy, even to war and standing armies.[4] Freemasonry faded away, however, while the Illuminati were suppressed in 1755. It was the collapse of this "liberal" experiment in self-organization that opened the door to extreme, anti-rational and highly nationalistic movements such as the *Sturm and Drang* (Storm and Stress). According to Bernal (1987), it was the collapse of the organized *Aufklarung* which soon opened the door to "Hellenomania", the extreme glorification of Greek Antiquity which would be the chief preoccupation of the German Romantics throughout the 18th and the 19th century. The influence of this tendency manifests itself in Barth's constant reference to the Sudan as a sort of Greek theatre, with himself as the spectator-audience, and his fascination for small, isolated and mountainous lands or communities.

After the defeat of the Prussian armies by Napoleon at the battle of Jena in 1806, German nationalism became indistinguishable from the Romantic "craving for miracle, mystery, and authority" (Epstein 1975:674). In the post-1806 period, Romantic scholarship championed by the philosopher Schiller, German historicism represented by the great historian Leopold Von Ranke, idealist philosophy by Hegel, and the conservative nationalist cause became allied. Soon this alliance would change the entire intellectual climate of German scholarship, and culminate in the overthrow of Napoleonic hegemony in 1813. In this, the Romanticists' work was critical. Romanticism was the real inspiration behind the Humboldtian reform of *Wissenchaft*, a form of romanticist philosophic and cultural idealism that sought to effect a synthesis of Prometheanism and Humanitarianism, Rationalism and Aestheticism, Racialism and Historicism, a compromise, in other words, between the Rationalist and the Aestheticist. This synthesis is echoed in *Travels and Discoveries* with its bizarre blend of historicism and aestheticism, rationalism and empiricism. In fine, it is this "synthesis" of Prometheanism and Humanitarianism, Fact and Sentiment, which has appealed most strongly to Barth's historical readers.

One distinctive feature of the *Aufklarung* was that although its ideals had a great impact on the imagination of the educated/cultural elite, to the extent that even the post 1806 romantic-nationalist reaction was unthinkable without it, its leading intellectual figures such as Kant, Wieland, Lessing, Herder, Goethe, Schiller, consciously strove with varying degrees of success to rise above the movement. Kant's critical philosophy, Herder's historicism, Lessing's critical rationalism cumulatively undermined the *Aufklarung's* uncritical rationalism, unqualified

universalism and natural religion respectively. This is important because it was in Germany, more than anywhere else, that the key intellectual figures of the Enlightenment also "participated" in the Romantic counter-Enlightenment. Nowhere is this the case more than in the issue of race and racism. In fact both the camps of the romantics and the *Aufklarer* were agreed on the innate inferiority of non-European peoples and the innate superiority of the so-called "white race". The key figures of the European Enlightenment such as Carl Linné (also known as Linnaeus), Comte de Buffon, David Hume, Immanuel Kant, Johann Blumenbach, Georges Cuvier, Thomas Jefferson and Friedrich Hegel, either produced a comparative racial classification (or taxonomy) or a racial aesthetic notion in which Europeans were classified as the handsomest, the most industrious and superior while "black" (dark-skinned) peoples and the inhabitants of Africa, are depicted as the ugliest, the most indolent, the most governed by caprice. These thinkers also held the climatic determinist idea that all other "races" had degenerated, on account of their inferior climatic condition, from the white (European) race. Hegel gives the whole edifice its subtlest philosophical justification in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History* (1830).

Thus by the 1830s, a racist consensus was reached among the major Enlightenment and Romantic thinkers that the inhabitants of Africa, especially the dark-skinned peoples of the interior, were innately (biologically) inferior to whites and the other "races" (such as the Chinese and Arabs). Such "blacks" were also said to be incapable of cultural development, and lacked rational capacity. For Hume, black people are "naturally inferior to the whites. There was never a civilized nation

of any kind (among them) nor any individual eminent either in action or speculation. No indigenous manufacturers among them, no arts, no sciences" (1997: 33). For Kant, black people are primitives and savages who possess "a thick sub-nose and tumid lips... the super-abundance of iron particles... which make all Negroes stink". For the German comparative anatomist who experimented with the skulls of dead blacks, and the inventor of the term "Caucasian" to describe white people, black people are "bandy-legged". For Jefferson, "Among the blacks (there is) no poetry". For Cuvier, "The Negro race (has) the thick lips (which) evidently approximate it to the monkey tribe; the hordes of which it consists have always remained in the most complete state of utter barbarism" (1997:105). It will be demonstrated that Barth has reproduced such "common knowledge" in his own textual practice.

As the work of Debrunner has shown, racism was endemic to both the German *Aufklarung* and Romanticism. Race, indeed, was the chief obsession of especially, 19th century German scholarship. Here, too, a discourse of "scientific" racism predominated: race was the great handmaiden to culture. Europeans were considered cultured because they were the best; blacks were inferior because they lacked Reason. Debrunner relates how Mozart, Lessing, Luder, Goethe, and other great Enlightenment figures of the period (1840-1870) saw the African as "dangerously savage", "lovely rascal ... happily cowardly", and, in Hegel's abusive phrase, the supreme example of animal man in all his savagery and lawlessness. This is echoed by the work of Geyer-Ryan (1985:112-119) on Goethe's play *Iphinegie Auf Taurus*. In such discourse, Europe and Reason became synonymous, so that Europe was also thought to be the centre (metaphysical and physical) of the

world, where Reason, Feeling, Love, Imagination, *Geist*, and the like had come to full maturity. The non-Europeans on the other hand are said to be the "rationally inferior and savage" (Eze 1997:4)[5] For example, Barth believes, just as Thomas Jefferson wrote in his well-known book, *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1787), that among the blacks "love is ardent, but it kindles the senses only, not the imagination". This is Barth's exact view in TD2: 217, 338-39, and TD3: 404).

The significance of "race" to the German Romantic environment was that it stimulated specifically Romantic themes such as the view of language as the repository of race and origin and the privileging of the principle of ethnicity as the model for life and scholarship. According to Debrunner (1979) and Bernal (1987), this was also the real impulse behind the work of Barth's teachers at Berlin between 1820 and 1848. Among them, Ranke, Curtius, Muller and Berthold Niebuhr (the eminent historian of Rome) were enthusiastic adherents of the new Romanticism and the passion for ethnicity, and for whom the principle of race and ethnicity was the model of life and scholarship. Niebuhr, for example, saw race as "one of the most important elements of history" (cited in Pieterse 1996:47); and was, in later years, "praised by the historian Jules Michelet as the " 'founder of the ethnic principle of history' " (ibid). According to Pieterse, such a concept of race "combined with notions from biology, and ideas borrowed from British thinkers" (ibid). This may explain why Barth uses the terms nation, community, race, and people interchangeably and also accounts for the centrality of the concept of race to his writing epistemology. Yet again this passion for ethnicity and race, which the Romantics brought centre-stage, meant the valorization of the misty and

mountainous regions of Northern Germany, which were seen by the Romantics as the authentic repository of human virtue, a virtue which, it was said, would, in time, create an authentic German civilization nurtured on German soil (Bernal 1987: 204). In this way, the German Romantics gave wings to the idea, first mooted by Herder, that each people were unique, or had a unique character which could be observed in their "customs and institutions, [their] works of art and literature, and which was intrinsically valuable in itself" (Schenk 1979: 15). This, for Herder, was the so-called *Weltgeist*, the Spirit of the world, which he saw as developing in stages. Herder himself combined the Romantic passion for particularity and the universalism of the Enlightenment. Yet the concern with "history and local particularity, and the disdain for rationality or 'pure reason', apparent" writes Bernal, "in [Herder's] views and those of the other German thinkers including Kant, Fichte, Hegel and the Schlegels, provided a firm basis for the chauvinism and racism of the following two centuries" (1987: 206). For example, Barth's art professor at Berlin, Ernst Curtius, regularly told his students that language was like the "body of a trained athlete, in which every muscle, every sinew [was] developed into full play, where there [was] no trace of tumidity or inert materiality, and all [was] power and life" (cited in Bernal 1987:334-5). Kirk-Greene relates how Barth subjected "not only his mind to strict training, but also his body, building up a naturally weak constitution by cold baths and physical exercises even in mid-winter" (1962:2).

The German Romantics gave a pride of place to language and folksong, which they saw as the pure essence of Race. This concern with folksongs and language was characteristic of the work of the Grimm Brothers Wilhelm and Jakob,

the latter being Barth's teacher at Berlin who gave lectures on Tacitus' *Germania* (Feuser 1975 : 127). It was also crucial to the work of Boeckh, Barth's teacher and close friend, and who supervised Barth's research in archaeology and classical studies (Feuser, 1975: 127). Barth's interest in language and his training in philosophy are evident in his life-long interest in Sudanese languages.

And like the Romantics, for example, Barth saw language as the specific expression of *Volksgeist* (Folkspirit). His training in historical philology is put to great effect in *Travels and Discoveries*, and in his collection of vocabularies of select Sudanese languages, *Collection of Vocabularies of Central African Languages* (2 vols.;1862). Barth also shares with the Romantics the models of the tree and the family (of language and knowledge). In *Travels and Discoveries*, for example, indigenous trees such as the *Adansonia digitata* (the monkey bread tree) frequently appear as a metonymy for the Hausa people. Indeed trees are inscribed as intimate and mystical presences, and generally possess, for Barth, a complicated symbology that clearly goes back to German Romantic metaphysics. *Travels and Discoveries* also has a long appendix which classifies local histories, landscapes, trees, etc within the classificatory systems of German historical philology and Ritterian anthropogeography (which is really another name for exotic geography). Carl Ritter, a former teacher of Barth's who was responsible for recommending Barth and Overweg to the British Foreign Office, was deeply immersed in the passion for Romanticism and Race. He was not only trained at the University of Gottingen, but also taught his students, recalls one of them, Berard, "to consider our

Europe as a land favoured above all others, unique and superior to all the others in beauty...in elegance of forms and power of civilization" (cited in Bernal 1987: 378).

The Romantics also stressed the disciplinary virtues of travel. Many of them went on grand tours of their favorite country, Greece. Those who could not go on such tours, read travel books on Greece or the so-called Hellenic world in the comfort of their studies. Werneke (1995: 22) relates how such tours were targeted not only at the rich and the aristocracy but also at "impressionistic young men", and that in such tours pleasure meshed in with instruction. Barth, too, went on such tours, hence the so-called *Studienreise*, his grand tour of 1845-7 (Kirk-Greene, 1962:2-3). These tours took Barth to Venice, Florence, Rome, Pompeii and Sicily, and were part of the then disciplinary romantic concern for "feeling and particular locality, [to] confront and if possible even smell, the original documents and other remains of the period and place [the Romantics] wish to study" (Bernal, 1987:210). It was also part of a disciplinary epistemology: a hermeneutic empathy with the "sources", a point alluded to by Barth in a passage in which he "re-voices" the local histories of Agadez, Katsina, Bornu and Timbuktu. For Barth, then, travel was a romantic experience that marked a post-Enlightenment "remapping of the space of representation" (Duncan and Gregory 1999: 6). It was this that in fact became the epistemology of "source criticism" : a hermeneutic and creative appropriation of the object of perception or representation.

The phrase "source criticism" recalls the great epistemology of German historicism whose greatest practitioners were Winckelmann, Ranke and Neibuhr. For these thinkers, history-writing was the "biography" of peoples, races and

ethnicities (the Germans and Greeks being the chief models). Winckelmann, for example, was a homosexual and a passionate Philhellene who gloried in Greek art and its youth-loving culture. He is generally regarded as the greatest champion of Greek youth and purity, whose work inspired a whole generation of scholars who sought the origins of European art and philosophy in the divine beauty and (racial) purity of Greek art (Ruegg 1993:90-91). This conception of history-writing is at base Barth's adopted model in *Travels and Discoveries.* Barth "reinvents" indigenous history within the Herderian problematic of institutions and histories as manifestations of the *Zeigeist* of particular ethnicities. (Cf. Barth's account of the history of the Songhai Empire in TD3: 281-299).

In this, Barth is indebted to Ranke, under whom he studied the history of Antiquity. Ranke stands out as the chief exponent of "source criticism" (also called *Quellen-kritik*). This is a form of "scientific" procedure (history-writing) in which the historian is required to critically study "the most original sources [and by] penetrating all details [by] arriving at generalizations and synthesis from the primary facts" (Laue 1950: 138). This means, in other words, discriminating carefully and only valorizing those documents or texts which reveal the *zeitgeist* within and in which they were originally composed or written. On Ranke's disciplinary theory, all this must be carried out in the name of the "scientific spirit". This is exactly the procedure followed by Barth in *Travels and Discoveries,* first in his "archaeology" of indigenous history, and second, in his search for the zeitgeist of Fulbe, Hausa, Songhai or Kanuri "history". But as discussed in chapters three and

five, Barth's "history" turns out to be the self-activity of the writing subject, or rather the activity of this self that is both written and writing.

The Romantic search for origins can also be seen in Barth's general obsession with mountains, summits, trees, and rivers. It was both a romantic search for zeitgeist, for exotic being and for exploitable resources. As chapter five makes explicit, Barth's Romanticism has deep materialistic and industrial, even imperialist, "hermeneutic", immersed as it is in the utilitarianism and mercantile curiosity of the 19th century. Indeed this search for origins, for the *zeitgeist* of indigenous being, is at the heart of Barth's narrativization of difference. As indicator of origin and "family", language, for example, is, for Barth, a repository of a hidden or lost *Urheimat* (original homeland, essence and purity). This indicates Barth's symbology of place. For example, he devotes space to a discussion of the original homeland of the Hausa, the Kanuri, the Songhai, among a host of other ethnicities, as if his life depends on it. Yet it is not his life that depends on it but his practice. Barth has to "deliver", that is, to *displace* absence as presence, the signified as the signifier, if he is to stay alive, or rather *write* (textualize "discovery").

The search for the hidden or lost *Urheimat,* central to Barth's disciplinary formation, was the legacy of the programme of *Altertumswissenschaft* (science of antiquity/philology). It was the Prussian Government's response to the disaster of 1806. This programme, supervised by the Prussian Minister of Education, Wilhelm von Humboldt, was designed to be University-based, complete with seminars, departments and journals. The University of Berlin, Humboldt's chief creation, was the centre of such experiment. It was a conservative programme designed to

inculcate into young Germans the virtues of Hellenism, a way of promoting, in other words, the values of the classical *bildung* (instruction in Prussian/German Nationalism). Barth was intellectually and politically formed in this atmosphere.

What is often not mentioned by the historians of the age (Dulmen, Epstein and Barnes) is that the new "science of antiquity" was, after all, the old Romantic aestheticization and poeticization of life. In a celebrated essay, "The Task of a Historian" (1804) Humboldt argued that the historian required not only eternal description but also a balance between "rational observation" and "poetic imagination"; that the historian, "must subordinate his imagination to the investigation of reality, must of necessity yield to the power of form, while keeping constantly in mind the ideas which are its laws" (cited in Bernal 1987:287).

For Humboldt, then, history was, could, and should be, a branch of literature, or the literary. In the Nationalist-Romantic writing of history which Humboldt represented, lands and culture-heroes are seen as transcendent entities, while the mastery of Form was regarded as a primary requirement. For here there would be, Barnes argued, the passion to "tell the whole story of the growth of human civilization, instead of being content with the history of politics, wars, and diplomacy" (Barnes, 1965:1012). Hence it would be Form (imagination, poetics, symbology, figuration, language) that would be the guide to Truth ("the facts"). This, in truth, is a paraphrase of Ranke's great dictum that "strict *narration* of the facts, however limited and unattractive, is without doubt the highest law" (cited in Laue 1950:26). Ranke's celebrated pupil, Theodore von Laue, summarizes Ranke's,

and, by implication, Barth's "science of history" that the latter deploys to great effect in *Travels and Discoveries* thus:

> In history, as in any art, reality and form are inseparably interconnected. Ranke thus freely admitted his use of the literary device of treating the story of each people, each power, each individual only in greater detail... This artifice remained one of Ranke's favorite guides for literary composition of historical narrative (Laue 1950:26-27).

If history with Ranke "conformed to the same esthetic notions which, in the interpretation of the time, had guided classical art" (Laue 1950:50), so it was for German historicists, despite their highly valorized yet under theorized, "source criticism". Barnes has noted that in the Germany of the 19th century, the "spirit of the age" meant investigating the past as well as writing "poetry" about it (1965:1018). This surprising valorization of the aesthetic element which Ranke himself strongly emphasized, and in which style and content cohered in an artistic unity, is the hallmark of *Travels and Discoveries*. For here the cup, to borrow a classical metaphor, is always drained, that is, the story is told as a matter of necessity. In fact one of the ever-present narrative tropes of Barth's Narrative is a Rankean one: the explorer-writer *reads* the indigenes' past, culture, "race", and language, as he *reads* the indigenes themselves. Hence the inevitable creation, by the explorer-writer, of a *language* and an *aesthetic* in which colour and suggestion reinforce the figurative conditions of representation and narrativization.

There is another sense in which Barth was indebted to the Enlightenment-Romantic synthesis. The New Science of Antiquity also taught that life be lived as

art: integrated, harmonious and organic. These ideas were offered to German youth, with the hope that the future leaders of Germany (Prussia) would remake themselves along those lines. This may explain Barth's stupendous sense of order and stability and natural beauty, values which, Kirk-Greene, Schiffers, Prothero and McLynn tell us, remained with him all his life. Thus, from Barth's description of a tree, the topology of a river, the body of a native woman, the imaginative mapping of a landscape, to his "worship" of ruins, the aesthetic-literary conception is never far away. Yet this "description" is also a *mobile aesthetic,* as the following section will show.

1.5 The Explorer in Transit: Barth's Field Method

In the published literature on Barth, it hardly gets a mention that Barth's is a *mobile* profile of the Sudan, and that his travel archive was composed of diverse media of representation from participant observation and "translation", to on-the-spot writing, pencil sketching, and physical and imaginative mapping of territory and people. Barth, for example, was not only a philologist and ethnographer, but also a cartographer, a draftsman and an artist. He aimed, in his *apercus,* at both visual and graphic "knowledge" or representation of the Sudan. But, whatever the media or means by which Barth recorded his experiences, he was all the time in transit, and rarely spent more than a month at any place, except at Timbuktu, where he spent seven months in virtual captivity. In Kano, he spent a total of eleven weeks in two separate visits, and much less in Zinder, Katsina, Sokoto, Wurno and Yola. Even in Kukawa, the base of the expedition, Barth spent a total of only four months. He spent his time travelling around the eastern Sudan, and the central Lake Chad

area, and camping outside the town. Chapter four of the present study discusses the disjunctive effects of a mobile profiling (travelling) and a synchronic journal (the travel-exploration report).

Although Barth's initial journey began within the organizational structure of a mission and an expedition, that is, manned wholly by Europeans (Barth himself, Richardson, Overweg and the sailor William Croft, who was detailed to assemble the boat meant for the exploration of Lake Chad), this arrangement was quickly abandoned largely because of the hitherto unappreciated field situation. For "discovery" required that the explorer negotiate his way through the labyrinths of real and fictional selves, real and rhetorical presences, reciprocity and unequal exchange.

Barth prepared, or was prepared, very well for the journey. He was armed with two draft treaties, one commercial, the other abolitionist, which he was mandated to put to the Sudanese rulers. So in a sense, Barth was, as may be said today, a British Ambassador-at-large. He was amply supplied with novel, state-of-the art equipment and other provisions. There was a boat (named *Lord Palmerston,* and intended to be presented to the Sheik of Bornu upon conclusion of the expedition). There were also household goods such as tables, chairs, crockery, kitchen equipment, planks, bedding boards, ten iron cases filled with biscuit, tents, foods such as coffee and liquor, and medicines such as Empson salts. Later, Barth came to depend on the Tamarind fruit *(tsamiya)* as medicine, especially against dysentery. The travellers also carried arms such as shotguns and revolvers, with enough cartridges for their armed escorts. In the secondary literature there is hardly

any mention of the fact that Barth was heavily armed, and frequently threatened, as in Bagirmi, Timbuktu and Tintellust, to use his arms on any who stood in his way. In Timbuktu, he was inclined to shoot his way out of the city. It should also be noted that Barth more than once obtained accommodation by force.

Barth's other media or technology of representation were the so-called "scientific equipment", namely measuring chains, thermometers, compasses, telescopes, chronometers, tracer bullets, and an aneroid barometer, which Barth used to tie around his waist. One other such technology was the Journal, about which there is more in the next section.

Barth was also supplied with numerous specimens of British manufactures such as a musical box, razors, needles, shirts, mirrors, scissors, clasp-knives, copper wire, fishing hook, thread, writing paper, tobacco, and other "Meditteranean" goods such as saddles, pillows, Stambuli carpets, bernuses, Ghadamsi shoes, narrow-ankle trousers, and shawls (all very popular with the Sudanese royalty). Sixty-two camels were required to carry all this. These were arranged in four strings, with thirty-three camels fastened head to tail. Barth used to ride on a bullock, but after he came off one, rode instead on camel, donkey and horse. His favourite camel was named Bu-Sefi; the favourite horse "Blast of the Desert". Yet Barth also walked long distances (up to between thirty-five and seventy kilometers in Schiffers' estimate).

Barth also hired body guards, guides, informants, and, for a very brief while, interpreters. The most noteworthy of these are Mohammed Belal (whom he took on in Tunis), Mohammed Gatroni (a native of Gatron in modern Libya, and whom he calls in the Narrative "our best and most steady servant"), who remained with Barth

throughout his travels; Abbega and Dorugu whom he engaged after the death of their "master" Overweg[6]; and Gajere, whom Barth calls his "grave overseer from Teghelel". A true heir to the Greek Philhellenic homosexual cult of male beauty and youth-loving, Barth brought into service only *handsome* or *good-looking* boys or young men, such as Mohammed, a redeemed Tunisian "slave", Mohammed Zintani, Mohammed Habib, Hamman (of Agadez), Ibrahim I and Ibrahim II, the two camel drivers, Ibrahim and Sliman (Suleiman), Musa, the Fulbe lad, Zen Abidin, and the stunningly handsome lad, Kungu, whom Barth "valued" for his soft gentleness and chivalrous dispositions and martial air.

Barth used his fluency in Arabic to great effect. He had no need for interpreters, for by 1851 he could speak Hausa, Kanuri, Fulfulde, Tamashek and the language of the Bagirmi fluently, as attested by his book on the vocabularies of these languages which he published in 1862. As a trained philologist, Barth did also take language lessons from his guides, and other local informants. His text may, to some extent, be considered an "infiltrated" local knowledge. Barth's ability to learn some of the most important Sudanic languages such as Hausa, Fulfulde, Kanuri, Tamashek, and Bagirmi insured his linguistic penetration and appropriation of the Sudan; for it is this which supplies a measure of linguistic and semantic authority to his representation of local speech, and such declarative statements as "the chief said..." or "Gajere informs me that..." and so on.

Above all, Barth kept a diary, which he repeatedly reworked while travelling. His journal conveys a man reflecting, in the best tradition of Romanticism, on travelling as both an impersonal disciplinary requirement

(industrialized Romanticism) and a personal aesthetic. For example, he prepared for the journey by reading the account of ancient and contemporary explorers of the Sahara and the Sudan, such as El-Bekri, Ibn Batuta, Leo Africanus, Park, Lyon, Ritchie, Captain Smyth, Hornemann, Denham, Clapperton, Oudney, Caillie, and Lander. Biographically, Barth's fascination with the Sudan was first nurtured by a reading of the travel narratives of Columbus, Maghellan, Marco Polo, Carvazzi, Bruce, Park and Caillie, among other countless travellers whose narratives were widely disseminated within European reading publics, as chapter three shows. Barth did bring along some of these narratives both as handbooks for the journey and as an account of the beaten track. These may also have acted as guidebooks which served to reduce the anxieties of travel.

Yet Barth brought along with him more than travel accounts, for he had with him a copy both of the Koran (in Arabic) and the New Testament (in Greek); Perron's *Voyage au Waday,* Hooker's *Flora Nigritia,* and Richard Lander's *Records of Captain Clapperton's Last Expedition* (1830). He was later to receive a copy of the British Antiquarian journal *Athenaeum,* and the Maltese newspaper *Galignani* while in the Sudan.

And while Barth was always on the move, his Journal conveys the urgency of "discovery", the synchronous quality of vision. Barth wants to move on to new scenes, his Journal "wants" the "stasis" and panoptical vision indispensable to the rhetoric of discovery. Barth never travelled alone, that is all by himself, but in groups (caravans), which at one time numbered 2000 camels (see TD1: 567). However, the Journal also conveys the image of a solitary knight recording serenely

and privately *his* own exploits. Barth had to observe things a little closely both for his safety and for the sake of "discovery", while the Journal conveys the image of a traveller-writer configuring things which fall within his gaze. The Journal is actually the key to the enterprise: Barth roundly criticized Overweg for neglecting to bestow infinite care on his own Journal.

This does throw light on how Barth used the "technology of writing" while in the field and beyond. It has virtually escaped the historical authorities on Barth that when he looks into the telescope, reads the compass, takes the height and circumference of the Kano wall, sketches in pencil the Caliph's palace in Sokoto or contemplates the face or body of a "native", he *is* writing, or rather inscribing/creating a *differential grid,* namely fictionalizing. It is thus not true that Barth was *writing* only when he was scribbling into his Journal and doing "history" or "science" only when he was walking in the field collecting oral traditions, or interviewing informants. The media of pen, ink, the *movement* of the pen, inspection, observation, contemplation and reflection are all different integrities and conventions of *writing.* As Ong (1989:81-82) argues, *writing,* especially alphabetic writing "is a technology, calling for the use of tools and other equipment".

The point bears emphasizing: all the *results* of Barth's interviews, observations, conversations, riding, mounting and dismounting, negotiations, failures, triumphs, eating, handshakes, measurements, meterological calculations, reports on the political, economic, ecological or ethnic situation, optical inspection, auditory and tactile monitoring or sensing or mapping of the Sudan, have come to Barth's readers as both a *writing,* and an *instance* and *result* of this writing, the text

(textualization), or *diffférance*, the very condition, as Derrida points out, of language itself. This conveys the important insight that writing is completely artificial, and that it is impossible to write "naturally". This is evident in the paradox that an endeavour such as *Travels and Discoveries* which claims to be a scientific, or empirically objective investigation, should, however end up as, or become, a *writing*, an *excess*, a massive and carefully prepared text, a free play of communication which itself ends up *separating* Barth's words from the living past, the *context* that *was* the Sudan.

As a linguistic notion, writing is, by its spacing, exteriorizing and signifying, intimately related to mobility, for as Derrida would say, the identity of text and author "conceals itself unceasingly and is always on the move" (1976:49). So it is not an accident, or a mere coincidence, that Barth's fieldwork, or allegedly objective empirical method, has necessarily and logically and rhetorically culminated in a *mobile* profile of the Sudan. This is why the image of an explorer, Barth, in transit, or engaged in a field research, is an *aesthetic* one, the *death*, as it were, of the living reality (the Sudan) so that it is, and can be, *resurrected* as a text, or as Horace *(Odes* III:30, 1) says of the book, as a "monument". And it is to a brief consideration of the composition and publication of this "monument" (to the Sudan), or what Barth calls his Narrative (TD1: xxix), that we now turn.

1.6 Composition and Publication of the Narrative

Just before his departure for the Sahara and the Sudan, Barth was required, while receiving the *Draft Instructions* from the Foreign Office and Lord Palmerston, to submit a literary account or report of his journey to the British Government. One

of the reasons for his selection for the expedition, besides his distinction as a philologist, geographer and ethnographer, was his being adjudged a "well qualified scientific and literary man". Upon his return to Britain five years later, Barth was granted publication subsidies by both the British and Prussian governments. In 1857, the London Publisher Messrs. Longmans Green published 2,250 copies of the first three volumes of the Narrative. The remaining two volumes were issued in 1858, but only 1000 copies accompanied the volumes. The text did not become an instant best seller, comparable to a contemporary account by the missionary-explorer David Livingstone, which came out at about the same time, and sold over 70,000 copies (Bennett 1970:43). However, the Narrative's "success" lay in the future. The text was originally composed in English; and the Foreign Office, in consultation with the publisher, appointed a well-known editor of exploration and travel literature, Dr. Cauvin, to act as Barth's principal advisor and literary editor for the writing of the Narrative.

The original English language text was thus published by the Order of Her Britannic Majesty's Government [Queen Victoria]; and was dedicated to the Right Honourable, The Earl of Clarendon (K.C.B.), the secretary of state for Foreign Affairs.

Since the Narrative's appearance in 1857-58, it has been translated into German, French, Danish and Dutch (Kirk-Greene 1962:44-48). The French edition *Voyages et dé couvertes dans l'Afrique Septentrionale et centrale pendant les annees 1849 à 1855* (1861) has been called "anything but an unfortunate version" by Kirk-Greene (1965:xvi). It has also been called "sketchy and unskilled" by the

German geographer, Koner, and "emasculated" by Urvoy. The Dutch and Danish translations (1858-61) had been abridged, single-volume versions and therefore non-standard. Pirated and abridged editions had appeared in the United States. In 1857-59, a New York Publisher, Harper and Brothers, put out a 3-volume edition of the text. In 1890, Messers. Ward Lock brought out a condensed 2-volume edition in the *Minerva Library of Famous Books.* In 1896, The Drallop Publishing Company of New York republished the 3-volume edition by Herper and Brothers. In 1965, the year of Barth's centenary, the London Publisher, Frank Cass, issued a 3-volume edition, based on the Harper and Brothers' edition. But instead of the latter's original sixty colour lithographs by J.M. Bernatz, based on Barth's pencil sketches, the volumes had black and white illustrations by Loosing-Barritt, also based on Barth's pencil sketches.

The Frank Cass edition is based on the original 1857-58 English version supervised by Barth himself. This edition contains, in addition to the illustrations and lithographs, fifteen detailed fold-out route and topographical maps drawn by August Petermann of the London Observatory. The text also contains woodcuts drawn by Barth, and massive appendices on routes, flora and fauna, ethnographic descriptions, chronological tables, metrological registers, genealogies, and so on. This edition has remained the standard version of the Narrative.

There was an interesting debate about the German edition, *Raisen und Entdeckungen in Nord-und Central-Afrika in den Jahren 1849 bis 1855,* which was published simultaneously with the English edition by Justus Perthes, at Gotha, Germany (Prussia). It is not clear who translated the German edition, or whether

Barth wrote the two together. Urvoy (1936) has claimed that the German edition is a "translation" of the English original, and that the former is exactly the same as the latter, except the dedication in the German edition which was to Kaiser Williams, rather than Lord Clarendon. However, Benton (1913), the translator of Shultze's *The Sultanate of Bornu* (1913), says that a certain J. Arthur informed him that the English and German editions of Barth's Narrative vary considerably with whole paragraphs missing in the German edition. Kirk-Greene (1962:47) also argues against Urvoy's position. According to him, there are numerous differences between the German and the English edition, chief among which are variations "in the arrangements of the appendixes, in the division of chapters, and some titles of the illustrations". This should support our argument, explored in detail in chapter four, that the original English text of *Travels and Discoveries* is the official, sanctioned one, and that all the other non-English versions are not only *translations* but also unofficial and unsanctioned.

There is internal textual evidence that much of the Narrative started as, or rather was composed from, the diary, or Journal, kept by Barth while in the field. On the contrary, Prothero (1958:334) argues that some of it stemmed from "dead reckoning", or from what this study describes as "extra-travel reflection". The text runs to about 3,500 pages, (85 chapters)[7]. It is sparsely illustrated with lithographs, sketches and woodcuts, covering such themes as landscape, scenes of slave-raiding, local architecture, corn or rice fields, cattle and breath-taking scenery. Many a reviewer has noted that Barth took great care to write a virtually flawless English text. It is without doubt Barth's *magnum opus*. It is also arguably the most detailed,

most sophisticated and most engaging travel or exploration narrative of Africa ever written, as McLynn (1993:38) in particular has noted. The text is episodic, and structurally organized around the diary entry. (For a detailed discussion of the text's composition, structure and publication see chapter three).

Barth's Narrative takes a classic form of the Odyssey, very much like the path travelled by consciousness in Hegel's philosophy, that is, it is composed within the triadic structure of Departure ---- Adventure ---- Return. *Travels and Discoveries begins* with a departure and *ends* with a return. In fact the text of the Narrative itself is *this* return (writing). For the writing is overwhelmingly *retrospective*, that is, done *after*, and reflecting textually and rhetorically on the event (the journey, the past, the *stage* of return). Yet there is also evidence that some writing was done *en route*.

This is the significance of the text's title, *Travels and Discoveries:* It announces, first, the coupling of the "Journey" and the "Seeing"; second, the *mobile*, self-sufficient activity of the monadic subject, the source of knowledge *and* the *epigrammatic* programme of finding, knowing, signifying, writing and textualizing the semiotic field, the Other, the space *for* writing. This is why the text attempts to achieve, though unsuccessfully, a symmetry of textual space-time and the space-time of actual travelling.

1.7 **Problem Statement**

This study sets out to investigate the following set of propositions:

First, the assertion that 19th century exploration narratives, such as Barth's *Travels and Discoveries*, are factual, reliable and corrigible documents of history.

Second, the widely held view that exploration narratives such as *Travels and Discoveries* are not literary, fictional, rhetorical or narrative texts but historical texts, or historical source materials.

Third, the argument that Barth's rich, detailed, and "totalizing" text is a good example of what the sensitive and empathetic European observer of non-Western cultures could achieve, rather than an example of the "infiltration" and incorporation of local knowledges by the alien explorer.

1.8 Scope

This study is limited to Barth's 3-volume narrative, the *Travels and Discoveries* (1857; 1965). This will be the study's *text-for-criticism.* In temporal scope, the study covers the period of our subject's discursive and historical formation, that is, the period between 1821 and 1865.

In general, the present study, while drawing on the historical and anthropological literature on exploration writing and on the *text-for-criticism*, will not itself attempt to offer a narrative history or account of the field in question. Rather, *the study is limited to primary source materials in English, which according to three major authorities on Barth, R.M. Prothero (1958), McLynn(1993), and Kirk-Greene(1998)*[8]*, are the most important.* This is essentially the case because not only did Barth originally write the text under study in the English language, and generally considered himself an Englishman but also deliberately framed himself as writing within what Pratt calls the "British explorer tradition" represented by English-speaking or British explorers such as Mungo Park, Livingstone, Denham, Clapperton, Barrow and Richardson.

Finally, although Barth was a German (a Prussian, to begin with), and has been studied by German scholars such as Schiffers, to name the most famous, some of the most influential German studies of Barth have been based, it should be noted, not on the German translation but on the original English edition. For instance, two German studies by Spittler (1997) and Lange (1995) could only refer to the 1965 3-volume edition of *Travels and Discoveries*. This shows that the German scholars are acutely aware that the original English edition is the fuller and more authoritative one. The point is that our object of study is the original English text of *Travels and Discoveries*.

1.9 **Justification/Significance of the Study**

Exploration writing is only one of the many forms of knowledge, expression and symbolic practice which have historically produced and mediated the semantic structures of European imperial meaning-making. This at least is the conclusion of research by Adams (1983), Pratt (1992), Said (1993), Rennie (1995), Eze (1997), Loomba (1998), and Wheeler (1999). All the greatest figures of European thought, from Francis Bacon to Hegel, had relied very heavily on exploration writing produced by travellers and missionaries as the semantic, narrative and representational authority for their conceptions of non-European societies. According to Commager (1978:52), European literature in general would have been impoverished "without the inspiration of discovery and the [imaginative] response [by novelists, poets and playwrights] to [exploration narratives]. There were a thousand imaginary voyages..." This observation has been borne out by studies by Adams (1983), Sullivan (1993), Pieters (1995), Low (1996), Phillips (1999), and

Nicholls (2000). These show that throughout the 19th century for example, the distinction between fictional and exploration literature was not thought of as primary or clear cut. Notable examples of such literature are Daniel Defoe's *Life and Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* (1719), and Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899).

However, despite the impact of exploration literature on European representations of the non-European world, research in the field has been relatively limited. This study is an attempt to contribute to this limited but growing critical literature. There is thus an urgent need to show, in the case of Barth, the affinity of his text and the larger European exploration narratives to the knowledge building project of the Post-Enlightenment, a project which has systematically sought to conceal its dependence on poetic and rhetorical discourses. Such a study also shows that both the "so-called truthful text (histories, philological analyses, political treatises) [and] the avowedly artistic (i.e., openly imaginative)" texts are *representations* (Said 1978:21).

The disciplinary arguments for this study are no less important. The collapse of New Criticism in the late 1960s and of idealist aesthetics, both of which saw "literature" as instancing a universal property, was occasioned by two developments in literary/textual studies: the collapse of the hitherto valorized, and allegedly self-evident distinction between the literary and the non-literary, and the remarkably productive critique of the traditional category of Literature by Marxist, Post-structuralist, and the newly emerging feminist, critical theories. On the other hand, in the adjacent areas of the social sciences, a scientific realist philosophy of science

represented by the philosophers Hilary Putnam and Roy Bhaskar was deconstructing positivism in all its forms. This, and the cataclysmic events of the late 1960s (the rise of the Black Civil Rights Movement in the U.S., the Women's movement, the anticolonial wars of liberation in Africa, the May 1968 student movement in France), all cumulatively forced, in the words of Michael Payne, "fundamental and far-reaching changes in literary studies" (1990-VI). According to Payne, these paradigmatic shifts meant:

> Enlarging the literary canon not only to include novels, poems and plays by writers whose race, gender or nationality had marginalized their work, but also to include texts by philosophers, psychoanalysts, historians, anthropologists, social and religious thinkers who were studied by critics merely as 'background'. The stance of the critic and student of literature is also now more in question than ever before. (Payne 1990:VI).

This innovative enlargement of the literary canon has inspired the present study. The traditional canon in large parts of, at least, Nigerian higher literary studies privileges the fictional text such as poems, the novel, and drama. There is not much attention to what may be called, for want of a better term, "non-fiction prose". As this study has demonstrated, there is no such thing as a "non-literary" or "wholly fictional text" or writing if by literary is meant either the fictional, the imaginative, on the one hand, and the poetic and the embellished on the other. And there is no better place to illustrate this than in a study of *Travels and Discoveries* which has been, since 1857, regarded as the factual, non-literary, non-fictional, text par excellence, indeed the supreme example of empirical reporting, a window to a transfactually-existing reality.

This study draws its inspiration from the fact that it is time to abandon the unhelpful and outdated conception of literature as a "privileged set of fictional, imaginative and creative forms of writing which... exhibit certain specific properties that require special methods of analysis if they are to be understood" (Bennett 1979:6). By the time Barth's text is revealed as a *literary* text, despite the claims of the historians to the contrary, it might be easier to establish convincingly that the category of Literature should be understood as a field marked by a variety of textualities, by specific practices of writing to the extent that the distinction between, say, genres and forms, logics and practices of writing becomes an institutional rather than an aesthetic or a literary one. For instance, *Travel and Discoveries* does not "declare" itself a *historical* text. It is rather appropriated as a historical text by a specific epistemological and institutional practice, the empiricist historical practice of writing, which attributes to the text the virtue of a canon, of a major treatise of historical-anthropological report *on* the Sudan.

However, the critical issue for this study is not simply the expansion of the literary canon, but the demonstration, first, that Barth's very concept of "discovery" or "history" is inseparable from the universally accepted meaning of *poesis*: the graphic and figurative *making* of an alien place into the familiar and the non-threatening. But this is what all writing is about; and, second, that the concept of a non-poetic, non-literary historical-writing, or empirical reporting or first-hand observation, *in textual terms*, is a contradiction in terms, a wishful thinking, or even an impossibility. This explains why even Kant *had* to attempt a real synthesis of aesthetics and Enlightenment empiricism. This study has shown that to write is *ipso*

facto to constitute, in text and figures, an imaginative-literary re-mapping of boundaries and dimensions. All this should re-validate the categorical premise of this study that literary terms such as narrativity, representation, fiction, author, narrator, symbology, rhetoric, etc. are not an inassimilable excess, a secondary diction which the historian, for example, may dispense with, but the central and unavoidable aspects of all and every textual, nay print, and manuscript, production.

Quite apart from rigorous theoretical justification of a research field, a 'literary" approach to *Travels and Discoveries* is doubly justified by the following two points. First, Barth repeatedly announces himself as a writer or inscriber of native significance, and a reader of nature. Barth also clearly frames himself as an actor on the stage of "discovery", and as a storyteller, of a world-wide significance.

Second, *Travels and Discoveries,* far from being a harmonious, integrated, comprehensive and coherent work which the historian or other may quite happily integrate into their *apercus*, is an amalgam of genres, forms, motifs and themes. It is, to borrow a phrase from Eagleton, "woven of a whole tissue of different strands [genres]". *Travels and Discoveries* should thus be seen as a *text,* a hybrid text, riddled with, and by, dissonances, cross-hatched, to borrow a phrase from Porter, with literary, rhetorical, mythical, political, cultural, and psychological determinations (1994:154); a text *par excellence,* a "generic heterogeneity", a fragmented, compounding, and compounded semiotic field encoding a series of "discourses" and "genres": ethnographic description, territorial surveillance, geological anthropogeographic discourse, topological and imaginative mapping, historiographic "archaeology", navigational narrative, the traditional, manners and

customs description, captivity narrative, naturalist discourse of race, anecdotes of encounters, illustrations of political decay of empires and chiefdoms, abolitionist sentimental stories of slave-hunting, military surveillance, hydrological and astronomical observations, landscape description, obituaries (of Richardson and Overweg), crop science, imperial dreams of (future) European colonization of the Sudanic areas, even a story-within-story of ants conspiring to drive the traveller-narrator out of the land -- in a word, a story of Saharan and Sudanic difference "complete with storms, sickness, brackish water" to use Pratt's felicitous phrase. There are also sensationalist, even journalistic, reports of marvels, disappointments, frustrations, personal dangers, treacherous, indolent, witty and unpleasant "natives". There are also scenes of erotic encounters with "supple" native women, tensed meetings with superstitious or shrewd chiefs, and finally philanthropic-abolitionist rites of passage. Surely, there is much more to the text than mere "historical facts".

Finally, this woven fabric of discourses, genres, and encodations is held (precariously) together by the narrative mode. And although the text abounds in technical, analytical and anthropological languages and discourses, they are inscribed within the narrative mode. *Travels and Discoveries* is thus both a narrative and a narrativization of being; a text that is also a collection of texts, and not a single comprehensive or an integrated set of texts. As a form of textuality, *Travels and Discoveries* is a series of, a disparate collection of, frames of inscriptions, re-framings, codings and encodings, emplotments and what Heidegger has called *enframings*.[9] *Travels and Discoveries* is also multi-voiced, despite appearances to the contrary. Of course, the text strives to achieve monovocality, the omniscient and

retrospective voice. However, this illusion of monovocality, the striving for semantic mastery and the spectatorial position, paradoxically, both enhances the text's capacity for a free play of textual ideology and gives it its authorial narrative universe a sense and appearance of heroic proportions, what Pratt has called the "heroic paradigm" (1992:148).

This complexity at the centre of *Travels and Discoveries* shows precisely why it is a conceptual error to, in the first place, approach Barth's text as a narrowly historical book. In fact the historian can only so appropriate the text by ignoring its complexity, or by blanketing large parts of it. For the very idea of *selecting* one thing and not the other, and of selectively chopping texts off into the historical box here and the literary box there simply will not do. Yet this is precisely what the eminent historian, Roland Oliver, says historical studies are intrinsically about, "an *artistic exercise*, consisting in an attempt to master a large body of facts and to present a *selection* of them" to the public (cited in Moorhouse 1973:17 my italics). All this suggests, therefore, that the artistic is the inescapable. This is why this study insists that even if Barth's text were wholly a historical text, it is, in the last analysis, an artistic and poetic endeavour. A literary-critical study of this important text is thus necessary because even if we were to regard Barth's text as a narrowly historical work, we cannot but be faced with the truth of Jameson's famous remark that "history is inaccessible to us except in textual form [and that] it can be approached only by way of prior (re)textualization" (1981:82).

In this sense, then, literary critics have an important contribution to make to the unmasking of exploration texts masquerading as "scientific" and objective

"historical" knowledge. Thus any "appropriation" or problematicization or methodological interrogation of exploration narratives such as *Travels and Discoveries* should confront the text's double mode of existence or insertion as both a " cultural" document and a symbolic system, as both the "key concept of a major phase of a culture" (Williams 1977:53), the post-Renaissance, post-Enlightenment tradition of reporting and narrating (Granqvist 1990:57), and as a "decisive evidence of a particular form of the social development of language" (Williams 1977:53).

But, in spite of the growing attention to exploration writing, there are as yet no sustained studies of single authors. The most influential and authoritative studies of exploration literature have offered only general outlines of periods and the "genre". This study has bridged this gap in that it offers a "depth study" of a single author from a dialectical perspective which stresses the intricate relationship between history and subjectivity on the one hand, and writing and narrativization on the other. True, there exist, since the late 1980s, studies, mostly by feminists, of women travellers such as Mary Kingsley and Maria Falconbridge. However, these have been either celebratory or merely biographical, without situating the subject matter within the narratorial, representational and rhetorical dynamics of exploration writing. On the contrary, the present study has researched the mediation of the contradictory web of history, the ambiguities of subjectivity and the ambivalences and dissonances of the rhetoric and practice of writing within the textual, ideological and symbolic practice (s) of a specific exploration text, the *Travels and Discoveries*. For example, while historians have studied Barth as the unproblematic

authority for his representations and reports, the present study, by a literary critic, has demonstrated that Barth is himself the perfect example of a "text": ambivalent, crisis-ridden, fissured, self divided. These considerations are lacking in the established historical studies of Barth, because they lack, among other lacks, what Roy Bhaskar (1979) calls a "depth psychology".

Thus this study has, by concentrating on the study of a single author, revealed, in powerful and incisive ways, the complex stratification of textual aporias in exploration narratives. For example, in the published historical literature on Barth there is not a single study devoted to Barth's audiences and reading formations. Many a historian has used the expression. "Barth reports that", and yet it is not clear, in such studies, to *whom* he reports, or reported. One justification for the present research is that it has brought to light the very audiences and interpretive/reading communities for whom Barth wrote, and which had, in the same breath, *constrained* what he had to say about his subject-matter. Needless to remark, the study of the reader or reading subjects has been a central pivot of literary analysis.

On the whole, this study has been conceived as a very modest contribution to the expansion of literary and rhetorical study into new areas, all within the new and exciting expansion of the literary research field, and the critique of the traditional canon mounted by a host of new critical approaches. However, this does not support the idea of the existence of an unbridgeable gulf between the historical and the literary. For this study, the historical and the literary are part of the same process, two sides of the same coin because both the literary text and the historical/cultural

artifact (or document) are *instances* of textual production in which questions of narrativity, conventions of representation and of rhetorical troping are central rather than marginal.

1.10 Research Design

The research did not involve the use of the questionnaire or other means of the empirical testing of a hypothesis, such as field interviews or quantitative procedures. Rather, both the relevant primary and secondary data were generated via textual (content) analysis of the respective literature. Some of this literature was realized from electronic sources, such as the World Wide Web (the internet), and this is appropriately indicated in the bibliography.

1.11 Theoretical Framework

In this study, "Theoretical Framework" is treated under two aspects: **a)** a theory (a concept-formation) and **b)** a methodological stance.

a) *Concept Formation*

Under this heading, "theoretical framework" refers to the sum of conceptualized entities within which the objects of inquiry, in this case Barth *and* his textual practice, are approached or "appropriated" as mediated fields of textual and subjective rhetoric, and from which are derived the intrinsic items that inhabit the area (object) of study. But these have to be developed up to a certain point *before* they are capable of being presented as veritable fields of inquiry. This is why the study has devoted space to a deconstructive examination of the contexts within which Barth and his textual practice emerged. This should be the case even when

the object *of* study is itself a concept, that is, a meta-language, a language that is about itself. Thus the critic or theorist must derive abstractions and categories *from* the area under study or investigation.[10] In this way, the critic or theorist avoids the danger of what may be called "theoretical solipsism" and super idealism, the *reduction* of the concrete object of inquiry to the critic's mind. Marx (1958:102) argues that the method of inquiry "has to appropriate the material in detail, to analyze its different forms of development and track down their inner connection." Only then, Marx argues further, can the material (text) be presented as a concrete particularity, say a 19th century conception of the world. This is why the chapters in this study are arranged in such a way as to reflect the study's deconstructive tactic: it begins by contextualizing Barth as the author of specific representations, then seeks to show whom the *producers* and *consumers* of these representations are, and only then questions whom the *objects* of the representation are. The study thus starts from the writing to the reading process and back again, and from the movements of the pen, via representation, to the reception of the representation, the audiences and readers of this "adventure of the sign", and how this "adventure of the sign" has in turn produced a specific writing-reading formation.

These remarks point to the fact that neither the "subjectivism" of the critic nor the "objectivity" of the text is wholly, in the last analysis, defensible. Although the critic, the reader, conceptualizes, even contextualizes, his or her object of inquiry, it does not follow that he is, or is not, "real" relative to the object of inquiry chiefly because of the following reasons:

i) Social and conceptual reality is not known *before* it is interpreted. This way of formulating it avoids the danger of super idealism, the notion that there are no objects save the mind. Literary criticism must preserve the notion of theoretical inquiry as a discourse that is not identical with its object. This, indeed, is the ground of all rational critique.

ii) The task of interpretive or explanatory criticism or analysis is *not* to read conceptions, theories, notions or values *into*, but rather *out* of, the text (or object of inquiry).

iii) What the critic or theorist is trying to understand is not *same* but an *other;* for literary criticism is possible only in relation to a practice (textuality) *and* an object (the text) and an agency/agent (the author, the reader, the community, the "world" and so on). According to an eminent philosopher of science, an enriching critique of knowledge-production must retain "an intransitive dimension if the possibility of an understanding, which is anything other than a self-understanding, and the susceptibility of meaningful objects to critique alike are to be retained" (Bhaskar 1979:201).

Now Bhaskar's formulations are meant to dispel the usual error in literary criticism, by for example, structuralists, that only the critic is transcendentally real, or that all the critic need do is deploy concepts and categories onto the text. In the case of *Travels and Discoveries,* it is clear that they themselves generate, have generated, *their own concepts*: "native", "savage", "oddity", "civilizing mission", "dark continent", "blacks", "whites", "progress", "regeneration", "colonizing", "discovery", "exploration", "reader", "text", "public", "writing", "Muslim",

"Christian", and so on. This attests to the fact that texts and their authors, paradigmatic and causal, are, to a large extent, also conceptual systems, and for this very reason are embedded in, and mediated by, forms of rhetorical, political, ideological and material relations.

This is not to suggest, however, that the critic should only ever, or necessarily must, derive conceptual tools from the area under study. Rather, it is to argue that the critic must *first* conceptualize the area of study *before* generating his/her context-specific categories. This is, again, for two reasons: 1) It is the nature of the object of study, or what we can plausibly and rationally establish as the *nature* of the object of study, that determines its cognitive possibilities or the form of its possible "analysis" (Bhaskar 1979:3); and 2), a conceptually innovative critique is a movement, as Marx would say, from the abstract to the concrete because theoretical or conceptual items are not, should not, and need not be, subjective constructs. Rather, they are more or less specific features of rhetorical, discursive and institutional consciousness and formations.

That is why there is no contradiction, or dissonance or double-bind, between Barth the historian and Barth the storyteller, the novelist-like, or between *Travels and Discoveries* as (historical) "primary source material" and *Travels and Discoveries* as a *literary, narrative* or representational artifact. As Marx would argue, there is no contradiction between the *historicity* of knowledge and the *reality* of the objects of knowledge (Marx 1958:505. Cf. Bhaskar 1991:491). The *reality* of an object of knowledge might be such that it is a *literary,* or *symbolic,* object; that is, the *reality* of things must include their possible identification as multi-tiered, co-

determined, and, in a meta-critical sense, *imaginary*. This is why this study revolves around writing, narrativity, representation, and the reading audiences of the writing, the narration and the representation. Yet this requires the adoption of an interdisciplinary perspective for the reason that all discursive activities, including their discursive mediation, are historical, social, imaginary-imaginative, linguistic, psychological, interdependent and interlaced.

b) *Methodological Stance*

The methodological standpoint of this study is Marxist, or more appropriately Marxist literary theory. This requires an explanation because it is possible to have a situation in which one could agree with the comments under "conceptual framework", and still utilize, say, New Critical methods. However, in addition to a broad theoretical or procedural "philosophy of method", the critic still needs a concretely theorized and analytically grounded *literary* theory, in effect, some *rhetoric* of reading and analysis. The following sections of the Thesis both summarize the method of inquiry adopted, and underscore its distinctive virtues and merits.

The method of inquiry adopted in this research has been taken from Pierre Macherey, whom Terry Eagleton has called "one of the most challenging, genuinely innovatory of contemporary Marxist critics" (1986:10).[11] This choice, and view, of Macherey's work needs to be briefly justified by way of a thumbnail sketch of the problematic history of literary criticism within Marxist thought. It is well known that Marx and Engels left behind only scattered comments on "literary criticism" (Demetz 1967; Baxandall and Morawski 1973; Prawer 1976). It was the subsequent

Marxists, among them Franz Mehring, Georgi Plekhanov, and Lenin, who sought to produce systematic analyses of what might today be called "Marxist literary criticism". Lenin's intervention into literary theory was prompted by his urgent need to provide the Communist cadres with a broad outline of a politically committed critical reading of "bourgeois" texts, and culture as a whole. In this task, Lenin drew, following Marx's example, on Hegel's *Science of Logic* (1812) and *Philosophy of Fine Art* (1835), some of Marx's comment on alienated labour in *Capital*, and on Engels' 1888 comments on Margaret Harkness' novel, *A City Girl*. This was the inspiration behind Lenin's famous articles on the Russian novelist, Leo Tolstoy, whose writings he saw as a *reflection* of historical circumstances, and Tolstoy himself as a *mirror* of the Russian revolutions of 1905 and, by implication, of 1917.

In these essays, Lenin began by interrogating Tolstoy's techniques of *presentation of reality*, seeking to discover in them the existence of "class equivalents" within the larger fictional universe of Tolstoy's texts. Lenin's methodology involved the deployment of the *reflection* theory of literature and the *realist* ontology. This was the theoretical basis for Lenin's claim that Tolstoy's texts reflected, more or less accurately, certain observable and unobservable features of material and social reality. What is more, Lenin's formulations were closely modelled on the neo-Hegelian thesis of *typicality*, first expounded within the Marxist context by Engels in his discussion of Mary Harkness' novel. "Realism", Engels suggested, "implies, besides truth of detail, the truthful reproduction of typical characters under typical circumstances" (Marx and Engels 1978: 90). Taking

a cue from Engels, Lenin proceeded to search out the extra-literary value-clusters such as "class", "typicality", "alienation", and "(untroubled) reflection" of reality in Tolstoy's fiction. Soon, this methodological model became the "standard" Marxist view of literature, and was refined by the early Marxist critics such as Mehring and Plekhanov (Baxandall 1968; Morawski 1974; Bisztray 1977).

The early Marxist reflection theory of literature received its most sophisticated philosophical elaboration in the hands of the great Marxist critic, Georgy Lukacs, who combined the neo-Hegelian notion of art as a humanizing and emancipating element, and that of the artist as a co-producer of the problematic of alienation, with the literary realist thesis of art as a mirror to produce a heavily Hegelianized version of Marxist aesthetics (Arvon 1973). In *Studies in European Realism* (1972) and a host of other writings, Lukacs developed a Marxist theory of realism from a strong anti-modernist perspective. From this vantage point, Lukacs erected a Hegelian-Marxist criticism based on an ethical critique of the fragmentation and quantification of personal life under capitalism (reification), the warping of the human potential for self-realization as elaborated by the youthful Marx in his *The Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* (1844). Lukacs looked forward to a period in which art would rise above the narrowly ideological, and consequently uphold the values of moral responsibility and the class struggle of the working class (the proletariat) (Slaughter 1980: 134-35).

Thus when the 1934 Congress of Soviet Writers officially adopted the doctrine of "socialist realism", Lukacs' perspective became the official Stalinist line. Stalin's minister of culture, Zhadanov, announced that it was the duty of the

writer to "provide a truthful, historico-concrete portrayal of reality in its revolutionary development" and strive to confront "the problem of ideological transformation and the spirit of socialism". Thus "socialist realism" effectively demanded that writers toe the Stalinist party line, and imaginative or creative writings be "party-minded". (See, on this, Zhadanov 1950: 4-7). Distinguished Soviet writers such as Maxim Gorky, and Soviet cultural organizations such as Proletkult, and the All Russian Association of Proletarian Writers (RAPP) endorsed this party line (Tertz 1960: 5).

It was against this background that Louis Althusser (1918-1990) launched his anti-Hegelian re-interpretation of Marx. Althusser elaborated the notion of "problematic" by which he meant the theoretical framework or system which determined the significance of concepts, procedural deductions, and, above all, *omissions* within a body of thought. This led Althusser to look for *epistemological breaks* and *symptomatic* omissions, silences, and elisions of a thought or systems of thought. In *For Marx* (1969), *Lenin and Philosophy* (1972), and (with Balibar) *Reading 'Capital'* (1971), Althusser deployed, with breathtaking sophistication, this method of symptomatic reading against the Lukacsian notions of ideology, totality, humanism, self-overcoming, and the like. Its effect was to lead to a deconstructive critique of the deeply entrenched Hegelian and humanistic currents of Marxist thought, represented by Lukacs, Lucian Goldmann (Genetic Structuralism), and the Hegelian Marxists of the German Frankfurt School, notably Theodore Adorno and Herbert Marcuse.

Theoretical and scientific practices, Althusser contended, were distinct from such things as the ideological, political, and economic practices. Yet all these, he further argued, were practices, *types of production*. This led Althusser to see reality as irreducibly complex, and subject to multiple causation, that is, reality as *over-determined*. But this was, in the last analysis, a devastating critique of the Hegelian notion of Totality, which Althusser saw as an "expressive totality", a "totality all of whose parts are so many 'total parts', each expressing the others, and each expressing the social totality that contains them" (Althusser and Balibar 1971: 96). Althusser's rejection of a single essence, a whole that possessed a core, and for which all the other elements (of the whole) were only *reflections*, led to a philosophical revolution in Marxist analyses of literary phenomena.

Not only did these ideas lead to the rejection of the classical Marxist base/superstructure paradigm, the traditional Marxist conception of ideology as a form of false consciousness, the deterministic notion of the class struggle as inevitable, but also to the so-called holistic view of economic, political and cultural reality. Against these, Althusser offered a view of the whole as a "plurality of instances", as *differential*, heterogeneous, divided, uneven, contradictory, and saturated by ideology, as manifested in their gaps, absences, silences, and omissions (Althusser and Balibar 1971: 207). With Althusser began the *break* with the Hegelian heritage of orthodox Marxism: henceforth, the Marxist critic need not seek to analyze a single, homogeneous and all-encompassing Totality (the literary, for example), timeless or self-evident works, but rather ensembles of practices, analyzable forms of *production*, rather than wholly fictional, author-centred

"creations". These deconstructive ideas acquired a very sharp cutting edge in that they coincided with the tumultuous events of 1966-68, generated by the popular opposition to the American invasion of Vietnam, the great student and radical movements in Western Europe, and the anti-Stalinist uprisings in Hungary and Czechoslovakia.

It was in this context, and intellectual re-thinking of the Marxist heritage, that Macherey's intervention into literary theory arose. However, as will be seen below, Macherey's work is not a simple reproduction of Althusserian premises within literary theory. In many cases, for example in the relationship between ideology and literary production, Macherey broke new grounds by creatively incorporating the methodological insights of Marx in *Capital*, and of the newly-emerging anti-empiricist philosophy of science pioneered by Gaston Bachelard and Imre Lakatos. It is to an explication of Macherey's ideas that we now turn.

In *A Theory of Literary Production* (1966; English translation 1978), Macherey suggests that it is the critic who, employing a new language, "brings out a *difference* within the work by demonstrating that it is *other than it is* "(1978:7; original emphasis). For Machery, the text is not, and cannot be, complete, because conjecturally, it "has its *margins,* an area of incompleteness from which we can observe its birth and its production" (1978-90). By "production" Macherey means the text's self-productivity as a chain of significations, as opposed to what Eagleton calls the text's "material apparatus, technological infrastructures and social relations" (1986:10). For Macherey, "writing" or "textuality" analytically consists of production, and of work on, and with, historico-cognitive materials, such as *Travels*

and Discoveries. Like the French literary philosopher and founder of Deconstruction, Jacques Derrida, Macherey rejects the notion of a central, univocal meaning. Macherey sees the text as "participating" in some sort of intertextuality. He writes, for example, that the text "never comes unaccompanied, but always determined by the existence of other works, which can belong to different areas of production" (100) He also argues (again like Derrida) in favour of *dissemination*:

> Constrained by its essential diversity, [the text], in order to say one thing, has at the same time to say another thing which is not necessarily of the same nature; it unites in a single text several different lines which cannot be apportioned (99).

In a breath-taking discussion of the relationship between explanation and interpretation, Macherey rejects the traditional critical notion of interpretation as a comprehensive reading of a text or as "the determination of *meaning" (75).* For him, the idea of the interpreter as "one who takes up position at a centre, or rather in an intermediate space [and who then] proceeds to an exchange" (75), is a piece of mystification, or is indeed a mere copying and repetition, which he regards as inherently uninteresting (76). In a famous aphorism, Macherey calls this notion a "purifying repetition... a single signification" (76). In its place Macherey proposes "explanatory criticism", which he sees as the more interesting form of criticism, being a search for the "knowledge of the text". This search for a knowledge of the text and the conception of criticism as explanation would be regarded by the Derrideans, for example, as logocentrist, because it does seem to imply that there is, or could be, a fixed centre outside discourse or the play of meaning. Yet it is also true that all evaluation of a text, to say, for example, that the text is this or that, or

has this or that *effect,* is, without doubt, a search (explicit or implicit) for a "knowledge" (however putative) about the text. This is conveyed by Macherey's phrase that explanatory criticism "recognizes the necessity that determines the work but which does not culminate in a *meaning"* (77-78).

In this way, Macherey "decentres" the text, since he regards the task of criticism as measuring the *"distance* which separates the various meanings" of the text's multiple meanings. Echoing the realist theory of science, Macherey argues that the text is not a stable source of meaning but the product of a host of incompatible and contradictory meanings:

> [The text] bears in its material substance the imprint of a determinate absence which is the principle of its identity... not the extension of a meaning; it is generated from the incompatibility of several meanings... In seeing how the book is made we see also what it is made *from;* this defect which gives it a history and a relation to the historical (80).

Macherey envisages a new form of discourse in which criticism and its object, the text, are held to be distinct, and in which the former seeks to produce a new *knowledge* of the latter. On this view, criticism neither abolishes itself nor merely seeks to interpret the text; neither does it function as a mere "instrument" or "passage" to the concealed truth, meaning or structure of the text. Rather, criticism acts upon the text in such a way that it *appears other than it really* is. For Macherey, then, a text is criticism's *other,* its topic, and a potential referent for its conclusions (1978:5-6). This model of criticism avoids the following three endemic fallacies or failings of literary theory: the organicist fallacy which says the text is a harmonious totality; the epistemic fallacy, or the definition of the text (indexicality)

in terms of (our) knowledge or theory of being; and the hyper-realist fallacy, the reduction of multi-causality and difference to a single essence (as for Lukacsian-Hegelian criticism). In the first two, the text is seen as the given; in the last, as a ghostly model of reality. For Macherey, on the contrary, the text is not the product of a single cause, whether authorial or narratorial (determination). Instead, it is composed from a diversity of elements which give it substance" (1978:49). This postulation supports the study's decentering of Barth into real author and fictional narrator respectively, and justifies the highlighting of the multi-dimensional quality of *Travels and Discoveries.*

The real value of Macherey's theory is discernible in his conception of the relation between literature and ideology. His contribution is unique in that unlike Althusser, Lukacs and the other Marxist thinkers who conceive of ideology either as a "cement" which holds society together or as class consciousness, he argues that "a historical period does not spontaneously produce a single, monolithic ideology, but a series of ideologies determined by the total relation of forces; each ideology is shaped by the pressures upon the class which generate it (115). This is suggestive and entails a negative conception of ideology. Equally suggestive is Macherey's contention that the writer is only "the apparent author of the ideology contained in his work; this ideology is in fact constituted independently of him. It is *encountered* in his work, just as he himself *encountered* it in life" (15). This explains why this study has devoted space to highlighting Barth's intertextual connection with previous discursive formations, not just his immediate one. This is why Barth's text

is not, to use a Machereyan expression, *"directly* rooted in historical reality, but only through a complex sequence of mediations" (113).

Macherey's greatest contribution to literary theory is his contention that reality in the text is an *absence* precisely because the text, as a discursive system, does not stand face to face with reality but with ideology and with history. This is because the text presupposes the absence of that about which it speaks; it is this lack, its silence, which the text is unable to say. He writes, for example, that the "speech of the book comes from a certain silence, a matter which it endows with a form, a ground on which it traces a figure" (1978:85). This means that the knowledge of the text must include "a consideration of this absence" (85). But this absence or silence is a determinate one, which also shows up the text as incomplete and "hollow". Yet for Macherey this incompleteness, being a determinate incompleteness, cannot be reversed. In the same manner the "silence of the book" cannot be remedied, or made up for. Neither is it "a temporary silence "that could be abolished or removed. Fundamentally, it is this silence that constitutes the text as an object. The text, writes Macherey:

> cannot speak of the more or less complex opposition which structures it; though it is its expression and embodiment. In its very particle, the [text] *manifests*, uncovers, what it cannot say. *This silence gives it life* (1978:84).

To illustrate: the critic will not find in *Travels and Discoveries* an explicit admission of its complicity with imperialist ideology. True, there are oblique signals to the imperial reading formations of its author. But this "silence" of the text is precisely what makes it possible in the sense that if it were simply seen as a

propaganda text for British imperial ambitions, then it would not be valorized as explicitly as it has been within both conservative and radical historical circles. In the logic of the preceding argument by Macherey, it is argued that *Travels and Discoveries* has an unconscious which consists in its "splitting", a splitting which is a division, and this division is *its* unconscious, "the unconscious which is history, the play of history beyond its edges, encroaching on those edges; this is why it is possible to trace the path which leads from the haunted work to that which haunts it. Once again, it is a question of redoubling the work with an unconscious, but a question of revealing in the very gestures of expression that which it is not. Then, the reverse side of what is written will be history itself " (1978:94). For example: Barth's historical readers such as Adeleye (1971) and Smith (1997) either attempt to *complete* what Barth says has or had existed, or actually duplicate his arguments in the very process of making theirs; in effect, they adjust Barth to serve their citationary practice.

Following Macherey, it could be argued that *Travels and Discoveries* is "hallowed" by the elusive presence of subjects, word and significances such as the indigenous people, their locutionary and illocutionary acts, their sheer *presence* against which it constructs itself (otherwise the hero will be "invisible"), but to which the text necessarily "returns". It is this which impels the text to reveal itself as a conflict, and as an incompatibility of several meanings, meanings which themselves generate other meanings. It is this, Macherey would argue, which binds the text to reality (of ideology and history). This is why *Travels and Discoveries* is an ideological text, for it silences the voice of the indigenous people in its discourse

of science, narrativity, and description. Yet because the *presence* of the indigenous people cannot, objectively and structurally, be *erased*, they have to be *written over*, literally reinscribed in a process called *superscription*, a form of free indirect discourse that absents absence as presence.

Thus in saying one thing, Barth is saying another: *Travels and Discoveries* "wants" to represent the European explorer (Barth the explorer-narrator) as effecting the discovery (the bringing into being) of the Other, and as literally inscribing, naming, mapping and textualizing spaces, people and cultures within the rationalist discourses of European modernity, the Enlightenment. Yet he finds himself (on account of certain contradictions inherent in the ideology and discourse of discovery) enforced to represent this ("his") discovery in images which show the natives themselves facilitating "their" discovery.[12] Thus *Travels and Discoveries* reveals, semantically and figuratively, the gap, disjunction, between the rhetoric and the textuality of discovery. There is, as Macherey would say, "a constant flow from one into the other" (1978:172-3). As Macherey says of Jules Verne's travel narrative, for Barth, the "theme of colonization is less explicit, less frequently emphasized, as though it [has] to be kept out of sight" (173). This is the significance of Macherey's phrase, "the play of history" which he says encroaches on the text's edges, its margins. Eagleton has called this "the ideological *torsion*" whose effect is a "set of hiatuses" within the text, a *decoupage*, which is a "discrepancy between levels of 'representation' ['discovery', synchrony] and 'figuration' [narrative, diachrony]" (Eagleton 1986:15). In the text of discovery, the exploration narrative, for example, the *difference* and *conflict* between discovery (ideology) and reality

(indigenous informant) appear as the *absence* (not-said, unsaid, or lack) which divides and binds together "representation" and "figuration".

Belsey is thus right to say that for Macherey, the task before the critic is not to seek the unity of the text, or to "heal" the wound of difference in it, but to highlight its incompleteness, and the notion that "the omissions which it displays cannot be described... and in the collisions between its divergent meanings, the text implicitly criticizes its own ideology. It contains within itself the critique of its own values" (Belsey 1990:109). This is why for Macherey both ideology and the text can never acquire a systematic form; why reading involves *prising open* the text, and releasing its diversity in the effort to show up the text in its attempt at the "*fictive* resolution of ideological conflict" (155). It follows from this that meaning is unstable, that a radical otherness shapes all textual production, that form and ideology are intertwined, that the task of ideology is to efface contradictions, that there are limits to ideological representation, that politics and textuality are *inseparable*[13]; and that the question criticism should ask of the text is: "In what relation to that which is other than itself is the [text] produced?" (154).

The Macheryan methodology has distinctive, unique, merits *relative* to this study. One obvious answer is this: Macherey 's version of Marxist critical theory is both a theory and a practice of criticism in which the three dimensions of analysis -- historical, theoretical, and textual are integrated. This method of inquiry does not, in other words, stratify reality (both transitive and intransitive) into the separate domains of the historical, the theoretical and the textual. Instead it regards these apparently distinct domains as moments of, and instances within, the same process.

Ania Loomba expresses this clearly when she writes that "when and where a text is written, the language in which it is inscribed, the traditions and debates within which it intervenes all come together to create a textual fabric" (1998:36). This is particularly relevant to exploration literature in which history, consciousness, and textuality merge into a potent yet troubled discourse of difference.

This model of criticism also permits a conception of the text as speaking against the grain. Thus for Macherey a text is composed from a real diversity of discourses, discourses which give the text its substance. This by implication means that texts can never arrive at a unified or internally consistent vision or conception or mimesis of an intransitive world; that the text is marked by contradicting and contradictory discourses, and by gaps, lacks, fissures, paradoxes and absences. As Hulme puts it, in texts of othering such as *Travels and Discoveries,* " no smooth history emerges, but rather a series of fragments, which read speculatively, hint at a story that can never be fully recovered" (1986:12). As Macherey's conceptual paradigm illustrates, "heterogeneous discourse" means that the text is, to borrow a phrase from Mills (1997:119), "troubled by undercurrents from a range of different discourses". This important insight permits a "deconstruction " of the object of inquiry in ways that reveals it as both a process of signification and an unstable textual practice, rather than a master-discourse.

Dipesh Chakrabarty, an exponent of Marxist criticism, has argued that "ruling class documents... can be read both for what they say and their 'silences' " (cited in Mills 1997:121). In fact Chakrabarty is echoing Macherey's view that the task of criticism is the analysis of the eloquent silences, the elusive presences of

subjects, words and significances, the gaps, fissures and determinate absences and conflicts and incompatibilities (of several meanings) in the text:

> to know what the writer is saying, it is not enough to let him speak for his speech is hollow and can never be completed at its own level. Theoretical inquiry rejects the notion of the *space* or *site* of the work. Critical discourse does not attempt to complete the book, for theory begins from that incompleteness which is so radical that it cannot be located (Macherey 1978:84).

The implication of the view cited above is that *excluded* or silenced "knowledges" are as crucial to the study of the text as the "obvious" or "appropriated" ones. This is of immense theoretical value in the study of exploration literature which is, by and large, an appropriated and infiltrated local knowledge. And in this type of literature, the "silences" are also "repressions", elisions, and absences, namely the native informant, the local guide, the friendly local chieftain, and other local "knowledges" such as medicine, routes, histories and landscapes. This is in fact the only route for the radical critic to take so as to avoid the mimeticism by which historians and other critics have traditionally approached exploration writing. Macherey's insight enhances the detecting and analysis of the silent inscription of the involvement of the indigenous peoples in the production of the hegemonic texts of exploration. This repressed dialogue between the alien writer and the native-informant (or indeed the contradictions of a "master" discourse built on the repressed "authority" of the native-informant) not only allows for resistance but also the type of discourse encoded by the exploration text.

This leads us to Macherey's most important methodological contribution -- the concept of *absence*. One persistent weakness of both mimeticism and anti-

realism are hyper-referentiality and super-idealism respectively. In the former the exploration text is a more or less reliable, but nevertheless corrigible, "source" of information (history), as exemplified by Kirk-Greene, Adeleye, Usman and Hodgkin. In the latter, the exploration text is said to be a mere representation, incapable of participating in extra-discursive relations (that is outside language and figuration), as exemplified by Mudimbe-Boyi. In the first, the transitive order is reduced to the ontological one; in the second, the ontological (intransitive) dimension is reduced to the transitive (mind-dependent) one. In both instances, criticism or analysis is regarded as the reverse of a *disruptive* practice which would not only "make speak" that which is silent, but also make presence absence. Macherey's concept of absence, which logically flows from his concept of silence, is even vindicated by contemporary philosophy of science:

> Absence is ontologically prior to presence, and it is essential to the ontology of causality, spatio-temporality, totality, agency and morality. Thus no purely positive world could exist. Moreover [the denial of absence] would itself be an absenting (real negating) act, resulting in performative contradiction ... any world containing change (e.g. any one containing agency) must contain absenting [absence] (Bhaskar 1993:371).

This implies that the Machereyan theoretical and methodological model (Marxist criticism) is a *species* of what Bhaskar has called a "meta-critique":

> [A] 'meta-critique' typically aims to identify the presence of causally significant absences in thought, seeking to elicit... what cannot be said or done *in* a particular language or conceptual system about what is said, done, known, implied or presupposed by *means* of it; or more broadly, what cannot be said in a scheme about what is *done* in the practice into which the scheme is connected... A meta-critique is a type, component or precursor of explanatory critique generally. For in the meta-critical movement of thought, as we pass against the limits of conceptual forms, we are continually impelled to explain -- and if needed transform -- the practical activities they indue and by which they are in turn sustained (Bhaskar 1986: 25-26).[14]

A meta-critique would look like Macherey's model, itself a good illustration of the Marxist method. That is, it would take the form of a dialectical critique, integrating literature and history, the material and the discursive. On this view, *Travels and Discoveries,* for example, will be seen as *both* fictional and historical sentences; or as factual discourse conditionally and semantically dependent upon a matrix of *fictional* discourses.

In a meta-critique, the author (Barth for example), is not "dead" or drowned in an ocean of discourse or rhetoric, but conceptualized as an ensembles of textual and extra-textual phenomena, that is, the mediated "agency" of history and social reality. For example, on this view, Barth is necessarily and inescapably an historical and textual agent, an active agent in the ideational process, a mistress of his beliefs and conceptions. He is, nevertheless, a hybrid, structured, differentiated and stratified. Thus our study admits of many Barths: Barth the writer, Barth the narrator, Barth the focalizer, and so on. This is why Barth is, in this study, articulated as a *text,* psyche, a *hierarchy* of projects, a *form* of life, and, finally, an ensembles of tendencies, liabilities and powers (both textual and extra-textual).

With Macherey the danger of *reductionism* is avoided, that is, *Travels and Discoveries* is not approached as the direct, unmediated and *linguistic* or *discursive* expression of Barth or his 19th century historical and discursive environment. Also, the critic, the reader of the text, is not, and does not become, a transcendental figure, standing above discourse, and pointing out its absences or lacks. This, then, underscores the *relationality* of text and author. For example, both Barth and his text are a personal, rhetorical and demiurgic intervention into the life ways of

historically specific societies (the Sudan). As such, as the articulation of the Sudan into legibility and textuality, the text is neither *reducible* to its author nor to his conscious intentions. He is, to that extent, not the "lord and master" of his work. Conversely, Barth is an agent in, and an agency of, a world he has "not produced and of which he has no automatically privileged knowledge" (Bhaskar 1979:45)[15]. This is chiefly because there cannot be a world, textual or otherwise, that is ontologically finished or epistemologically completely described. The point is that this model of reading is non-logocentric.

That is why the study has borrowed selectively from Derrida, for it is in agreement with the following key aspects of Derrida's "grammatology": his critique of logocentrism (the notion that extra-discursive reality is directly given to the subject without a discursive intermediary, also called *parousia,* i.e., the myth of the given); an insistence on the *divided* nature of the sign *(differance);* the denial of an autonomous realm of fiction; the notion that the text transgresses the very laws it sets up for itself, so that it goes to pieces, so to speak. And like the deconstructive method, this model does not view reading or analysis as the *recovery* of the original intentions of the writer, or as a *complete* interpretation or explanation of the text. In this model, the text cannot be described, that is to say, brought to the stage of conclusive demonstration (closure). This is because linguistic, historical, and discursive fields are not amenable to totalistic analysis, or even to closure. Thus the text and its writer must be held in constant tension and *differance(defer-ance)*. But this, according to Eagleton (1996:7) is also how Marxist criticism should define its task:

> [A]ny Marxist criticism worth the name must...adopt a well-nigh impossible double optic, seeking on the one hand *to take the full pressure of a cultural artefact* while striving at the same time *to displace it into its enabling material conditions* and set it within a complex field of social power. What this means in effect is that one will find oneself *bending the stick too far towards formalism and then too far towards contextualism,* in search of that ever-receding discourse which would in allegorical manner speak simultaneously of an *artistic device and a whole material history,* of a *turn of narrative and a style of social consciousness* (my italics).

Eagleton's remark adequately sums up the distinctive virtue of our adopted method of inquiry, namely its *dialectical* character. It stresses that the critic or theorist is himself or herself part of the process he/she studies; and that criticism is, and can only be, an engagement with more than strictly literary issues.[16] In the context of this study, this means grasping Barth and his text as both "artistic device" and "material history," and as both "narrative" and a "style of social consciousness". Nevertheless, this model of reading goes beyond a mere "academic" or "disciplinary" adequacy. It aspires to be a *political critique*. That is, it not only *studies* but also *explains* and *critiques* its subject matter as not only a rhetorical or literary or discursive consciousness but as an *ideology*. Therefore, our conceptual approach to the object of inquiry is also, as a form or variety of meta-critique, a depth-explanation, or, to put it in yet another way, a historically and rhetorically situated hermeneutic, whose *logical* structure takes or replicates Marx's critique of political economy in *Capital:* a triple critique, of *ideas (*e.g. Africans are savages; Europeans are civilized), of *practical consciousness* (e.g. the ideologies of racism, Christian /Civilizing mission, discovery, etc) such ideas reflect or ground , and of the *conditions* (e.g. colonial slavery/capitalism, Europe's material and ideological

expansion within 19th century imperialism) explaining such consciousness. (On this, see Marx 1981:956).

In adopting such a method, it becomes possible to unite the criticism of texts (and consciousnesses) and their conditions of existence; to illuminate or explain Barth's textual practice and ideological (cognitively defective) conceptions while critiquing such. But this does mean that the critic should work towards the elimination of the condition, action or practice that informs, conditions, sustains or necessitates those textual and ideological conceptions. Here the Macherеyan critic passes immediately and unconditionally to a *negative* evaluation or judgment of the object (ideologies, generative mechanisms, social relations, or literary and narrative conventions and traditions) that make such ideological and cognitively defective consciousness necessary.

This mode of critique or criticism is unique in textual or literary analysis. For it is only Marxist criticism, best exemplified by the work of Macherey, which unites conceptual (textual) criticism and social (historical) criticism; evaluation and explanation. That is to say: *only Marxist criticism criticizes its object of inquiry in the very process of explaining it* -- so that the task is not just to interpret the object (false and dominatory beliefs and practices) but to change it (that is to remove its conditions of possibility). Here the literary fuses into the historical, and vice versa: conceptual or literary change implies social and/institutional change.

Thus the very conditions of exploration writing, and of *Travels and Discoveries* in particular (racism, the ideologies of entrenched power relationships, narrativization, and representation of non-Europeans, or subordinate groups or

classes as merely *objects for representation*) are criticized, have been criticized, in being explained. Yet our method is an open, non-deterministic, analytic, for it offers the greatest range of real (non-utopian) possibilities that might be available to a literary-textual critic. On this meta-critical conception, the most powerful *literary* theory is, and should be, the most powerful *explanatory* theory.

This study is thus proposing a new and innovatory methodological approach to Heinrich Barth and his *Travels and Discoveries*: that these be read as real, determinate non-being, as, in a word, an *absence*[17], whose absenting and de-construction should demonstrate the promise and possibilities of the radical, deconstructionist, and demythologizing critique.

NOTES

1. The Expedition was also a mission: not only would the travellers collect information in the field but also act as representatives of Her Majesty's Government, in which capacity they were expected to sign commercial and anti-slavery treaties with the local rulers.

2. I have relied heavily on Kirk-Greene (1962), Prothero (1958) and McLynn (1993) for my account of Barth's involvement with the British Government.

3. I am indebted to Prothero (1958) for my account of this period of British exploration of the lower Niger.

4. The German Enlightenment was centred on the University of Gottingen. It was also the fount of the racism and chauvinism of much German scholarship since the 18th century.

5. Other "causes" were polygenesis, the rejection of the Christian idea of the unity of "mankind"; the feverish search, exemplified by the work of Cuvier and Knox, for the anatomical bases of racial differences, which were increasingly seen as self-evident.

6. Soon after his return to Britain, the Secretary of the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society accused Barth of bringing back to Britain Abbega and Dorugu, whom the Secretary insisted were Barth's slaves. In a forthcoming paper in *Kano Studies* (Third Series, Vol. I, Number I), Aliyu points out that when Overweg bought off Dorugu, he denied the latter his certificate of redemption, which had been written out by a local *khadi*. Aliyu also point out that "neither Overweg nor Dr. Barth bothered to work out the terms for Dorugu's services ... Barth's promise to return Dorugu to his father ... was a ruse [since] Barth did not even bother to try while they were in the vicinity of his home". It seems, then, that the charge against Barth levelled by the Secretary of the Anti-Slavery Society is not groundless.

7. This estimate is based on the original 5-volume edition of 1858.

8. This is also Kirk-Greene's view. In a letter to this writer, dated 15/09/98, Kirk-Greene wrote:

> The Barth archives are in Hamburg, all in old-fashioned German script and almost impossible for you or me to decipher.

9. According to Heidegger, enframing is the process whereby language or mind orders forth reality in such a way as to establish a claim over it, to, in effect, transform it into an object available for control by the subject. See Heidegger (1977:46) and Spurr (1996:17, 184).

10. For Marx there is a contrast between the underlying (causal) mechanism (internal structure) and surface appearance (the phenomenal forms), hence his insistence in the *Grundrisse* (1973) of rising from the abstract to the concrete, and his methodological statement that "the concrete is concrete because it is the concentration of many determinations, hence unity of the diverse" (Marx 1973:101).

11. This assessment of Macherey is consistent with Belsey (1980)'s and Milne (1998)'s. According to Young (1990:21), "Marxist literary criticism has not produced a new theory in over twenty years. Not since Macherey's *A Theory of Literary Production* of 1966 has there been any fundamental theoretical innovation". As for Eagleton, it is instructive that he produced his most sustained piece of criticism during his "Machereyan" phase. For example, his *Criticism and Ideology* (1976), which he wrote under the influence of Macherey remains Eagleton's most fundamental methodological contribution to literary scholarship.

12. One example of the dissonance which besets the explorer narrative is the problematic status of the native, or native informant. On the ideology of discovery which defines European exploration accounts, the native informant, the indigenous guide, is both present and absent. He or she must be absent if the explorer-protagonist is to remain the monadic source of knowledge and sovereign subject-discoverer. He or she must also be present because for "discovery" to be narrated, or acquire a narrativity, the narration of discovery has inevitably to produce the native

or native informant as the "object" rather than the "subject" of discovery, as, in other words, a *terra nulla*.

13. For Macherey, as for Jameson, politics, or the political perspective, is "the absolute horizon of all reading and all interpretation". It is thus not something the critic can do without, or see as an "optional horizon". See Jameson (1981:17).

14. The critic adopting a "meta-critique" must take care to distinguish what is necessarily inexpressive within the field under study from what is unknown the agent employing this form of critique.

15. This is so because there cannot be a world ontologically "finished" or epistemologically completely described.

16. According to Eagleton (1983; 1996:vii), "there is in fact no 'literary theory', in the sense of a body of theory which springs from, or is applicable to, literature alone". Eagleton adds that all "literary" approaches are not "simply concerned with 'literary' writing". On the contrary, such approaches "emerged from other areas of the humanities, and have implications well beyond literature itself".

17. It should be stressed that the concept of *absence* is crucial in any science, for without it a meta-critique, for example, is well-nigh impossible. A meta-critique, for example, identifies a relevant *absence* in a text or theory, "indicating an incompleteness, T/P [theory/practice] inconsistency, detotalization, split or reification of some kind" (Bhaskar 1993:354).

> A few cattle were grazing here and there, but they looked very sickly and emaciated, and skeletons of others were lying about in all directions, proving the ravages that disease had made among them; for besides the fact that general epidemic diseases visit the cattle in these regions. The conquering tribe settled in this quarter having had to sustain a long siege against the enemy, most of their cattle, being cooped up in the town, had perished for want of pasture. Not withstanding all these disasters, the inhabitants of Kalliul stood their ground; for the Fulbe hereabouts are a very warlike race, and are excellent archers. Several of them, attracted by the news of the arrival of a caravan with corn, of which they stood much in need, rushed past us on horseback as we were looking out for a place where we might take up our quarters with some degree of safety. Leaving two other salt-manufacturing hamlets... we descended at length from a higher slope crowned by a cluster of well-built but at present deserted huts... We remained in this poor hamlet the following day, and, being aware of the great distress which prevailed in the whole of this tract of country... my servants soon returned with the news that the distressed [Fulbe] had taken from the fataki or native traders all their corn by force... The site of our hamlet was highly interesting to me, and I soon set out for a stroll around this artificial mound of rubbish. It was of considerable size... consisting as it did of nothing but the soil of the valley itself, from which the saline particles had been extracted (TD3:163-64).

As this passage indicates, Barth has something for all categories of his reading formations. For the armchair traveller, or the romantic poet or novelist, the place is "signposted" so that he or she, the reader that is, can read it as a series of sites and thus reproduce it as a sight, a *meaningful sight,* an imaginative landscape. Indeed the artist may even attempt to paint the *scene.* It is instructive that the narrator uses the word *site* (p.164), which, he says, he finds *interesting.* Note the inscription of the "site" as one of "considerable size", and the hint that it is of "the saline particles", and so on. For the "commercial" reader, the abundance of cattle and the hint that there could be abundant corn are doubly significant. For the abolitionist, or the so-called enemy of the slave's suffering, there is the implicit suggestion of slave raiding or the oppression of the local merchants by the

"conquering race", the Fulbe. There is clearly portrayed an active *colonial* or *imperial* relationship between the Fulbe and the larger native population. There is sickness there, mosquitoes here, excellent hunts over there, native *traders* over here. Thus several "discourses" converge in this passage, from naturalist, commercialist, imperialist, journalistic, romantic, scientific to abolitionist and sentimentalist.

The critical reader can easily see how the above passage is inscribed within a figurative economy torn between *popular* and *lettered,* informational and experential writing. Barth, or his text, strives to convey both the *naked truth* of the site, the oppression by the Fulbe and the ravages of nature (disease) *and* the *beauty,* the *serenity* of the site *(embellishment).* Barth as both the author and narrator attends all at once to the informational needs of the man of science, the naturalist, and that of the man of sensibility, the romantic, the artist, the embellisher. This is one reason why Barth's text is embellished, that is, illustrated with sketches and engravings of indigenous scenes of slave hunting, breathtaking scenery, and portraits of exotic subjects.

Embellishment is indeed necessary for exploration narrative. According to Fisher and Bumsted (1982:17), the European explorer-writer just has to embellish his account, or the details of travel, or what he thought he had seen because, from the 1790s onwards, embellishment was, and has been "the stuff of marketable travel writing" (See also, on this, MacLaren 1992:55). Such embellishment, which Barth admittedly carried out for his Narrative, is part of the necessary *transmission* of a travel text in which the text *informs* and *confirms,* and it is itself informed and confirmed by, the imperial or home culture. According to MacLaren (1992:56),

embellishment is the process whereby the exploration text is "prepared/implored/elevated for the press of that culture''. A good illustration of this is Barth's abolitionist sentiment, which will be studied in detail below. According to Debrunner (1979:283), 19th century European, especially German, writers stuck to "old cliches whenever Africans appeared in their work at all,'' and that illustrated and sensationalized anti-slavery books were "the fashion in the 1850s.''

The point is that Barth invented as much as he found. In other words, Barth was/is writing within a *literary* tradition and *genre* very well know to both the public and the domestic reader. His text layers and sediments, is itself a layering and sedimentation of now powerful now *aporetic,* now learned now popular, imaginative geographies, histories and natures which shape, have shaped and will shape, the expectations of the reader. The conclusion, then, is inescapable: that *Travels and Discoveries* emerged from, is the complex historical-discursive and literary product of, cultures of abolitionist sentiment, imperial-colonial relations/imagination, learned and popular romance, natural history, commercial geography, and, not least, romantic poetry.

Nowhere is this demonstrated than by the discursive, literary and patronage networks which *funded* Barth's travel, subsequent writing, and the political and cultural rhetoric which influenced the reception of his Narrative by the literary institutions of the day, and by the ideal reader, the arch-imperialist Lord Lugard, and Post-Enlightenment academic historians since 1913. For as Bennett (1992:217) correctly says, a "reading effect'', for example, the meaning-effect of *Travels and*

Discoveries, does not pre-exist the "reading formation", the audiences and interpretive communities, in which is it embedded.

An examination of the production, embedding, and re-embedding of these meaning-effects should be preceded by the tracing of the cultural-historical emergence of the institutional and discursive formations, or contexts, within which Barth's travels took place, or unfolded. This brings to light the fact that Barth did not create or write his Narrative out of his lived-experience in the Sudan alone but also textually organized his experiences in ways intended to have a "positive" impact on his audiences and ideal readers. In this context, Boahen's (1964:203) claim that it was Barth's situation as an "eye-witness to the brutalities of the slave trade [that made him] passionately interested in its abolition and civilization of Africa" is simple-minded.

3.2 **Ideologies of Reception: Abolition, Commerce, Pax Britannica**

In 1788, the African Association was established in London. Its main objective was the discovery of the inland parts of Africa, namely the Sahara and the Western Sudan. There were other societies interested in the exploration of Africa, namely abolitionist, or anti-slavery, societies such as Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade (1787), Anti-Slavery Society, formed in 1823, and the Society for the Extinction of the Slave Trade and for the Civilization of Africa, formed in 1840. There had, before the latter, been missionary societies such as the Society for Missions to Africa and the East, founded in 1799. Even these missionary societies were tied up to commercial interests. As Moorhouse puts it, many prominent missionaries such as Sir Robert Peel and Mr. Gurney "enlarged upon the

commercial opportunities that might follow from cleansing Africa of all pagan practices.'' Moorhouse reports Mr. Gunnery discoursing on the day when the Society for Missions to Africa "might obtain wool and indigo in great quantities from Africa'' (1973:30). Finally, there were numerous geographical societies in Britain and on the Continent, the most famous being the Royal Geographical Society of London. Even the British Library, and the rising natural historians inspired by the work of the Swedish naturalist Carl von Linne (Linnaeus) (1707-1779) were also interested in African exploration. At about the same time (1823-1841), the British Government was taking a more aggressive commercial and imperial policy towards trade with Africa, occasioned by the loss of the North African export outlets. Report after report from British consuls in the Sahara and the Western African coast, and from merchants and Foreign Office bureaucrats spoke of the "commercial opportunities awaiting Britain in the interior and urging that steps should be taken to exploit them'' (Boahen 1964:6).

Thus, in the case of West Africa, exploration went hand in hand with abolitionism, commercial geography, economic and missionary imperatives and scientific curiosity. By the time of Barth's journey (November 1849), abolition, commerce, science and economics had formed one veritable ideological formation of exploration. It was against this background that the travels of Hornemann, Park, Major Paddie, Dochard and Gray, Laing and Denham and Clapperton and Oudney to West Africa took place.[4] For example, Oudney, Denham, and Clapperton were told in their briefs to not only explore the country of Bornu and of the Niger (in terms of their rivers, natural products and vegetable and mineral productions) but

also to popularize "specimens of British manufacturers such as light clothes, knives, razors, files, saws...hammers, tea-trays, fish hooks, drugs, and blotting paper'' (Boahen 1964:54).

Virtually every explorer sent to the Sudanese interior came back, if he came back, with sensational stories of slave raiding and slave trading. Richie and Lyon, Clapperton and Denham, for example, argued that as long as the raids for slaves in the interior continued, "no exploration could be done'', and that "only by the establishment of commercial contacts with the people of the interior and by supplying their needs in exchange for indigo, ivory, gum, and ostrich feather that the traffic in slaves could be extirpated'' (Boahen 1964:69,72). In this endeavour to "open up" West Africa to British capital and the abolitionist sentiment, these explorers were repeating the long-standing arguments of Wilberforce and Granville Sharp, two key abolitionists, that "if the soil of Africa were made to produce goods for export the sale of Africans would cease'' (Newbury 1965:17).

This was how abolitionist ideas and commercial aspirations became united. For example, one Paul Read advocated that the British Government should "send an expedition to take possession of one or two of the Islands [on] the Niger'' (Boahen 1964:94). Private individuals such as MacGregor Laird established The African Inland Commercial Company, whose objective was direct commerce with the Sudan, and the establishment of a permanent settlement on the Niger-Benue Confluence, "for the purpose of collecting the various products of the country'' (Laird and Oldfield 1837:4). It was also argued by Laird and Oldfied that "by introducing legitimate commerce with all its attendant blessings into [the Sudan, the

Company was] striking a mortal blow at that debasing and demoralising traffic which has for centuries cursed that unhappy land.'' (ibid).

In 1837, Thomas F. Buxton, one of the leading propagandists in the Society for the Extinction of the Slave Trade, launched a campaign in which it was said that Africa would be delivered by calling forth its own resources. Buxton wrote, "The real remedy, the true ransome for Africa, will be found in her fertile soil". His memorable phrase, that "it is the Bible and the plough that must regenerate Africa'', became, says Moorhouse (1973:23), "the battle-cry of the missionary''. The practicalities of this principle meant, for Buxton, the military occupation of the continent, including the colonization of the Niger region. According to Buxton, all wars in the interior were occasioned by the hunt for slaves, and that such wars were conducted with extreme brutality and high mortality rate. One notable method of Buxton's was his heavy reliance on the accounts of explorers on the subject, and which he collected together under one cover. Buxton, we are told

> collected together for the first time accounts by African explorers of the wars that were raging in the interior and the raids carried out of the capture of slaves. He also assembled descriptions of the brutalities and loss of life caused by such raids and the march across the Sahara to the north coast. He informed his readers, for instance, that 'the Mohammedan towns of Jenne, Timbuctoo, Kano, Suckatoo [Sokoto] in Houssa, Kouka and Angornu in Bornou, Wawa or Wara [Wao] the capital of Darfur are so many large warehouses where stores of human merchandise are kept for the supply of the Arab carriers or traders who convey them in caravans across the desert (Boahen 1964:101).

Buxton's ideas were extremely popular, and caught the imagination of the British public of the period. His ideas were common currency within the societies of the period, and were also enthusiastically embraced by the African Civilization Society, the various missionary groups, and the British Government through the

Secretary of State for the Colonies, Lord John Russell. It is noteworthy that in May 1857, Barth had baptized one of the two young men he took back to England after Buxton, the so-called "friend of the African race" (Kirk-Greene and Newman 1971: 12). Buxton once appeared before the congress of the Church Missionary Society. His speech is reported in Moorhouse (1973:28) thus:

> What was the state of Africa, exclaimed Buxton. Why, it was one universal slaughterhouse, as was proved upon evidence that could not be disputed. What was its trade! A trade in the bodies of its inhabitants. (Cheers.) Its religion was human sacrifice (Loud cheers.) Its trade swept off and mowed down multitudes every day in the year and every hour in the day. Multitudes, did he say! Why, thousands were destroyed in the nightly combustions which took place -- thousands fell by day travelling the burning sands; and as to a slave-ship, it was impossible to describe, except in the words of Scripture [Bible], which said: 'A pestilence walketh upon the waters'; nay, the very shark knew the slave-ship to be a barque of blood, and expected from it his daily sustenance. (Loud Cheers)[5]

By the 1840s, the abolitionists, the merchants, the naturalists, and the policy makers of the Foreign Office were agreed that it was the political instability of the interior, the chronic wars and slave-hunts more than anything else, that stood in the way of the extension of legitimate trade, and the demise of slave trading within African societies themselves (McLynn 1993:184-212). By the time of Barth's mission, the popular sentiment was that the Government should lead the way and open up the Sudan, the Niger regions, to British commerce by establishing "a colony which would serve a dual purpose as a centre of civilization and a depot for British traders'' (Boahen 1964:97). Lugard would, while citing the authority of Barth's allegedly eye-witness account, make the same arguments in 1900, in his

deep desire to overthrow the sovereignty of the central Sudanese societies, whom he saw as "warrens'' for the commercial hunting of the "pagan-slaves''.

It is in this context that Debrunner (1979:262) speaks of the exploration of Africa in the 1850s as being watched, in Britain and Germany, for example, in the "same way as the exploration of space is news in our time''. The public interest in Africa generated by the abolitionist, missionary and official institutions gave Africa a news value so intense that there was no sector of British or Western European society which had a comparable emotional or informational "investment'' in news about what Debrunner calls the interior, the wild bush, the lions, gorillas and the "wild'' Africans. In an important sense, both the abolitionists, missionaries and official policy-makers about Africa on the one hand, and the early explorers such as Lyon, Richie, Park, Laing, Clapperton and Denham on the other were, besides their practical-utopian project, satisfying what Debrunner calls the European public's need for stories of "exotic adventure and tough life'' (262). This may explain why Barth had to bring back to Europe a collection of *exotica* such as native craft, clothes, manuscripts, and human specimen in the form of Abbega and Dorugu.[6]

3.3 Reception and the Pre-Publication Audiences

The fact that Barth has great anxiety about his audience should alert the critical reader to the ideology behind the writing and reception of texts. Not only does he regularly pause the narrative to indicate the significance of what he is narrating, but also attempts to guide his audience's response. Railton (1993) has usefully introduced a distinction between the "reader'' and "audience''. The "reader'', he suggests, is anyone reading a book at a particular time, while

"audience" should be used to designate the specific group or the reading public for whom the writer originally wrote or addressed his text. In the light of this distinction, the readers of *Travels and Discoveries* are all those who came into existence *after* Barth's text was written; or rather those who were, or are now, processing the published text, namely, for the purposes of this chapter, Lord Lugard, whom we shall designate as the "ideal reader", and a selection of academic historians, whom we shall call the "interested readers".

The audience of *Travels of Discoveries,* on the other hand, are precisely these: the abolitionist movement of the 19th century, the Geographical Societies of Britain, France and Prussia, the merchants and other organized commercial concerns of the period, the British Government (the Foreign Office, and the Colonial Office), the Christian Missionary Movements, and, not least, the popular reader, the domestic subject. Of course, this distinction between the audience and the reader is only an analytical one, and not an ontological requirement.

Barth, in other words, *wrote* for a specific audience, and this should imply that his text is a complex or mediated *response* to the actual reading public available to him as a professional writer in the 1850s. Barth hoped that such an audience would buy, read, and understand his text, and help to execute the programmatic vision of his book. It was this that shaped Barth and his text's ambitions and anxieties about performing for that specific audience. And if, as will be seen, this audience was *there* in his mind as an internalized construct, and if indeed Barth had hoped to *perform successfully* for this audience, then this logically casts doubt on the reliability of his account as an objective, truthful rendition of the real.

A good place to begin an illustration of the above point is a comparison of Barth's preface to his Narrative and the *Draft Instructions* issued to him by the Colonial Office in November 1849. First, the *Draft Instructions:*

> The countries you are about to visit are as yet so little known to the Nations of Europe that every information of every kind respecting them which you may be able to collect will be interesting [and] useful; but besides those Political [and] Scientific Subjects of investigation to which your attention will of course be directed, it is the wish of H.M. Govt. that you should specially endeavour to ascertain by what means the Commercial intercourse between Great Britain and Africa might be extended and developed; what are the Districts and what are the Lines of communication in that country which offer the greatest facilities for Commerce; what are the European Commodities which are sought after by the Natives; and what are the main articles of African produce which could best be obtained in payment for the productions of Europe... You will not fail to take advantage of every suitable opportunity to impress upon the minds of the African Chiefs with whom you may come into contact, the great advantages which they and their country would derive from the extension of Legitimate Commerce with the Natives of other parts of the World; and you will assure them that H.M. Govt. in seeking to put an end to the trade in Slaves are endeavouring most effectually to promote the welfare [and] prosperity of the Nations of Africa (cited in Newbury 1992:71).[7]

The *Draft Instructions* was drawn from Richardson's submission to Lord Palmerston, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. Richardson had specified the object of the mission as "the opening up of a regular and secure way of communication over the Sahara from the Mediterranean to the Banks of the Niger''. Others were the delineation of the tracks of the desert, protection and security for European travellers and merchants, treaties to this effect with the local rulers, the advantages of direct trade links between Europe and the Sudan, the overthrow of the slave trade and slavery through the regeneration of Africa's export economy [8], the development among the Africans of a culture of industry, and of legitimate, or

innocent, trade, the moral upliftment of the Africans through the raising up of the "degraded Africans to the stand of civilized Europe", so that they could "expect in humility the favour and blessings of Almighty God upon [Britain] as a nation and the world at large."[9]

A central contention of this chapter is that *Travels of Discoveries* is, in the last analysis, a *literary* replication of these instructions. It is instructive therefore that Barth opens the preface to the text with a re-statement of his qualifications. He tells his audience that he is indeed qualified to undertake the task of exploring an utterly foreign country. He essays his boyish fascination with the Sudan. He thanks the British Government for honouring him, and indicates his admiration for the British Empire, and for her philanthropy (abolitionist sentiment), her commerce, language and government, and her endeavour to carry out the "progressive civilization of the neglected race of [West] Africa" (xxiv). Barth gratefully defers to Lord Palmerston, the Secretary of State, for his hospitality, and generous disposition towards the non-British explorers sponsored by the Government, and for his allowing the expedition to carry firearms.

The preface literally quotes the *Draft Instructions* with respect to the giving of the specimens of the manufactures of Britain as presents or gifts to the local rulers, and to the necessity of establishing "friendship with the chiefs and rulers of the different territories" (xxv).

The preface repeats the line that the interior, the Sudan, is "in a constant state of war, where no chief or ruler can protect a traveler except with a large escort, which is sure to run away as soon as there is any real danger" (xxv). As Barth

would write in the extended narrative, the Sudan is full of cowards. As an example of this anarchy, he cites the "open or secret warfare", the "unsafe state of the roads" on account of the unending struggle between "Islamism and Paganism" (xxv).

Barth portrays himself as an ambassador of peace, as the *Instructions* advises. He says that in "matters of science and humanity all nations ought to be united by one common interest" (xxiv), in a direct reference to his non-British citizenship. Barth accordingly establishes and emphasizes his brotherhood with British travellers such as Oudney, Denham, Clapperton, Lyon and Ritchie. He gives them the credit of opening the road to the interior (Fezzan). Then comes the issue of abolition:

> One of the principal objects which her Britannic majesty's government had always in view in these African expeditions was the abolition of the slave-trade. This, too, was zealously advocated by the late Mr. Richardson, and, I trust, has been as zealously carried out by myself whenever it was my power to do so... *There can be no doubt* that the most horrible topic connected with slavery is slave-hunting...Hence it was necessary that I should become acquainted with the real state of these most important features of African society... But having myself accompanied such a host on a grand scale, I shall be able, in the second volume of my narrative, to lay before the public a picture of the cheerful comfort, as well as the domestic happiness, of a considerable portion of the human race, which, though in a low, is not at all in a degraded state of civilization, as well as the wanton cruel manner in which this happiness is destroyed, and its peaceful abodes changed into desolation (xxix).

Typical of the man of science, Barth says that he has, as the *Instructions* required him to do, "delineate [d] the country with greater accuracy and precision (xxvi), calling his endeavour "*my discoveries*", and also claiming to have discovered the eastern branch of the Niger, the Benue.

All this should support the argument that Barth hopes to perform creditably for his audience, and that this performance is regulated by a cultural rhetoric that binds explorer and his audience together. The key refrain of this rhetoric is that Africa, or the Sudan, requires European agency for her regeneration. So in the preface Barth starts with a rhetorical gesture to the audience, a *real* reading formation for his text, not an *ideal* one. It was this historically given audience that occupied his imagination and influenced what he had to write. In fact the entire *Travels and Discoveries* was organized in so strategic a manner as to *work on,* or rhetorically succeed with, the audience.[10]

In the preface, Barth discards the fictional narrator, assumes the position of the authorial narrator proper, and speaks *directly* to his inscribed audience. And it is in this process of inscribing what may be called the text's *aboriginal* audience that Barth sets up, or installs, the colonial/imperial relationship between the European audience and the Sudan, that is *by putting this relationship securely in place* even before the *story* (not the narration of the story) begins or unfolds. In the light of this, it may be said that Barth acknowledges, rhetorically and textually, that the *audience precedes or has preceded, the text*, and even the story itself: it is the European audience (the scientific, or reading, public) rather than Barth the author, writer, speaker, or narrator, who (which) structures, regulates and shapes the relationship, or the story of this relationship, between Europe (represented by Barth and his audience) and the Sudan (represented by the presumably fearfully suffering pagans, the Muslim slave-raiders, and other degraded tribes who inhabit, paradoxically, it is assumed, rich and fertile lands). Every sentence or phrase or line in that preface

draws attention to the audience to the degree it draws everything else to the attention of the audience.

The very existence of the preface is telling: it is clearly a summary of the plot, that is, well *before* the storyline unfolds, although the narration (of the story) is implicit in the preface itself. Barth has not the slightest doubt that the preface is *necessary*. That is, it is his way of telling the audience-reader *how* to read his Narrative. He strives, then, to guide, through the preface, his audience's response to, or reception of, his text. It is here that a fellowship of some sorts between author and audience, writer and readers, is fabricated, negotiated and affirmed. In gesturing to the reader, the audience, how to read the story, Barth the author is surreptitiously fictionalizing the audience-reader,[11] that is, putting, as Railton (1993:143) would say, his "surrogate audience into the text [readers who] would watch them watching the story and learn from them [the real audience] how not to read'' *Travels and Discoveries*.

It is to be expected, therefore, that Barth would fabricate a textual-rhetorical space in which he and his audience would stand in a sort of fellowship of humanists, philanthropists, helpers, redeemers, regenerators and narrators *for* the Sudan. This may be called "interpretive closure'', that is, the rhetorical constitution of the authoritative traveller-writer-eyewitness and the text's ideal recipient. This rhetorical space has historically constituted *Travels and Discoveries* as the "scientific'' and "referential'' text *par excellence*. Barth's audience was overwhelmingly male, middle-class and professional. Steven Mailloux is thus correct in saying that "every act of reading is a reading rhetorically transacted''

(1993:9), for the simple reason that both Barth's audience and his readers have necessarily to function as if they alone occupy what Dimock (1993:90) calls "the position of interpretive authority [and thus function] both as the text's ideal recipient and its necessary coordinate".

The very existence of the preface itself indicates, against conventional wisdom, that Barth's entire narrative is not, and could not have been, a faithful account of his explorations. Why, may we ask, did Barth have to *reflect retrospectively* on his journey, and on the *writing* of the journey? Unlike Hegel who explicitly says in his preface to *The Phenomenology of Mind* (1807) that he should not be taken seriously in a preface, that the real work is in the larger written text rather than in the preface to it, Barth is, in effect, saying "Take me seriously in this preface". Barth's preface is not a marginal comment on his Narrative but the *value*, the *pre-face* (the saying before hand), the very *substance* and *structure* of cognition that moves, has moved, the Narrative as an entire *event*. For Barth, the Preface is the *abstract*, or to use a Derridean metaphor, the *"son or seed"* for/to the Narrative as a whole. This means that Barth's textual production is typical of all *mythical* production: it has been conceived before hand.

It is the case that Barth's attempt to impose an "interpretive closure", *how* his text should be read, and *who*, precisely, should read it, succeeds if his attempt to impose a *centre* on or to his Narrative as the space of *objective meaning*, or the "eye-witness-claim-to-truth" is uncritically accepted. It is necessary, then, to collapse the distinction favoured by Barth, between a Preface and a Narrative. That is, the two seemingly different things should be apprehended as the same things, or

at least, as semantically open, rather than as closed. Hence the truth of Spivak's argument, that each "act of reading the 'text' is a preface to the text. The reading of a self-professed preface is no exception to this rule''(1976:xii).

The implications of these remarks are, first, the fact that Barth has to gesture to, and "preface'' for, his audience, and has anxiety about what this audience might make of his text, indicates, precisely, that he *had* (that is before the actual writing of the Narrative) to alter, change, modify or revise, many an idea, description or experience *after* reflecting (retrospectively) on his travels. The argument is logical enough: Barth *did,* and necessarily *had* to, alter his field notes, experiences and representations so as to conform to the expectation of the audience for whom the entire Narrative, or the subsequent writing of the Narrative, was prepared. A good illustration of this point is a passage in the preface where Barth refers to Richardson's published narrative after the latter's death:

> Of the first of our expedition there has already appeared the Narrative of the late Mr. Richardson, published from his manuscript journals, which I was fortunately able to send home from Kukawa. It is full of minute incidents of travelling life, *so very instructive to the general reader.* But, *from my point of view,* I had to look very differently at the objects which presented themselves; and Mr. Richardson, *if he had lived to work out his memoranda himself, would not have failed to give to his journal a more lasting* interest (TD1:xxx).

Barth is in this passage explicitly saying that the writing of the published journal is a literary enterprise that requires revision and extra-travel reflection on the material, very much like the writing of novels and poems. Notice, also, that Barth is implicitly saying that he is not, and cannot be, writing for what he calls "the general reader'' but, we can justifiably say, for the scientific reader or public which would readily demand not only the "hard facts'' but also a *creative* or *interesting*

(embellished and animated) speculation or reflection on, or treatment of, the subject. Hence Barth's phrases such as "to lay before the European public", to "present to the view of the Scientific public of Europe", and so on.

Second, in narrating his travel, Barth has rendered as *literary* what were, in reality, *literal,* extra-textual, processes or realities or details. For example: Barth repeatedly says, in the preface and in the larger narrative, that he *was* there, that he *saw* with his own eyes. And on the authority of this visual authority he says, for instance, that half the population of Kano in 1851 was composed of slaves, or that the town's population was between 30,000 and 40,000. These clearly are extra-textual "things". But then what we have in the narrative is a literary replication of these presumably extra-textual facts (that is if we are even prepared to accede to the veracity of Barth's statement that he truly visited Kano in February 1851). The point is that Barth knew, while he was in Kano in 1851, that his audience or readers could not be there, hence his *fleshing out* of his experiences in and of Kano in literary-textual terms. Thus Barth has no option but to turn the event into a *literary* event, that is a play of linguistic replications, a mere *representation.*

Third, we must cast doubt on the allegedly factual (non-metaphysical) claim that Barth's text is the true, accurate, reliable, *record* or *statement* of what he, its author, experienced while in the field. For example: Barth claims throughout his Narrative that there are more slaves in the Sudan than free subjects. In volume two of the Narrative (pp.174; 190-1) he says that in Adamawa, every slave owner has more than a thousand slaves. Even landless peasants, the Emir's bodyguards, everyone, except some highly favoured political office holders, are slaves. (On this,

see these passages: TD2:201, 204, 228, 331, 343, 346-48, 456, 457, 548). He is emphatic that slaves form the principal currency of Bornu, that all the wars are slave-hunting *razzias,* that he was offered a female slave in Bagirmi (TD2: 538), and, finally, that some Emirs even sell their own subjects into slavery (TD1: 553-54).

It would not do to dismiss these claims of Barth's as lies or exaggerations. Barth's preface supplies the clue to the truth or otherwise of these assertions: he is laying before the European public, the abolitionist movement, people like Sharpe, Buxton, Palmerston and Clarendon, as he says, *"a view"*. The issue, then, is not whether Barth's statements on slavery or the allegedly chronic slave-hunting and civil wars in the Sudan can be verified or corroborated by a native, or local, "source" (books or archaeological artifact) but the ideological, rhetorical, and documentary *conditioning* of his literary practice on this issue by a specific audience or reading public who had directly or indirectly demanded of him such literary portrait or inscription of the Sudan. McLynn argues in fact that given the psychology of the explorers, their own accounts of their motives may constitute "valuable evidence" for whatever reason, but that for obvious reasons we should not take their accounts as unproblematic representations of their lived experiences.

This seems to support the contention of the eminent historian, Roland Oliver, that "all worthwhile historical writing is *primarily an artistic exercise,* consisting in an attempt to master a large body of facts and to present a small *selection* of them in the *proportion* and *form* seem most meaningful at a particular moment [and audience] in time" (Cited in Moorhouse 1973:17, my italics). Thus

Barth has *artistically* chosen, in proportion to his *oeuvre*, and in conformity with the demands of *form* (the genre of travel writing, its narrative requirements and conventions, the special needs of its audience) and a particular way of opening to the view of his audience, a particular perspective on the Sudan, that is, as the latter has been inscribed in the literary tradition inherited by Barth, and within which he was/is writing. These comments apply to Barth's descriptions of the Sudanese landscape, leaders, characters and living spaces.

In fact Boahen informs his reader that Barth's expedition was "financed from the Secret Service Fund instead of from the Civil Contingencies Fund, as has been the usual practice" (1964:186). It is to be expected, then, that Barth would structure, plot and phrase the events he reports in the way he has, and emphasize some things more than others. For example, in Barth's Narrative, the Sudan is racked by universal chaos and insecurity, and yet these did not prevent him from successfully exploring the land. Also, despite the massive narrative, there is not a single line devoted to a description of such basic things as Sudanese marriage or burial rites.

What should be our primary focus, therefore, is not the extra-textual Sudan, which in any case is *absent*, or is an ontological *absence*, in Barth's text but the following four problematics: first, "the Sudan" he has *inscribed*, written down, second, the *writer*, the real Author and fictional narrator of *Travels and Discoveries*, third, the *writing*, the literary-linguistic rendition or replication, of the events, and finally the audience/readers of the text. This is necessary if what Derrida calls *logocentrism*, the assumption of a one-to-one correspondence between word and

referent, signifier and signified is to be avoided. This is why the colonial apologists and academic historians who focus on the world that the explorer brings to textual life are not focusing on a real or matter-of-fact intransitive reality but on a literary one, a *fiction.*[12] To show why this is indeed the case, would require a consideration of the relationship between *Travels and Discoveries* and the imperial culture of its day.

3.4 **Audiences, Publication and Imperialism**

There is some truth to the statement by Saynor (1998:18) that exploration writing gives one "the sense of an author in search of a book''. Perhaps he should have added,'' in search of an audience''. It is arguable that Barth's development, or "evolution'' from traveller to authoritative explorer became complete only with the writing and publishing of his Narrative.[13] It is, paradoxically, not the actual travelling or exploring or journeying that bestowed upon Barth the stamp of authority (as an eye-witness or discourser) but the publication or publishing of his Narrative (which bestows upon him the authority of an expert "reader'' of the allegedly extra-textual Sudan). It may surely be said that Barth went out to the Sudan not necessarily to build up knowledge (about the Sudan or any other topic) but to become an Author, to, in effect, be read with all the potential personal profit that that entailed by the greatest, most prestigious and most sophisticated of all European reading publics -- the British reading public. Barth says precisely this in his Preface:

> During my three years' travelling [1845-1848]. I had ample opportunity of testing the *efficacy* of British protection; I experienced the kindness of all her Britannic majesty's consuls... and often enjoyed their hospitality...*my admiration of*

> *the wide extension of the British over the globe, their influence, their language,* and their government, was such that *I felt a strong inclination to become the humble means of carrying out their philanthropic views* for the progressive civilization of the neglected races of Central Africa (TD1:xxiv; my italics).

While in the field, Barth referred to himself as an Englishman, *Abd-el-Karim Barth el Inglisi* (Abd al karim Barth the Englishman). He completely suppressed his Prussian (German) identity. There is hardly a reference to this in the Preface either. Although Barth had written and published in German a travel text before, his account of his "Wanderings" in the Mediterranean and Asia Minor, the book was not a success, and sold no more than a few copies. In fact the second volume was never published (Kirk-Greene 1962:5). Barth followed up on the success of the *Travels and Discoveries* with a famous essay which he read before the Royal Geographical Society of London in 1857. Barth generally relished in writing in English, and standing before English-speaking audiences.[14]

Surely, then, it was by, or in, writing for the British audience that Barth transformed himself from a mere traveller (in the field) to an Author (the writer of an "authoritative" narrative). This is true because even the German scholars of Barth writing in English generally cite not the German, but the original English text of *Travels and Discoveries,* and the 1857-58 Essay[15]. These two English texts have become the standard reference material on Barth. Even Lugard could only quote Barth's English Narrative. Adu Boahen who submitted in 1964 a doctoral thesis on British exploration of the Sahara and the Sudan relied wholly on Barth's English texts. He cites not a single German-speaking "source material". This is one reason why any adequate study of Barth's career or writing must address the question of his

audience, and how Barth's anxiety about his audience has imposed limits on what he could honesty and truthfully say about the Sudan. It should be noted that Barth is only able to *rhetorically look down* on the Sudan to the extent he is able to successfully perform for his actual audience, the reading publics of late 19th century Britain.

Thus the issue of publication is interactively tied up with that of audience. For even at the level of publication, *Travels and Discoveries* was found fit for publication only because Barth wrote in a fashion that both the Foreign Office, which financially supported the publication, and the publisher, Longmans Green, considered, or found, sufficiently *profitable* and *literary* enough to secure a respectable readership. Note that Barth was instructed, while receiving his briefs, to submit a literary account of his journey to the Foreign Office (in return for a life pension) (Boahen 1964:184; Richardson to Palmerston, 12 Oct. 1849)[16]

The original English text of Barth's Narrative is, to this extent, the official, sanctioned account, published by the Order of Her Britannic Majesty's Government. It is said in the title that it is the journal of an expedition undertaken under the auspices of H.B. M's Government (Her Britannic Majesty's Government [Queen Victoria]) in the years 1849-1855 by Dr. Heinrich Barth. The book is dedicated to the Right Honourable, The Earl of Clarendon (K.C.B.), Her Majesty's Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs by the author, or rather the Earl of Clarendon's "obliged and faithful servant" in "grateful acknowledgement for many acts of kindness".

According to MacLaren, from the time of James Cook's voyages between 1768 and 1772, the official policy among European nations such as Britain was that

the laying of imperial claim to the land discovered and to "knowledge" about the land and its resources "consisted pre-eminently in the *publication* of the narrative by the explorer whom [the king] appointed. The form of the official account thereby exercised a weighty significance well beyond the sum of its contents" (1992:44; my italics). It is significant that the Foreign Office, in consultation with Longmans Green, the publisher, appointed Dr. Cauvin to act as Barth's principal adviser and literary editor for the writing of the Journal (Kirk-Greene 1962:54). This is why all other non-English versions of *Travels and Discoveries* are not only translations (literally, a transfer, a substitution) but also unofficial, unsanctioned and unauthoritative.

This leads us to the issue of the relationship of Barth's Narrative and the imperial culture of 19th century Britain. When Barth came out to the Sudan in the 1850s, Britain was the foremost imperialist country, with an aggressive, imperially conscious policy toward the non-European world (Calder 1981; Lloyd 1984; Said 1993). Barth was acutely aware of this, for he recommends the colonization of what would today be called Northern Nigeria (see, on this TD1: 592; TD2: 501; TD3: 299). So it is not just that Barth had to measure up to the expectations of his reading public and his audience, and to the contemporary standard of stylistic propriety they expected of him, but also *entertain* them, and, to the same degree, project their cultural rhetoric and *weltanschauung*.[17]

In the briefs given to Barth, he was required to preserve his character and disposition as a worthy "Englishman" in the eyes of the people he would be visiting (Newbury 1965:57-59; 62-66). To all intents and purposes, this meant a literary

endeavour in which the explorer becomes a textually embodied "eye/I" in which the real author is transformed into the fictional narrator, that is, from an adventuring explorer/enquirer into, first and foremost, the polite, patient and travelling gentleman possessed of, and exhibiting, decorum, trustworthiness, honesty and morality. Barth, whether as Author or fictional narrator, is never shown harming, or maiming any one, or harbouring a malicious thought or intent. He is the perfect moral subject, something very close to Fichte's "I" or Kant's Transcendental Subject. All this is consistent with British imperial mythology, which, Trotter writes, stressed that "the vitality of the [white] race could be renewed by journeys to the frontier [where civilization meets barbarism]... [and] attributed great significance to exploration" (1988:145, 147).

This may explain why both author and fictional narrator are shown in *Travels and Discoveries* to be on all occasions possessed of manners befitting the British character, and the court of Queen Victoria. It is little wonder, then, that Barth, according to Boahen, "increased even further Britain's reputation and popularity in the Western Sudan. When Baikie visited Kano in 1862 he found the British so highly esteemed that he experienced no difficulty in raising loans and drawing bills on the [British] Consul-General in Tripoli" (1964:211). It was all, Boahen assures us, largely due to "Barth [who] was a great success" (ibid). But since Barth advocates the conquest of the Sudan, he must have imagined an ideal reader for his text. The ideal reader could, in the 19th century, have been either Lord Palmerston or Lord Clarendon (who were both at one time secretaries at the Foreign Office and Colonial Office, and were also dogmatic abolitionists). Hence the

dedication of the narrative to the latter: Barth *knew* that although Lord Clarendon could not visit the Sudan, he was no mere armchair traveller, for he could easily order the conquest of the Sudan. That is why the dedication of the Narrative to Lord Clarendon is, properly speaking, a *poetic* act, an attempt at *making* the propositions of a story, a discourse, a narrative, acquire the *force* of a material sign, the Empire:

> There is a convergence between the great geographical scope of the [European] empires... and universalizing cultural discourses. Power makes this convergence possible ... with it goes the ability to be in far-flung places, to learn about other people, to codify and disseminate knowledge, to characterize, transport, install, and display instances of other cultures (through exhibits, photographs, paintings, surveys...), and above all to rule them. All this in turn produces what has been called 'a duty' to natives, the requirement in Africa and elsewhere to establish colonies for the 'benefit' of the natives or for the 'prestige' of the mother country (Said 1993: 130).

As a texture of linguistic and cultural determinations of, and for, a specific audience and reading public, *Travels and Discoveries* emerged from, was itself the creator of, an imperial culture of thinking and planning for other societies and lands, despite this culture's and this Narrative's subscription to the supposedly humane ideas or values of 19th century mainstream European thought such as Humanitarianism, Philanthropy, Abolition, Legitimate Commerce, and Progress. Yet all these, argues Kiernan, were the "mould of ideas and conditioned reflexes into which the whole business of empire later flowed" (cited in Said 1993:99) [18]. Rotberg is, on this score, justified in his contention that as far as the printed accounts of the nineteenth century explorers are concerned, they were "influenced by the narrow expectations of a Victorian readership" (1970: 7).

3.5 **The Early Reading Public (1857-1858).**

In June 1857, *Travels and Discoveries* was issued, or to quote the original blurb, "placed before the public", by the publisher Longmans Green. The text was lavishly decorated with J.M. Bernatz's sixty colour lithographs[19] based on Barth's pencil sketches; and with fifteen very detailed foldout maps by the Anglo-German geographer, August Petermann. There were also over thirty woodcuts illustrating many aspects of Sudanese life. It is clear that the illustrations were designed to convey, in pictorial form, Barth's authoritative presence and representational authenticity in the Sudan,[20] as evident from his effusive gratitude to J.M. Bernatz for the colour lithographs, which Barth says, " have been executed with *artistic skill* and the strictest fidelity, from my sketches" (TD1: xxxii; my italics. For some of these lithographs, see the Appendix).

There is something distinctive about the early reception of Barth's narrative. Contrary to conventional thinking, his Narrative was first reviewed in the popular press, rather than in the learned journals of the time. As is emphasized by Jameson (1981:9-10) and Gaitet (1992:42), texts, all texts, are the always-already-read because not only are they apprehended through what Jameson calls the "sedimented layers of previous interpretations" or the "sedimented reading habits and categories" of previous interpretive formations, but also already "conditioned by the status of [its] author and publisher" (Gaitet:1992:42). Nowhere is this illustrated more than in the first reviews of the Narrative in the *Athenaeum,* (May 16, 1857) *Spectator* (May 16, 1857) and *Guardian* (June 1, 1857). The differences of emphasis not

withstanding, the reviewers in these periodicals were unanimous in their estimation of *Travels and Discoveries* as the greatest book of African travel, and of Barth as the "indefatigable traveller". The publisher was commended for including the "unexampled" maps and the "beautiful plates and woodcuts". Specifically, the Narrative was favourably reviewed for its thoroughness, clear narration of the events, and its excellent and authoritative description of the political anarchy in the Sudan. Barth's accuracy and scholarship were affirmed, his text's freshness and novelty was emphasized, although its "tedious length" and massive details were said to be "too much for any reader".[21]

It should be emphasized that those reviews did not depart from what might be called "genre expectations", which are normally brought to bear, in textual analysis, on specific texts. Notice that these popular reviews did not depart from the broad expectations of the 19th century reading formations of exploration literature. For example, Barth's reviewers took it for granted that he really did travel in the Sudan, had witnessed the anarchic and slave-raiding situation there, had delivered the Sudan with all its complexities *within* his text, and that, finally, his seeing, and the textualization of this seeing, possessed the status of scientific truth. The reviewers were also unanimous that Barth should entertain the reader; hence their critical comments on the text's "tedious length", its almost "heavy" academic mode of delivery, and the author's clear (they thought) neglect of the need to stimulate in the reader the pleasure of the text. For the reviewers, Barth's readers should be *informed* as well as *entertained*.

Now these press reviews of *Travels and Discoveries* should not be underestimated, or seen as marginal to the discursive formations within which official readers or institutional audiences of European exploration accounts had traditionally approached their subject matter. Rather, they were an important indication of the "discursive bonding" between the highbrow official reader or audience (in the Royal Geographical Society, the Anti-Slavery Society or the Linnaean Society), and the educated reading public at large. According to Terdiman (1985b: 52), the 1850s was a period during which "newspapers as institutionalized discourse [experienced] an extraordinary multiplication in its pervasiveness of the world of words and social representation".

Now the assessment of *Travels and Discoveries* in the press and popular periodicals meant that the content of the work (as selectively reviewed) would reach a much wider audience. Gaitet (1992:42) writes that in the 19th century, the assessments of a "non-fictional" work or text in the press did address a much wider audience than, for example, "the novel could ever hope to reach [and that] by providing unabashed value judgments and clear cut interpretations these reactions [would] help determine by whom the work is read, as well as how".

We can test this out by considering the reactions of the highbrow or official readers of Barth's Narrative. Below are the reactions of Sir Roderick Murchison, the President of the Royal Geographical Society, *soon after* the reviews of *Travels and Discoveries* had appeared in the periodicals mentioned above:

> Referring to the publication of the first three volumes in his annual address to the [Society] in 1857, its President, Sir Roderick Murchison, reported that 'this meritorious explorer of vast regions has issued to the public three volumes, which ... are to be followed by two others, completing a work which

> will doubtless be considered the worthy termination of so many years of patient research on the great privations'. [Sir Roderick] praised the excellence of the maps and the richness of the volumes which showed 'that Dr. Barth was so completely at home among the natives, with seven of those languages, he has familiar, and made such very diligent inquiries, that the information thus gathered is far more complex and minute than that of his precursors' (Cited and paraphrased in Kirk-Greene 1962:50-51).

Again in 1858, when the last two volumes of the narrative were about to be published, Sir Roderick said of Barth that he truly possessed "indefatigable industry" (cited in Kirk-Greene 1962:54). This is the standard judgment of Barth and his narrative one finds in Morel (1902:44), Flora Shaw (1905), Bovill (1926), Rodd (1926:22), Wellesley (1934:94), Flint (1960:18-19), and a host of other academic authorities.

The learned or academic readings of Barth were a reproduction and/or replication of the popular, or run-of-the-mill, reading in that the former reading of Barth's Narrative, or *oeuvre,* shares, excepting the secondary differences, the same historical, ideological and material foundations or determinations with the latter. Yet both readings are specific reading relations which existed, had to exist, within specific social relations of reading.

The point being made is: the consensus that can be observed in both the popular and high readings of Barth share the same cultural rhetoric, or have rhetorically transacted the same cultural interpretations of the Narrative, or again have constituted the same interpretive-reading community. As Machor says of the Euro-American reading communities of the 1850s, "reviewers in popular periodicals [constituted] the primary vehicle for the public dissemination and assimilation of ideas about how to read [exploration writing] in an informed manner" (1993: xv).

In an acclaimed study of 18th-19th century British reading publics (especially around periodicals such as the *Tatler*, *Edinburgh Review* and the *Spectator*, Eagleton says of such that they were the "central institutions" of the bourgeois public sphere (1984:10); and that the *Spectator* in particular aimed at the creation of a consensual space in which would be cultivated the mercantile class and the upliftment of the "profligate aristocracy" (11), that is, in Eagleton's ominous phrase, "the cementing of a new power block at the level of the sign" (14).[22]

The fact, then, is that it was not sound or scientific or disinterested research or study which found or reached the conclusion that Barth was the greatest African explorer and his Narrative the most authoritative account of 19th century Sudan but the historically specific cultural or reading rhetoric of a historically specific reading formation. This is not to suggest, however, that there were no important points of emphasis within this reading formation. We should, in fact, view this reading formation in the plural, that is, to quote Bennett (1987:70-71), as a "set of discursive and inter-textual determinations". This view stresses the relatedness of these reading strategies as opposed to a view of them as unrelated to one another, or as passive respondents to cultural, linguistic or ideological signals.

The significance of these arguments about the reception of *Travels and Discoveries* is that the inherited tradition of reading the text has had its roots in specific imperial, rhetorical, and cultural ideologies, and that it is these which have, since 1857, organized and animated the practice of reading the narrative. Far from *Travels and Discoveries* creating or constituting, through its allegedly disinterested "context", a specific readership, it is the readership, first as the audience, and then as

a reading/interpretive community, which created, constituted or in fact brought the Narrative into interpretive existence. Bennett suggests that "texts have and can have no existence independently of ... reading formations ... Texts exist only as always-already organized or activated to be read in certain ways" (1987:70-71). Bennett's point is a paraphrase of Macherey's contention that:

> The [text] only establishes the difference which brings it into being, by establishing relations to that which it is not; otherwise it would have no reality and would actually be unreadable and invisible (1978:53).

Just like the Sudan in Barth's Narrative, *Travels and Discoveries* turns out to be an *absence* (that is, as a thing-in-itself), a silence, a vacant space around which specific reading communities or formations have erected, constructed, and weaved, more or less contradictory cultural rhetorics. These rhetorics are similar to what Macherey and Bennett would call " productive activations," namely variantly modulated discourses of textual intervention, or reading practices organized within specific corpuses of intersecting (discourses of) interpretations.

It is then not true that *Travels and Discoveries* exists as a coherent or stable object, with a stable or objective meaning attached to it. It is equally not true that the reading of Barth produced by the academic historian carries more cultural or epistemological weight than the readings produced by reviewers in the popular press. Neither is it true that *Travels and Discoveries* has settled down into an enduring meaning (or a pattern or framework of response). The simple reason is that Barth had to, while writing that text, accommodate the divergent, contradictory, and, in many cases consensual, expectations of variantly inserted reading audiences, from the solitary writer in the home, to institutional audience such as abolitionists,

bureaucrats, merchants, historians, naturalists, novelists, poets, artists, embellishers, literary agents, editors, publishers, Christian missionaries, voyeurs, aristocrats, middle-class professionals, and, finally, his own very self with its specific tastes and temperament.

In that sense, the system of address within and outside *Travels and Discoveries* within which "the reader" is constructed or interpellated cannot be exhausted chiefly because the effectivity of the text (its impact or semantic presence) is not exhausted by, nor is it equivalent to, the text's potential effects. For example: although Barth advocates in his text the military conquest of the whole of the Sudan by the European powers, it is not these passages that Lord Lugard quotes in his justification of the conquest of a part of the Sudan, but the passages dealing with chaos and slave raiding in the Sudan. In the same vein, the most important historical studies of Barth's account of the Sudan have ignored the pre-publication history of the Narrative. Indeed Barth is, in general, selectively used, or inserted into a discursive formation already constituted by the historian even before the actual "reading" of the text begins.

From this perspective, to say that *Travels and Discoveries* is an absence is not to say that it has no semantic or rhetorical self-presence of a recognizable kind. It is to suggest, rather, that its "meaning effect" does not, and cannot, pre-exist the discursive formation in which it is constituted. And since a "meaning effect" is, and can only be, a "reading effect", it is itself the after-effect of the activity of a reading formation or formations. Again, an example: Lord Lugard conceives or approaches Barth's Narrative not as a *fictional* but as a *factual* account. Lugard has thus clearly

organized the text externally (from the outside in) through the specific (factual) construction of the text as a text-to-be-read, a process which he then effects.

That is the sense in which the concept of "reading formation" is critical to any meta-critical study of Barth's Narrative. For it shows the ways by which a text and its Audience and Reading Subjects productively and intertextually interact, and by which the context of a text (the 19th century) is, in the last analysis, a "set of inter-textual and discursive relations which produce readers for texts and texts for readers" (Bennett 1987:74). This insight permits us to see how the "meanings" of texts are embedded, dis-embedded and re-embedded in historically varying discursive/reading formations. Yet it also permits us to study, as in the case of *Travels and Discoveries,* how the text's reading formations and audiences have themselves been intertextually put to work "within reading relations of different kinds, as texts, in the course of their histories, are constantly re-written into a variety of material, social, institutional, and ideological contexts" (Bennett 1992:218).

3.6 The Ideal Reader: Lugard

The above citation from Bennett should shed light on how Lord Lugard historically read, and now textually reads, the *Travels and Discoveries* in his own textual production, or intervention, on the Sudan. Lugard started life as an armchair reader of *Travels and Discoveries*, and ended it as its real reader. That is, Lugard's discursive formation was within what Curtin (1964) calls the image (or, in our usage, discourse) of the "Dark Continent", according to which Africa was the benighted land, the land of slavery, the slave trade, universal chaos, governmental

collapse, and savagery. This image, according to Curtin, had, "by the 1850s ... hardened [and] was found in children's books, in Sunday school tracts, in the popular press [and that its] major affirmations were the 'common knowledge' of the educated class" (1964:vi).

In an important recent book on the images of Africa and black people in Western popular culture, Pieterse (1995) argues that the western popular conception of the Africa and black people especially since the Renaissance (16th century) was as an exotic land and savages respectively. By the mid-19th century, this image of Africa, or what Curtin calls the "common knowledge" had conferred on many a European child or would-be explorer of Africa "a prior impression of what they will find. Most often, they found it, and their writings in turn confirmed the older image --- or at most altered it only slightly" (Curtin 1964:vi). This "common knowledge" meant that the abolitionists, missionaries, romantics, imperial ideologists, and commercial adventurers all looked on Africa as a space within which they could act out their fantasies in the name of philanthropy, humanitarianism, conversion, legitimate trade, and discovery or exploration, among others. As Curtin puts it, such people had a tendency "to see Africa, not merely as it was, but as it might be, and with a full consideration for the Africa in the scheme of things": (vi). When Lugard came to read Barth's Narrative, both he and the text co-existed within what Gadamer (1975)) calls a "fusion of horizons". And if indeed racism had coloured "British attitudes towards other peoples across a whole spectrum of thought, from the theory of history at one end to explicit provisions for African education at the other" as Curtin claims (ix, 363 ff), then Lugard would be

the text's ideal reader, who would not only place a new discursive wrapping around it, but also be the insightful reader who would follow the author's every textual move.

Lugard opens his *The Dual Mandate* (1922) with the image of Africa as the "Dark Continent". It is such, claims Lugard, because the continent has remained undisclosed to the European eye, or what he calls "modern civilization". His claim is that Africa had to be discovered by explorers such Livingstone and Barth because its people had left no civilization (monuments or buried cities) and also because it was a "great blank space".

The invocation of Barth's name is significant. As we have seen above, Barth constructs the Sudan as a lawless and chaotic land, "scene of the most frightful desolation" (TD1: xxxi), and ruled by insecurity (TD1: 544-550). He inscribes the Sokoto empire as ruled by "disorder and anarchy ... as if there were no government at all "(TD3: 204). He frequently records the "state of anarchy' which, he says, rules much of the Sudan (TD3: 205). The local rulers, especially the Fulbe rulers of the Empire, are "effeminate conquerors" or "ineffectual rulers", whose degraded state is conveyed by their lack of "national honor" (TD3: 125) Barth even believes that Aliyu, the Sultan of Sokoto, is "effeminate" because he was descended maternally from a Hausa slave (TD3: 107). In many cases, Barth attributes the creeping decay of the "Fulani Empire" to the Fulbe rulers' intermarriage with the non-Fulbe "subject races" (TD3: 111-12). Barth also inscribes the Fulani as a fanatical, conquering race, fired by their zeal for Islam. He writes that their leader, Othman bin Fudi, preached merciless warfare against both pagans and

"Mohammedans", and that he "ended his life in a sort of fanatical ecstasy or madness".

Barth also has a largely negative conception of Islam which he sees as a deviant version of Christianity (TD3: 344,349,378,384) and a fanatical religion whose "God lives in the east" (TD3: 409) and which also teaches children to recite Arabic words whose meaning they do not understand (TD2: 222). Islam, says Barth, also encourages slavery. He laments "the national well-being and humble happiness of these pagan communities [being] trodden down so mercilessly by their Mohammedan neighbours" (TD2: 109). Also, Islam, he writes, "gave the first impulse to that continual struggle [the enslavement of pagans] which, always extending further, seems destined to overpower the nations at the very equator, if Christianity does not presently step in to dispute the ground with it" (TD1: 310; my italics).[23]

For Barth, therefore, the Sudan is a bastion of slavery and slave hunting. He even says that slaves are the principal export of Bornu (TD2: 78) and that there is no free individuality in the Sudan: all are slaves or liberated slaves, except the rulers. Even the ruler's wives are slaves (TD2: 79,80,186). In diction reminiscent of the British Anti-slavery rhetoric, Barth writes:

> slaves are the only articles which the conquerors want from the subject tribes; by carrying into slavery great numbers of them they force them into subjection, and even the tribute which they levy, after having subdued them, consists of slaves (TD2: 401).

In page after page of breathtaking hyperbole, Barth admittedly records scenes of merciless slave hunts, fearful suffering by the enslaved, heartrending scenes as when women and children are either separated or cut down (TD2: 304-5,

364-67, 354-55, 386ff). Barth's solution to all this chaos, slave hunting and fanaticism is simple: legitimate trade and philanthropy (abolitionism):

> All this will be changed as soon as a regular and legitimate intercourse has been opened along the River Benue into the heart of these regions, when the natural procedure of the soil will be in constant request.., (TD2: 401).

This is not original, as this was the view held, since the 1830s, by abolitionists such as Buxton, Richardson and the British Anti-Slavery movement as a whole. Barth's "solution" to Sudan's immersion in chaos, slavery and suffering, via the agency of European trade, humanitarianism and Christian philanthropy, obscures the fact that it is a way of dissociating European agency from the history of the slave trade in Africa. Here at last is a discourse, in the form of *Travels and Discoveries,* in which it is the Europeans who are trying to save the Africans from the African slave-holder; and also, here at last is a discourse of slavery and slave-trade by a European who is not a slaver, or slave-hunter.

But before we look at how Lugard appropriated, and in many cases deepened, those Barthian discourses, we need to emphasize the *aporias* of Barth's typologies of the Sudan. First, despite his condemnation of the Fulbe, Barth deeply admires what he regards as their enterprising energy (TD3:419), their conquering abilities. He finds them "the most intelligent of all the African tribes", "the conquering tribe --- sweeping over a wide expanse of provinces" (TD3: 110-11). In an important passage in which he advocates the colonization by the European powers of the central Sudan, Barth advises the future colonizers to rule through the agency of the Fulbe, the empire builders (TD2: 353). With regard to the expansion of the Fulbe into the Adamawa or Fombina area, he writes :

> the Fulbe are continually advancing, as they have not to do with one strong enemy, but with a number of small tribes without any bond of union. It remains to be seen whether it be their destiny to colonize this fine country for themselves, or in the course of time to be disturbed by the intrusion of Europeans. It is difficult to decide how a Christian government is to deal with these countries, where none but Mohammedans maintain any sort of government. It can not be denied that they alone here succeed in giving to distant regions a certain bond of unity, and in making the land more accessible to trade and intercourse (TD2: 196).

In this passage, Barth both undermines and reinforces his typology of the Fulbe. They are superior to the pagans who lack the ability to form lasting unions. Yet he laments the destruction of the pagans. The Fulbe are effeminate rulers, and yet they alone are capable of central government which alone makes trade and commerce possible. There is also an implicit racial/political hierarchy: the Fulbe are supreme but not *after* the "Christian government" is established. The Christians (Europeans) are superior to the Fulbe, the Fulbe to the pagans, the very pagans Barth says suffer from "the miseries arising from slavery and the slave-trade" (TD1:xxxii).

There is another aporia of Barth's that is worth noting, and which is reproduced wholesale by Lugard. Although Barth is an abolitionist and an enemy of slavery, he does not find it decent to be in the company of slaves, or people of slave origin:

> I did not find them sufficiently interesting to have much intercourse with them, for they have very little of that noble independent carriage which distinguishes, in such an eminent degree, their southeastern countrymen; and their stature, as well as their features, *seemed to indicate plainly a very strong intermixture with Mosi slaves* (TD3: 440; my italics).

Again and again, Barth finds the suffering pagans forming "altogether a most barbarous and savage spectacle" (TD2: 353). The pagans are also ugly, dirty

black, that is, an anti-aesthetic. Surely, Barth deeply admires the very people, among them Haj Beshir and Sheik Omar, he holds responsible for the misery and suffering produced by slave-hunting. In fact Bornu, whom he considers the foremost slaver, serves as the base for his mission, which also received a generous support from the paramount ruler, Sheik Omar. Despite his description of the slave hunting, burning, pillaging and terrorizing of the slave-pagans, Barth does not as express any discomfort, any anguish or a sigh. For he repeatedly regrets the political decay of the Fulbe's enterprising or conquering spirit:

> It is delightful for a [European] traveller to meet with these [Fulbe] nomadic settlers, after the disgust he has felt at the degraded character of their countrymen in Wurno (TD3: 199. Also TD3: 84, 186).

Lugard would reproduce these discourses, and all their *aporias*, in his single-minded struggle to overthrow the sovereignty of the central Sudanese societies. Even before he arrived in the central Sudan in 1894, Lugard had written, under the influence of Barth and East African explorers such as Teleki and Livingstone, in *The Rise of our East African Empire* (1893) that the "Dark Continent" needed to be saved by Europe from fanatical Islam and slave-raiding and economic decline. Here he makes explicit his "debt to European explorers, and other more modern travellers" (vol.1: i, ix, 169-216).[24]

At the inception of his career as High Commissioner of what would turn out to be Northern Nigeria in 1900, Lugard began by declaiming the alleged slave-raiding propensities of the Fulani rulers, whom he saw as "ineffectual rulers", and their towns as "great centres of the slave-trade". According to Lugard:

> There is, probably, no part of the 'Dark Continent' in what the worst forms of slave-raiding still exist to so terrible an extent,

> and the slave raiders are not even provident of their hunting grounds, for those who are useless as slaves are killed in large numbers, villages burnt, and the fugitives left to starve in the bush... the country is depopulated, and hundreds of ruins attest the former existence of a population and a prosperity which have gone (Lugard 1912: 10-11).

The vocabulary of "slave raiding" "Mohammedan chiefs", "depopulation" and "ruins" and of "population and a prosperity" was lifted verbatim from Barth's preface, and passages describing the slave-raiding activities of the Bornu army (TD2: 379, 386ff). Lugard would repeat this in his *The Dual Mandate* (pp.361-362). Even here the authority invoked is Barth's, for the reader is told, *"Barth noted, as we do to-day"*. Lugard repeats Barth's identification of slavery with Islam, calling it "the most serious charge against Islam in Africa that it has encouraged and given religious sanction to slavery" (1922:365). Lugard's authority is not the Koran or any authentically Muslim text but Heinrich Barth.

For example, Lugard writes that even by 1902, the Muslim Emirs were organizing "slave-raiding armies of 10,000 or 15,000 men [who] laid waste the country, and wiped out its population annually in the quest for slaves. Hundreds of square miles of rich well-watered land were depopulated" (1922:618). To give authenticity and eye witness authority to these claims Lugard writes:

> *Barth bore witness to a similar condition of things fifty years ago.* Men were impaled in the market place of Kano ... Nowhere was there security for life and property (1922:618; my italics).

Barth writes in the preface that the Sudan was an anarchic and warring interior full of cowards (TD1:xxv), and that his writing of it was an attempt to create order out of chaos (ibid: xxviii). So Lugard calls, for example, Emir Muhammadu Kwasau of Zazzau a coward, a slave-raider and "cruel and treacherous" and a "*Munafiki*"

[hypocrite] (1912:71,72-73). He writes in his *The Dual Mandate* that his exertions in the Sudan are intended to "bring order out of chaos" (607).

Lugard also draws on Barth for his discourse of the fanatical Fulani, and of the Fulani as an alien race. For example, Lugard notes how in the 19th century emerged the figure of "Dan Fodio, the founder of Sokoto", who, he continues, armed with "a flag of conquest" and "inspired by a fanatical zeal" conquered the surrounding country, the land of the "Habe dynasty" (1912:77). Lugard then accuses the Fulani rulers of depopulating the country:

> *When Barth reached Hausaland in 1851* he described it as the most densely populated country in all Africa, and *its population was estimated at from thirty to fifty millions* (77, my italics).

It is clear that Lugard has no regard for factual accuracy on this issue. Barth estimates the population of Kano, which by many accounts was the most populous of the Hausa states, as follows:

> In estimating the population of the town at 30,000, I am certainly not above the truth. Captain Clapperton estimated it at from 30,000 to 40,000 (TD1:509-10).

Contrary to the figures Lugard attributes to Barth, Barth estimates the population of the Kano emirate at two hundred thousand people, "besides an equal number of slaves", so that "whole population of the province amounts to half a million, though it may great exceed this number" (TD1:523). This is not to suggest that Barth is more accurate than Lugard, but to show that Lugard does not care a hoot about reportorial accuracy on this question. It should be asked, however, whether forty million people could disappear or perish or sold off to slavers within a span of fifty years (1851-1902)?

It seems, then, that Lugard is quoting Barth selectively, or, to put it in another way, creating a new (fictional) text out of Barth's narrative. For Lugard is eager to demonize the Fulani rulers in order to justify their conquest by British power, exactly as Barth has demanded in his Narrative. Notice that the bulk of Lugard's *Annual Reports* (1912), written between 1900 and 1911, is devoted to detailing the supposedly evil deeds of the Fulani rulers. For Lugard, then, the Fulani and the Devil are virtually synonymous. In passages reminiscent of Barth's, Lugard says that wherever "a Fulani army had been it left a depopulated desert" and that greed was one of the chief characteristics of Fulani rule. Once again, it is Barth that is deployed to hold the argument together, or supply it with an authoritative authenticity:

> Though only some eighty or ninety years have passed since the Fulani conquest, *the decadence which was already apparent in the time of Barth* had reached its extreme before the end of the nineteenth century (1912:78; my italics).

Like Barth before him, Lugard sees the Fulbe as an alien race. In fact he reproduces Barth's myth of the Fulbe as a conquering, alien race writ large over the non-Fulbe formation (TD3: 110-117). According to Lugard, echoing Barth, the "Fulahs or Fulani appear to have been a pastoral race who spread themselves throughout Northern Nigeria" (1912:77). Quoting Clapperton and Barth, Lugard details what he considers the "Fulahs' " rise from " a merely servile ... nomadic position" to victory (ibid: 77). Yet Lugard also notes, just as Barth does, that:

> The Fulani never thoroughly conquered the country, and succeeded only in gaining the submission of the great towns in the plains where their horsemen were effective. The pagan tribes in the hills and broken country and even in large areas of the plains maintained their independence. They are constantly raided for slaves ... This state of chronic war and unrest

> devastated the country. Caravans could only reach the Niger from the North if powerfully escorted, while the tribute in slaves to Sokoto and the number retained for use in each Emirate led to the depopulation of the country not merely by reason of the numbers captured - vast as they were - but by the numbers killed in these raids or left to starve in the bush (1912:77-78).

In *The Dual Mandate* Lugard writes that the "writings of all African explorers are full of evidence of the ruthless destruction of life and the human misery caused by slave-raids" (p.356). Based on this so-called "evidence" from European travel or exploration accounts, Lugard postulates that the "Fulani, therefore, held their suzerainty by right of recent conquest", and thus he can "see no injustice in the transfer of the suzerainty thus acquired to the British government by the same right of conquest" (1912:83). Lugard has, in a single stroke appropriated and domesticated Barth's discourse of the "Dark Continent" as set out in his scattered references to the chaos and anarchy in the Sudan, and the inability of its conquering rulers to manage their affairs.

But just as Barth thinks the Fulbe intelligent and enterprising, so Lugard would make a *volte-face* in the aftermath of the conquest, and begin to resurrect the image of the Fulani as a capable race that could serve British imperial interest. For example, despite his demonization of the Fulbe, Lugard writes that he is anxious to "utilize, if possible, [the Fulbe's] wonderful intelligence, for they are born rulers, and incomparably above the negroid tribes in ability" (1912:13). This, too, is taken straight from Barth:

> There is no doubt that, if any African tribe deserves the full attention of the learned European, it is the Fulbe ...No doubt they are the most intelligent of all the African tribes. (TD3:110).

When Lugard writes that "I believe myself that the future of the virile races of this protectorate lies largely in the regeneration of the Fulani" (1912:84) he is re-echoing Barth's view of the Fulani as the most intelligent, the conquering, race of the Sudan whose rule alone, Barth emphasizes, succeeds in "giving to distant regions a certain bond of unity, in making the land more accessible to trade and intercourse" (TD2: 196).

The preceding pages have documented how Lugard, as the ideal reader of Barth's Narrative, has consciously constituted himself into a competent or even official, perhaps even the necessary, reader. As a "reader formation" of some sort, Lugard has *produced* his own text *from* Barth's Narrative, that is, he has read Barth's text into the context of early 20th century central Sudan, and the imperatives of British colonial policies. We may therefore say that Barth's Narrative has "invited" Lugard to read it as fact, as extra-textual reality, to the same degree Lugard has read the Narrative *productively*. So here a social relationship of reading between text and reader has given rise to what might be called the "naturalization effect"[25], a process where by a text, and a specific reading of it, become one, that is naturalized within the cultural-political rhetorics or values held by both the text, and the subsequent reading (s) of it at different periods or contexts.

It is instructive that Lugard thinks that the world, or the Sudan, that Barth's Narrative speaks of or about really existed, or that it *stood* (note the past tense) in a one-to-one relationship to something outside the Narrative, namely a transfactually existing and *historical* Sudan. Lugard, in other words, assumes a central Sudan, or Northern Nigeria, which he thinks Barth's Narrative has delivered in its pristine

forms for his reading-interpretation. And Lugard does apparently think that he has read correctly and authoritatively what Barth's text has semantically and graphically "presented" before his gaze.

In truth, therefore, Lugard's reading of Barth is, despite its material and practical consequences, the mediated product of a set of discursive and intertextual determinations. For it is these, rather than Barth's Narrative, or text, that have *operated* materially and institutionally upon Barth's text *externally* by mobilizing its "effects" from the outside in, and *internally* by shaping and re-shaping the text in the direction of a "desired end" which Barth himself has advocated, and would, if he were to contemplate the results, applaud.

3.7 **The Interested Reader: the Historians**

Yet it is not just Lugard's reading of Barth's Narrative that is a construct, the product of historically specific discourse or discursive/epistemic frame, but also the kind of reading of Barth offered by academic historians. Despite the claims of historians that they possess an awesomely critical method of interrogating "primary source" (source criticism), as far as the issue of using Barth's text as a "source" of recounting the history of 19th century Sudan is concerned, they have tended to focus wholly on the world that the Narrative has brought into (allegedly extra-discursive) life. It will be shown below that the historians who have "used" Barth as a historical authority on the Sudan have either read the Narrative as a straightforward eye-witness report, or treated Barth not as an imaginative embellisher but as a reliable witness. It will also be highlighted that Barth has enjoyed the same prestige within

both conservative and radical, expatriate and indigenous, colonialist and nationalist, historical circles.

We propose, in the context of this argument, to study the reception of Barth by the German colonialist historian Shultze (1913), nationalist historian Adeleye (1971), and, not least, the supposedly radical, or left wing, historian Usman (1981). This choice is dictated by two key considerations. First, having discussed the key historical authorities on Barth in detail in chapter two above, it now remains to confront the uses of Barth as a historical source material within substantive academic historical discourses. This accords us the opportunity to discuss Shultze, and Adeleye, all of whom have not been discussed in chapter two. In addition to his essay on Barth which has been reviewed in chapter two above, Usman has deployed Barth in his substantive historical research on Katsina (1400-1883). Perhaps this is the place to test out Usman's claim (1982/85:138) that *belles lettres* or literature is qualitatively different from History, and that it is the method adopted for the interrogation of the primary source that indicates the quality of a historical study.

Second, Both Adeleye and Usman have been influential figures in that they have engendered substantial research through their students, as Saulawa (1989) and Kapteijins (1977) correctly claim. Even Shultze is a veritable source within secondary historical studies of the Sudanic past. Also, it will be interesting to show that despite their analytic, conceptual and political divergences, Schultze, Adeleye, and Usman do not differ fundamentally in their appropriation of Barth as an historical authority, for their assessments or usage of Barth rest on the same paradigmatic and institutional premises.

Shultze's work on the history of Bornu was stimulated by his career in German colonial institutions in the Cameroons in 1903-4, where he served as a member of the Anglo-German Yola-Chad Boundary Commission (Shultze 1913:7). Out of a desire to know more about his country's newly acquired colonies, Shultze read up works on the central and eastern Sudan, especially Bornu most of them written by travellers such as Barth, Nachtigal, Rohlfs and Flegel. These he regards as *primary* sources of the history of the Lake Chad area. As he writes, it was "German travellers above all, and amongst them the most scientifically important and authoritative of all African explorers, Heinrich Barth" who made known to Europe the existence of "these remarkable countries" (11). Barth, Shultze enthusiastically reports to his reader, especially brought news of the "unheard-of atrocities of the slave trade in the heart of Africa, and thus gave impetus to the anti-slavery movement" (11). With an admirable honesty, however, Shultze writes:

> Scarcely were the main avenues of exploration closed at the end of the nineteenth century than events happened such that these parts of Africa had never seen hitherto ... The end of these events was the present political understanding, which brought large potential empires under the protection of the three chief European powers. *Thus Germany at the present day again claims a share in those lands in which the self-denying and indefatigable activity of her great sons, the explorers Barth, Overweg, Vogel* ... had been so valiantly displayed of old, and in the great scientific and economic problems that have still to be solved in the Sudan (1913:12; my italics).

With these prefatory remarks, Shultze proceeds to draw on Barth to show that it was Barth, among other German travellers, who made the Sudan to become (intransitively) *known*. He credits Barth for his superior powers of observation, and an unrivalled historical account of ancient and pre-colonial Bornu (13-21). Barth is said to be the first European to trod on "land hitherto untrodden" (23); that his

detailed descriptions "cannot be superseded in essentials even to-day" (924); that in his journeys across "the dark continent", Barth reported the "thoroughly unsafe" situation of the Sudan (23-28); and that as Barth correctly said, "slaves were still the principal export of Bornu" (216).

There is hardly a page in Shultze without a reference to Barth. In his general sketch of the eastern Sudan in the 19th century, even in his account of the climate, flora, fauna, population and commerce of the Lake Chad area, Barth is the authoritative source. For example, Shultze writes that it is to Barth's measurements that we know that it was normally in the month of September that there were periods of heavy dew on the banks of Lake Chad (72). It is also to Barth that the modern reader owes the insight that the dum-palm was widely distributed in the Chad area: "According to Barth the fruit may be used in large quantities for food" (84). Barth is also quoted as reporting that "Everywhere in the woods and fields is to be heard the cooing and laughter of the many varieties of doves and pigeons both large and small" (138). Barth is also cited to confirm that the central Sudan is the ancestral home of the driver-ant (155). On all these and other trivial romanticist issues, Barth is the leading light for Shultze.

It is to Barth that Shultze owes his racial geography of Bornu, namely that the Kanuris were originally a mixed race of Arab tribes and Hamitic Kanembu and Tubu" (169); that the "extremely coquettish Kanuri lady" is the ugliest in all "Negroland". Shultze concludes his "historical account" with the supposition that "according to Barth's investigations [the Fulbe] were originally herdsmen ... from the Senegal"; and that "Barth says of them with absolute truth" that the Fulbe are

"the most intelligent of all African tribes", who, although possessed of "mental superiority" have been imbued by Islam with "special fanaticism" (199-200), whose spiritualism consists only in the "thoughtless repetition by rote of the first chapters of the Koran" (172).

Thus Shultze's "history of the Lake Chad" or Bornu consists largely in quotations from Barth's narrative. From the issue of slave raiding, the fanaticism or superiority of the Fulbe, to the commercial potential of the central Sudan, Shultze relies on Barth as the authoritative eye witness. Shultze does evidently firmly believe that Barth's Narrative is the most complete historical record, through which one could have a full and unmediated access to the Sudan.

Unfortunately, however, these problems are not mitigated even in the Africanist-nationalist tradition of history writing exemplified by R.A. Adeleye's influential text, *Power and Diplomacy in Northern Nigeria* (1971). Adeleye's work emerged in the context of what was then called "Ibadan History Series", which aimed at vindicating the African Historical Consciousness, and the continent's past political achievements, that is prior to colonial history. The ambition was to create a new African historiography by which the African past would be appraised by the Africans themselves.[26] For example, Adeleye writes, in his study of the Sokoto Caliphate in the 19th century, that, contrary to, for instance, Barth's account of the Caliphate, "the adequacy of the Caliphate's system for its nineteenth-century needs is stressed the overall picture that emerges is that 'there was nothing particularly weak or strong' about the Caliphate. Albeit its remarkable unity and the intactness

of its machinery of government up to the European conquest are demonstrated" (1971:xv).

Yet Adeleye is largely uncritical of one of the very sources of the idea of the Caliphate's weakness and impending collapse --- Barth. Not only is Barth one of the veritable sources of the study; he is also referred to as the authority on the Jihadists' conquest of Katsina, and the rebel Bukhari's routing of the combined army of Sokoto, Katagum, Bauchi, Kano and Missau (28;62); and cited to fortify Adeleye's view of the Fulbe conquests of Adamawa as "undigested conquests":

> Dr Barth's picture of Adamawa in the mid-nineteenth century, as a kingdom in which the conquerors possessed only detached settlements with the intervening regions and mountainous terrains in the hands of heathens, *aptly summarizes Adamawa's problems of consolidation.*

And in his discussion of the sources for the book, Adeleye writes that the explorers' accounts are of "chief value", for they "provide contemporary information" (346). As for Barth, his travels are said to be "outstanding", and that Barth in particular is a "close and penetrating observer". And although Adeleye insists that the explorers' "judgments on the historical situation which they observed" should not be uncritically accepted as "gospel truth", he nevertheless is prepared to credit their accounts at crucial parts of his historical account, as will be shown below.

It is clear that Adeleye has credited Barth's word because it is the writer's authoritative self, or presence as writer or traveller, which, for Adeleye, ultimately certifies it. Adeleye is, apparently, not bothered by the ontologically incorrigible claim of Barth's that Lawal's messenger *really* said that Adamawa was "a fresh, unconsolidated conquest". Adeleye is oblivious of Barth's need to portray to his

Audience in London that the Fulbe are on a career of conquest, much like European countries were in the 19th century in India, South America and Africa.

Even in his account of the Caliphate's struggle to beat back its enemies, Adeleye relies on Barth's account. For he agrees with the latter that there was a feeling "of great insecurity caused by the pressure of the forces of the Caliphate's enemies" in Katsina; and that by 1854, the Gobirawa raiders were pressing hard on Wurno, and thus rendering *unsafe* the road from Sokoto to Timbuktu. These are Barth's views, and Adeleye indicates this by the bibliographical reference to Barth's text. Although Adeleye does not accept Barth's conclusions, he credits his phrasing of the events:

> These revolts produced such a seemingly chronic state of warfare that Dr Barth was led to the conclusion that they indicated that the Caliphate was crumbling. But seen in their proper historical setting, these revolts formed a mere passing phase, a trying phase nevertheless, in Sokoto's perennial problem of consolidation during the first half of the nineteenth century (69).

Now the disqualifying adverb "seemingly" conveys Adeleye's ambivalence or undecidable stance towards Barth's postulate. Surely, Adeleye has credited Barth with the "correct" (i.e. optical-realist) observation (which is obvious) but is silent on the latter's dogmatic empiricist epistemology. That is, Barth, Adeleye *is* saying, did see the obvious; the only problem is his inadequate "reading" of the "seemingly chronic state of warfare".

Also, in Adeleye's text, Barth is repeatedly said to have "reported that", or that he "records that" he met this or that (85), or that this or that incident had this or that significance (70-71). For example, Adeleye questions, on the strength of his intuition or inference, Barth's estimation that Zaria sent, in March 1853, a tribute to

Sokoto amounting to 2 million cowries, 500 gowns and 30 horses. Adeleye thinks that this is an exaggeration "based on misinformation" (86). Yet Adeleye does not probe the source of Barth's misinformation. Paradoxically, Adeleye takes away what he had previously given when he writes in a note next to the bibliographical reference to Barth that: "However, considering the large number of towns and districts which were dependent on Zaria, Barth's estimates may *in fact* not be far out" (86 [n.36]; my italics). The italicized declarative phrase "*in fact*" is, in the last analysis, a fictional device since it is not an explicit claim, but the declaration of an assumed "aesthetic proximity"[27] between Barth on the one hand and Adeleye on the other. But "aesthetic proximity", even of the strongest version, can follow "aesthetic distance". This is indeed illustrated in Usman's reception of Barth.

Usman is arguably largely critical of Barth. Yet he has an "interest", nay an epistemological investment, in Barth's history writing. Usman's work shares much with that of the historians of the "Ibadan History Series" because he, too, is, as his research on the history of Katsina shows, dedicated to the vindication of the pre-colonial African past. His nationalist-Africanism means that he would place much stress on the oral traditions of the people. As he writes in the preface to his text, he is concerned with "the nature of the historical process which ... produced the successive political systems" which have historically defined Katsina's identity as a West African Sudanese society (1981:3). For Usman, the "historical process" means "not the movements and conflicts of races and tribes and their armies, but the changes in the nature and configuration of productive occupations, in the

composition of settlements, in the structure of lineages, and the changes in beliefs and the associated political ideology" (4).

Usman's book, which emerged out of his Ph.D. Thesis which was submitted in 1974 (Saulawa 1989:81), was an intervention into the debates engendered by the relevance of historical studies in the vindication of the African past, and the challenges of contemporary development. This observation might apply for much of the Nigerian academic historical scene in the mid-1960s and late 1970s (Kafteijins 1977; Hess 1972; Saulawa 1989).

Early in his book, Usman discusses Barth's recording of the early history of Katsina, and the latter's attempt to reconstruct this history based on the oral information he recorded while travelling in Katsina. Barth, Usman claims, has failed to critically and properly examine the evidence he uses. Usman is emphatic that Barth's attempt to use the oral sources to reconstruct the early history of Katsina "suffers not only from ... methodological limitations [of failing to properly examine the evidence used], but also from a neglect of the actual social and political conditions which enabled [the early dynasties] to arise" (912). For example, Usman says of Barth's "hypothesis" that a new Habe dynasty followed the fall of Korau about 1643 A.D., until early 19th century, that it is not "supported by any of the evidence available" (63).

It should thus be noted that Barth is struck down on the basis of the lack of *evidence* to support his "hypothesis". This shows that Usman is committed to a rationalist account of historical adequacy. That is, a "hypothesis" must be supported, or corroborated, by the *evidence*. Usman never defines, in conceptual or ontological

terms, what *evidence* is, or amounts to. Yet he credits Barth with an estimation of the population of Katsina town as between 8,000 and 9,000, which the latter obtained while he was travelling in Katsina in March 1853. Usman writes that Barth noted the town's "special gates, the triple walls in front of them and the double moat" (153). It seems, then, that Usman exercises no skepticism in regard to Barth's presence in, or optical or textual apprehension of, Katsina at a particular time (that is in March 1853, rather than, say, April 1865).

For example, Usman discounts Barth's account of Mohammed Bello, the governor (Barth's word) of Katsina (see TD1: 456-469). Usman says that Barth's criticism of Bello as an "unjust man" and a "comedian" is unjustified owing to the Barth's "worrisome and sour temperament" (158). Yet Usman *does* also agree with Barth that Bello was "an actor", " a lively humorist", and "the eccentric man". It is said by Usman that Barth does correctly perceive this aspect of Bello character" [sic] (158). The point is that Usman regards Barth's *published* observations as *exact representations of reality as Barth, the author-writer more or less correctly experienced it.* This means, therefore, that Usman's sharp focus is not on the author, or the icon, the emir, but on the "world" which Barth has brought to (textual) life. This is the case because Usman seems, in general, to merge his "I" with Barth's. He finds justifications for doing this in the directives, injunctions and disputations of Barth's text itself.

To illustrate the point above: Usman takes it as axiomatic that the reader should believe that Barth met Saddiku, a chieftain, and ex-emir, of Katsina on February 3, 1853, not before or after that precise date (60); or that he met, in

Katsina, the Galadiman Gari of Sokoto, Umaru Dan Doshero in February 1851 (169); or that the Galadima had "20 mounted horsemen with him" when Barth accompanied him in March 1853 (171). Indeed Barth is said to have *reported* (or *reports* in other verbal constructions) that in "Katsina the land tax was levied at the rate of 2,500 cowries annually on every head of family"; or that he "estimated the emirate's population at 300,000" (187). In one particular case, Usman writes that Barth "reports that each of the freeborn Abzinawa ... he accompanied to Katsina in January 1851 paid one *Kantu* (block) of salt and 500 cowries" (189). It is significant that Usman's book does not even discuss the "status" or "identity" of Barth's Narrative in the section dealing with "note on sources" (pp.26-223). Now Usman's use of the reporting clauses and the *"that"* subordinator (Barth says *that* ... reports *that*) is interesting. First, Usman's use of the subordinator "*that*" implies a consensual solidarity with Barth on the information being disseminated. Second, Usman never pauses to ask: to whom is Barth reporting *that* particular piece of information? In other words, if Barth is reporting, to whom is he reporting at that particular time? It cannot be said that Barth was/is reporting to no one in particular, as the discussion of his audience (s) and reading formations above makes clear.

More seriously, Usman directly and unconditionally (bibliographically and referentially) attributes to Barth supposedly factual statements (of a specific or general validity). Examples of these are Usman's statements that the Galadiman Gari of Sokoto, Umaru Dan Doshero, was "responsible for collecting that portion of revenue raised by the Katsina government, which was sent annually to the Caliph" (170) and that some areas of Katsina remained uncultivated in the wake of the

rebellions and wars of the 19th century, up to the time "Barth passed through ... in January 1851" (201; also 202, 217). Usman says, for instance, that "Barth was told" that a certain Abubakar "even aspired to the emirship when Saddiku was deposed" (174) yet he does not mention the person *who* told Barth so.

In a revealing passage, Usman quotes Barth's description of Saddiku:

> Saddiku was a stately person, of tall figure, a serious expression of countenance, and a high, powerful chest, *such as I have rarely seen in Negroland, and still less among the Fulbe. However, he is not a pure Pullo, being the offspring of a Bornu female slave.* He had something melancholy about him; and this was very natural, as he could not well be sincerely beloved by those among whom he was obliged to live (TD3:81; my italics).

The italicized lines are those *omitted* by Usman (see p. 161). His response to Barth's description comes in the form of a defensive comment that "the rest of the description tells us more about Barth's attitudes than about Saddiku" (161). Yet Usman writes immediately after the above sentence.

> But Barth observed that he [Saddiku] understood Arabic tolerably well and was quite pleased to get a copy of the Linjilah [sic]. This fits in with what is remembered in Katsina about his [Saddiku's] personality --- serious, deeply religious, but something of a 'loner' (161).

Why, it should be asked, is Usman willing to credit Barth's *positive* description of Saddiku and not the presumably "negative" one, namely Saddiku's ethnic origin? When Barth says that Saddiku does not exhibit the ethnic features of the Fulbe, Usman says that is Barth's attitude; and when, *correspondingly*, Barth says Saddiku is pious and deeply religious, Usman readily agrees. So one portion of Barth's discourse is accorded the status of "historical", or evidential fact (that is, Barth is allowed the "last word") irrespective of the plausible realization that

Barth's other, presumably negative, reading of Saddiku is *conditionally* and *allegorically* dependent on the first (positive) one. Indeed Usman does not notice that Barth is deploying, in his discourse of Saddiku, the rhetorical trope of *isocolon*, the allegorical-metaphorical *repetition* of a grammatical structure: "Saddiku: freeborn [stately person ... non-Fulbe 'offspring of a Bornu female slave']; powerful ... not beloved". Faced with this figural-chiasmic economy, Usman could only get out, or attempt to get out, of it by *factualizing* Saddiku while also *fictionalizing* Barth.[28]

In other moments, it is Barth, as it has been demonstrated above, who is factualized, or rather turned into an instance of the hyper-realist matter of fact, as is the case in Usman's use, or reading, of the following passage from Barth:

> The governor... about noon held a sort of review of several horsemen, whose horses, in general, were in *excellent* condition. They were armed with a *straight* sword *hanging* on the left, a *long heavy* spear for *thrusting*, and a shield, either of the *same description as that of the Tawarek*, of *oblong* shape, made of the *large* antelope ...or else bullock's or elephant's hide, and *forming* an *immense circular disk* of about five feet in diameter; some of them wore also the dagger at the left arm, while I counted not more than four or five muskets. Their dress was *picturesque*, and not too flowing for warlike purposes, the large shirt, or shirts (for they generally wear two), being fastened round the breast with an *Egyptian shawl* with a *red* border; and even those who were dressed in a bernus [Arab cloak] had it *wound round* their breast. Most of them wore *black* 'rawani' or shawls, *round their faces*, a custom which the Fellani of Hausa have adopted from the Tawarek merely on account of its looking warlike... (TD1: 454; my italics).

The task here is to show how Usman handles, or reads, this passage. In his reading, the passage conveys the reality of the organizational and military strength or sophistication of the Katsina cavalry. Usman hardly notices the unmistakably metaphorical, metonymic and ironic mode of the inscription of the passage, for this

powerful and richly attired and equipped army is only a mass of colour! The army of this passage is an aesthetic or aestheticized *body* of the exotic-savage. Yet Usman proceeds to build on the semantic authority of Barth's description, a huge monument, so to speak, of empirical, factual discourse on the "military organization", "judiciary", "taxation" and the like of Katsina in the 19th century. Usman behaves as if it is this passage that conveys the *ontology* of Katsina as a whole (that is, as cultural, material and historical space). This is conveyed by Usman's *demonstrative* clause which immediately follows the citation from Barth: *"This seems to have been a contingent of light cavalry..."* (Usman 1981: 185; my italics).

Several conclusions can be drawn about the historians' reception of Barth. Although the historian is sometimes critical of Barth, he is, still, unable to give up his "interested" approach to, or "academic investment" in, Barth. None of the historians discussed above has been able to direct a sharp focus on Barth the writer, so as to establish more coherently or adequately the nature of this written and writing self, its self-divisions, hesitations and aporias.

In their reception of Barth, the historians have failed to investigate, or offer an adequate account of, the status or identity of the exploration text on which they have so wholly depended in their reconstruction of the histories of a people or a place. Neither Shultze, Adeleye nor Usman has an account of the agential, transdictional, indexical or bibliographical history of the composition of *Travels and Discoveries,* not to speak of the critical examination of its real authorship, fictional narrative and

writing strategies, including its use of the *signs* which, to quote McKenzie (1986:8), "constitute texts and the materials on which they are recorded".

To read Barth's Narrative straightforwardly as an eye-witness report rather than as a complex response to mediated, ideational processes, as Adeleye and Usman, not speak of Shultze, have done is to deny that 19th century exploration narratives "construct every bit as much as they bear witness" (MacLaren 1992:41). It is the failure to conceive *Travels and Discoveries* as a *literary* text, with multiple narrative voices, a real author and fictional narrator, and inscribed within the "genre expectations" of 19th century reportorial strategies, circumscribed, as the novel, by a specific Post-Enlightenment Audience and Reading Formation, that has misled the historians in question to ascribe, or attribute, to Barth's Narrative a textual integrity, or a referential presence it clearly lacks, and will never possess, or at least it cannot itself sustain.

In the case of Usman, his reading of *Travels and Discoveries* oscillates between the factual (that it was Barth who wrote the text), the factitious (that he travelled in the Katsina area between 1850 and 1853) and the fictional (that Barth was describing himself when he described Saddiku). These are entangled in his reading or reception of the text. The peculiar way in which Usman's insightful *aporetic* readings are knotted and woven together should indicate what he has made of the past (the historical process, including Barth's Narrative), and to what *extent* he is *responsible* for the enduring presence of Barth's legacy within Nigerian historical studies.

One striking point that emerges from our study of the reception of Barth by the historians is that although they might deprecate literature, the literary text or literary criticism, as Usman does in his article on Barth (1982/85:138), for them, Barth's text has greater authority and use than the very places, people or experiences it purportedly describes. In Usman, Shultze, and Adeleye one finds that it is Barth's text (and other texts) rather than the extra-textual Sudan, or the Sudan as it really was in itself, which possesses discursive or linguistic or semantic authority and presence. This is what Said (1978:93) has called the "textual attitude", a process whereby a "book (or text) acquires greater authority and use, even than the actuality it describes". Paradoxically, it is the historians, rather than the literary critics, who have proved to be the unproblematic textualists.

Although Adeleye, Shultze and Usman may differ here and there in their readings of Barth, in the final analysis they are all readings in the same manner. For it does not matter that they claim that their approach is distinctively historical: they are virtually oblivious of the semiotic dimension of textual analysis, especially when dealing with a book which gives the illusion of the (analogical) unity of reference and referent, real author and (fictional) narrator, word and referent. Yet whether historical or otherwise, the historians' method must come to grips with what may be called the frame of the "symbolic". For it is the frame of the symbolic which makes a text *appear* "real" or "imaginative", that is, deceptively organized as either the "factual" or the "fictional".

It is thus pointless elaborately to attempt to *prove* or verify the truth-claims of *Travels and Discoveries*. The text was written for an audience, or a set of reading

publics, which did not require, as far as the Sudan was concerned, corrigible, matter-of-fact statements. That precisely is why it is the case that when Barth writes that Kano is a rich commercial centre, that the Mossi are savages, that the Fulbe are a conquering race, that Saddiku is well-built and pious, that Aliyu is not a noble Pullo, that the Empire is crumbling, that he met the Galadiman Gari of Sokoto, or, finally, that Kano emirate has a population of 500,000 half of whom are slaves, this is not *historical* information, nor will it ever be. It is *immune* to any external test or corroboration by any other text or account. *Barth's statements are, on the whole, unverifiable outside his text.* Yet even Barth himself, as far as the ongoing reading of his Narrative is concerned, is a *text,* and a fictional narrator, not a matter-of-fact person or entity. This is the implication of Ong's entirely correct postulate that "extratextual context is missing not only for readers but also for writers" (1982:102).

This does to a great extent explain the crisis in the reception of Barth within, especially empiricist, or what might be called the hyper-realist, historical circles. Either Barth's premises are fully endorsed, or half-heartedly, but nevertheless ultimately, assimilated as a set of incorrigible statements. But, to quote Lang on the issue of the corrigibility or otherwise of written accounts, "whatever engages the reader about such statements, it cannot be due to any external assurance of their correspondence to the facts or events" (1990:176). Rather, it is the historians' *confidence,* as readers of Barth's Narrative, in the description of the "facts" or "events" he encodes than the Narrative's matter-of-fact authority, which prevails, or is raised by the historian to academic or documentary respectability.

However, our analysis of the historians' reception of Barth is not meant to reveal the *truth* or *falsity* of their reading; it is to highlight that a text such as *Travels and Discoveries* is, and can only be, rhetorically constituted by its *location* and *activity* within an intertextual space of political and cultural rhetoric which binds author and reader together. The point of this is to emphasize that the reading of Barth's Narrative, whether by the historian or the literary critic, can only consist in the creation of a (new) reading formation around the Narrative, and that all such readings are, and can only be, textual strategies or conventions normally considered the traditional domain of Literary Criticism. Of course, the historians' readings frequently fail to be adequately or properly *literary critical.*

3.8 The Meaning-Effects of Reading

However, to say that a particular "reading" of Barth's Narrative is, or fails to be, literary critical is not to divorce it from "knowledge" altogether. On the contrary: any reading of Barth must account for the (reading) effects of his text. For Barth himself wrote for a specific audience in order to convey to them, or to say to them, what the Sudan was/is *like,* and what could be *done* with her. And among the "technology" at his disposal is the technology of writing. This is the truth of Peckham's suggestion that travel or exploration be seen as "*prompted* by readings" which, in any case, not only determined the places to be visited, but also constructed the far-away place as an artifact, which in turn was defined "in terms of its legibility, while the traveller was cast in the role of the reader who activated the meanings of the manuscript" (1999:172).

In the last paragraphs of his Narrative, Barth's narrator informs the reader that he alone has "opened to the view of the scientific public of Europe" the " *secluded* African world", that is, has made it, as he says, "*tolerably known*" (TD3: 631; my italics). Here Barth the narrator, indeed Barth the real author, becomes, or is, in textual reality, the ideal or competent or necessary reader of the Sudan. He has lifted her veil by reading, by *penetrating,* her. Writing is the *mechanism* for this reading, this unveiling, which, in turn, enacts Barth's desire for "transparent" knowledge of, and about, the Sudan. Yet this knowledge is a form of reading of the object that "pacifies" it, which in turn has the Sudan-object reduced to its reader's "colonizing" knowledge. To borrow a metaphor from Fanon (1967:143), in unveiling the Sudan, Barth reveals "her" beauty, bares her secret, and makes her available for (European) adventure.

This, surely, is one *effect* of the reading-exploring practice: in reading the *Travels and Discoveries,* the reader is invited to read, to experience, to command the Sudan as a series of spaces, icons, bodies, and *scenes.* Hence Barth's frequent use of the metaphor of the theatre, musical intermezzo, and the opera in his reading-scripting of the Sudanese "scenes". That is, he puts her on display-play, maps her as a space of/for *his* European knowledge. Barth's anxiety in this respect is towards his audience: he seeks to convince the members of his audience, to seek their commitment to his, and his Narrative's, fundamental terms. It has been argued, with justice, that all narrative, of whatever kind, has to seek to impinge on the world of the (or its) reader:

> Narrative meaning exists dialectically in the *tension* between its world and that of the reader. We must not be mesmerized by the fact that only the former of these appears to be there on

> the page. The narrative is itself inscribed in a language already *inhabited* by the reader (Bell 1990:197; my italics).

Ultimately, then, the reader is implicated in the very project Barth's Narrative has set for itself, and which also, as the quotation above implies, *defines* it. Yet while *Travels and Discoveries* is meant to persuade or initiate its audience into an interpretive closure, the truth is that its own interpretive community, the Geographical Societies, the abolitionists, colonial officials, and the 19th century imperial readers and, since then, its present *ideal* and *interested* readers, have, paradoxically, been brought into existence by their very *experience* of the Narrative itself, whose "very last line" is an invitation to the reader-audience to join the project by reading the text.

But by so doing, the Narrative leaves the reader-audience with a project of their own, namely to join the reading community or the interpretive audience. By doing so, they would see, or project into, *Travels and Discoveries* as, the belief that it is the *sign* that speaks to the high Post-Enlightenment categorical imperative which declares that the Sudan must be rescued from chaos, slavery and slave-hunting for the benefit of the Sudan, or mankind. This, precisely, is what Lugard, the ideal reader of *Travels and Discoveries,* insists the point of Barth's travels was/is all about:

> In all these cases a higher civilisation was brought into contact with barbarism ... in the effort to protect the weak from the tyranny of the strong to extend the rule of justice and liberty, to protect traders, settlers, and missions, and to check anarchy and bloodshed ... Nor must we ignore the very real desire of the people of [the Sudan] to assist in the suppression of slavery and barbarous practices (Lugard 1922:613).

There is no doubt that Barth saw beyond the mere writing of a "philanthropic" narrative, or a historical book, on the Sudan. He was, in this sense, paradigmatically conscious of the wider significance of his writing. As Rodgers (1997) has found in a study of the contribution of mid-Victorian writers such as H. Haggard to imperial discourse, Barth's text not only helped to condition Britain's, even Europeans', own developing imperial and racial identity, but also reflected imperialist-Victorian attitudes towards the Sudan in an age of imperial expansion.

It has been emphasized by McLynn (1993:312) that European explorers have always been the handmaidens to imperialism because they carried out "economic surveys of the lands through which they travelled". Nearly all of them, Barth included, stressed, in the fashion of Lugard's "dual mandate", the two-way "benefits of a partnership between African labour and European capital and technology". Yet it is also true that they did this--- and Barth's distinctive contribution in this should be noted--- first and foremost through writing. As an imperialist, Barth constructed the image of the Sudan by turning her into a "heart of darkness" racked by insecurity, tribal wars, the slave-hunts, cruelty, religious superstition and fanaticism, and cultural inferiority. It was this which discursively and ideologically enabled Lugard to speak of his special role as a "trustee, charged with bringing the benighted primitive to light" (McLynn 1993:312). Thus the fictive, factitious and cultural power which Barth's Narrative possesses is not unrelated to the literary, imaginative and discursive demands of his Audience for the very documentary model of non-European Identity and Otherness which Lugard and others like him found in *Travels and Discoveries*.

To that extent, Barth himself is the ideal reader for imperial audiences, for he not only entertained and informed his reading publics but also delivered the Sudan in distinctive literary form, symbolic-fictitious images, and reified and reifying discourses for the imperial policymakers, the domestic reader, and for colonial adventurers. Yet this has been lost on both the nationalist and radical historians. There is no attempt whatever on their part to see the text or the narrative that they study, or from which they derive "factual knowledge", or "first-hand information" as part of the 19th century imperialist effort to hold on to and plan for Africa.

As Barkindo suggests (1984:32), the "writings of Barth [were] the theoretical justification for European colonisation" of the Lake Chad area, and that "colonial agents and adventurers all seemed to have worked towards the implementation of his ideas". This shows that Barth's text was not, nor is it, a rarefied text, a mere space of writing, but a veritable sign of social representation:

> Through the writings of Barth ... Adamawa seemed the El Dorado for European colonialism. This was why there was a race to Adamawa by the three European powers Britain, France and Germany (Barkindo 1984:33).

It is in this sense that the reception of a text such as *Travels and Discoveries* is inseparable from its existence as an accentuation, displacement and condensation of arguably "insidious" meaning effects. This, in truth, is why the *Travels and Discoveries* which the modern, or more precisely, post-1857 (post-publication) reader encounters is the *recursively embedded* result of a series of readings by a host of reading formations which have, to the same degree, overworked, over-coded, or productively activated the text through the generations. Yet these reading

formations are, or have been, in their turns, social, ideological, material and institutional relationships.

A good illustration is Barth's "chaos thesis" within which he encodes the Sudan. It should not be surprising for Barth to find "chaos" everywhere in the Sudan because his career was devoted to finding one, as has been demonstrated above. Boahen's argument that Barth "painted the [Sokoto Empire] as a Hobbesian state of nature" is to the point. Yet he does not attempt to explain the durable reasons for Barth's misleading conceptions. Interestingly, Barth himself in 1850-55 left behind literally chaotic German provinces. Thus if Barth finds "chaos" all over the Sudan, that must be the meaning-effect which both he and his inscribed audience and reading publics have *recursively* embedded within his narrativizations. It is little surprise then that Barth's transpositional inscription of the Sudan as a plot structure of his own heroic deeds and superhuman accomplishments should please and delight his readers. It is therefore pointless to argue, as Boahen does, that although there were uprisings and revolts within the Sudan, it was not "chaos" or slave raiding as Barth conceives it, but occasional disturbances which Barth *mis*-interpreted or *mis*-described. In the final analysis, then, Barth's text has no meaning effects that can be constituted or realized *outside* of such relationships or reading formations which both his text and his readers have semiotically and intertextually brought into being.

This, it should again be emphasized, is the same process that governs the production or reception of literary texts such as poems, novels and plays. As Bennett (1992:219) might put it, *Travels and Discoveries* has no meanings, only

meaning-effects, that is, "has no meanings that can be traduced". And so, like any novel or play, *Travels and Discoveries* is the result of Barth's impressions of his reading public and audience, interacting creatively and intertextually with the requirements of textual composition. His text is therefore not a given but an *instance* of wider social and literary processes of representation. As such, *it is both the first and the last thing* we should speak about since the text has no existence outside the reading relations which have historically and analytically constituted its audiences, reading formations and its literary-informational or aesthetic-documentary value.

However, to raise the question of the literary-documentary value of *Travels and Discoveries* is to move, analytically at least, from the consumers and receptors of its representations to the objects and techniques of the representation itself.

NOTES

1. For the literature on reception theory, see Holub (1984), Suleiman and Crosman (1980) and Tompkins (1980).

2. Eze (1997:6) has highlighted the "intertextuality" which binds together, so to speak, these philosophers: "There is ... quite a promiscuous theoretical as well as stylistic dependence of one writer on another".

3. It should be noted that Barth, in a pre-photographic era, had had to convey to his readers an almost "pictorial" representation within a graphic one.

4. See the account in Newbury (1992:1-45) and McLynn (1993: 13-38).

5. According Moorhouse, Buxton's solution to Africa's alleged miseries was "legitimate trade", which Buxton remarked, "should carry away the superfluities of Africa [and] above all, to establish [the Christian] religion in Africa" (1973:28).

6. When Barth brought back these two African lads, he presented them to Queen Victoria and the Kaiser in Berlin. Yet it is very likely that Barth was more interested in their conversion to Christianity, as part of the then effort by missionaries and colonialists to plan for the Sudan. On this point, see Kirk-Greene and Newman (1971:1-25), Suleiman (1997:37-51). I have benefited from reading an unpublished paper on this by Sani Abba Aliyu (forthcoming in *Kano Studies*).

7. The eminent geographer, and Barth's former teacher, Carl Ritter asked Barth to explore the eastern part of the Lake Chad area. On this see Boahen (1964:181-196).

8. There is a text of the draft treaty in Boahen (1964:237) and a copy of the treaty between Great Britain and Umar the Sheik of Bornu in 1851 and the treaty between Great Britain and the Sultan of Sokoto, Aliyu Babba (1853) in Adeleye (1971:331-334).

9. See the communication between Richardson and Bidwell (Foreign Office Papers in the British Public Record Office, or F.O. 101/23, Oct. 11, 1849. It is also cited in Boahen (1964:182).

10. The engravings, woodcuts, and other illustrations do not contain captions. These are clearly meant for the readers' ocular penetration, that is, in silence. Allegorically, this is an invitation to the reader to fill in. "Space here", writes Ong "is the equivalent of silence (1982:128)".

11. Ong (1982:102) has argued that there is no extra-textual context either for readers or for the author (writer):

> "Lack of veritable context is what makes writing normally so much more agonizing an activity than oral presentation to a real audience ... The writer's audience is always a

fiction. The writer must set up a role in which absent and often unknown readers can cast themselves".

12. "Fiction" is not synonymous with "falsification", or unreality. See the debate on this in Lang (1990:189), and sections of chapter six below.

13. In 1849, Barth published a narrative of his Journeys in the Mediterranean area and Asia Minor, his *Wanderungen durch die Kustenlander des Mittel Meeres, ausgefuhrt in den Jahren 1845 1846 and 1847* (vol. I).

14. After intermittent quarrels with the Foreign Office, and the London Royal Geographical Society, Barth returned to Germany, travelled again to Spain, (1861), the Balkan Peninsula (1862), and Western Turkey (1865). It was in 1864 that he published the *Essay* which he had read to the Royal Geographical Society in 1857. For a detailed treatment, see Kirk-Greene (1965: ix- xviii).

15. For example, Spittler (1995) and Lange (1995). Lange's text is particularly instructive since he apparently wrote the text in German, and then translated it into English for the English-speaking German Journal *Saeculum*.

16. For the text of these *Instructions* and other relevant texts on the exploration of Africa, see Newbury (1995:44-79).

17. It might have been the realization of this by Barth that spurred him to produce a German translation which appeared together with the English original in 1857-58. Urvoy (1936) has claimed that the English and the German texts are identical, except the dedication in the German edition, which was to Kaiser Williams, rather than Lord Clarendon. Benton (1913:5), the translator of Arnold Shultze (1913) says that he has been informed by J. Arthur that "the English and German editions [of Barth's Narrative] vary considerably, and whole paragraphs are missing [in the German edition]".

18. True enough, Barth's text was read in 1857-58 in the immediate context of abolitionist and imperialist rhetorics, for it was, above all, privileged in terms of its wealth of abolitionist, commercial and political "information". These rhetorics functioned as allegories not only for Barth's scientific meticulousness but also for his audience's "humanitarian" values.

19. Subsequent editions of the Narrative, especially the 3-volume edition of 1965, have the black and white illustrations engraved by Loosing-Barritt. His engravings are also based on Barth's pencil sketches.

20. Thus far from conveying Barth's realistic method, or pre-occupation with the matter of fact, the drawing of sketches is one way by which the alien explorer seeks to authenticate his presence at the scene, which is also another way of conferring representational authority on his writing, which, naturally, should wish to give the impression that it has truly disclosed the "real".

21. For the text of these reviews, see Kirk-Greene (1962:48-52).

22. Yet Eagleton also finds that periodicals such as the *Spectator* sold only about three thousand copies, in a population of between five and six million; and that the periodicals were aimed at the literate middle-class and bourgeois, not farm labourers or domestic servants (1984:14).

23. In a passage in TD1: 310, Barth speaks sarcastically of "Mohammedan learning".

24. I am indebted to Umar (1997) for some of the points in my readings of Lugard, although I find his argument about a specifically European or Lugardian discourse of the "Dark Continent", as distinct from imperialist ideology in general, unconvincing. For example, Umar does not probe the "psychological" aspects of

Lugard's upbringing (as a boy he wrote adulatory essays about Livingstone and some of the other explorers; had a failed love affair, thought of suicide or death in action) and his imperialist dispositions (wanted to join the Italian army which was preparing to invade Ethiopia). On this, see McLynn (1993:344).

25. Culler (1975:135) has argued that "writing" (arguably both "fictional" and "non-fictional") "depends on [the] readers' ability to naturalize it and to recognize the common world which serves as point of reference". Perhaps this partly explains the propensity of historians to "naturalize" Barth's narrativizations, or to assume implicitly the "world" brought to (textual) life by Barth's text.

26. See the introduction to the series written by K.O. Dike, appended to many books in the series, such as Adeleye (1971), and Last (1967). Professor Dike writes:

> "... In the nineteenth century, when Europe occupied Africa, her scholars did not attempt to understand or to build on the historical traditions in existence there; they sought instead to challenge and supplant them. The history of European traders, missionaries, explorers, conquerors and rulers constituted, in their views, the sum of total African history".

It is debatable whether this ambition has been realized, given the heavy reliance on the European explorers by indigenous historians in recounting Sudanese history.

27. In Lang's formulation of the issue, there is "aesthetic proximity" between the author and the reader where the latter's discourse is privileged by the reader in such a way that his statements are rendered incorrigible. This, argues Lang, "accompanies even the strongest versions of the concept of "aesthetic distance" (1990:190).

28. Here is an illustration of this. Usman reviews Barth's view on the commercial decline of Katsina on account of the wars and upheavals of the 19th century. Usman cites Bovill, and other authorities on the issue. In the end, Usman reaches the conclusion that "the *fragmentary* evidence available does not conclusively support Barth's view of the commercial decline [of Katsina] after the Jihad" (211; my

italics). Usman's next sentence is as follows: "There are certainly indications which point towards a decline..." (211). After the initial evasive maneuvers, Usman certifies the very notions of Barth's that he had earlier questioned. That is, at one pole Barth is seen as deploying what might be called "fiction of authority"; and at another the "authority of fact".

CHAPTER FOUR:

WRITING, VISUALISM, AND PRESENCE

> The image cannot re-present and add the representer to the represented, except in so far as the presence of the re-presented is already folded back upon itself in the world, in so far as life refers to its own wish for a supplement J. Derrida (1976:184).

4.1 **The Mobile Signified**

In his account of his journey in the Sudan, Barth inscribes himself, much like Columbus before him, as the protagonist, the authorial narrator, of the very story he tells of his exploration of an alien and exotic land. He also claims for himself the intentionality of direct address. In the preface to his narrative of this journey, the reader is informed that Barth-- the hero and real author, the inscribing agent and narrator ego-- is an explorer on a journey of discovery" (TDI: xxviii), and that he is an "African explorer" who seeks to "*penetrate* into the interior" (TDI: xxiv; my italics). Yet this journey into the interior of the Sudan is undertaken not by a disembodied mind, or a serial consciousness, but by the subject of exploration, who has had boyish thoughts of visiting the blank or little known regions in the interior of Africa. The protagonist says that he had, before his journey, often cast a wishful look towards those unknown or little known regions in the interior" (xxiii).

Barth's text thus takes the form of the *inscription* of this "wishful look towards" the other, now veiled, now inscrutable. But this story is also the narrative of the protagonist's high "humanitarian" ideals, the "progressive civilization of the neglected races [of the Sudan"] (xxiv). This is what Pratt calls the "male discovery rhetoric" (1992:104) which inscribes the Other within the narrative of *desire,* the

protagonist's desire, to expand his imagination into new and exotic areas so as to *affect* himself with his own re-presentation. Yet as desire, Barth's impending journey is a signifier for his need for fulfillment in which his full presence would be registered, or rather repeated as a working system supported not only by an institutionalized audience-reading formation but also by the literary powers of visualism, writing, and representation. As Derrida writes, "Desire desires the exteriority of presence and absence" (1976: 167). For example, the narrator says that his endeavor to explore the Sudan consisted in a "desire to know something *more* about [those regions, and it] acted on me like a charm" (TDI: xxiv). But this desire is presented as a signifier for knowledge: to know more about the exotic other, to get a "clearer insight into the customs and the polity" of the Other; to "represent" them, and to place before the European reader "a new and animate picture" of "those apparently savage and degraded tribes" (xxviii).

But because this enterprise requires, and is itself a, representation, it would consist in an ocular penetration of the other space that would seek to conquer the anxiety of representation. For this, the traveller must be several things all at once: investing eye, which must remain mobile and active; a writing and written subject, which transforms the visual image into the signified content of experience; and an originary presence, which invests perception with the symbolic resources of textuality for the edification, instruction, and entertainment of the inscribed audience and the reading subject at home. This is why the hero is on a search for knowledge, knowledge that is driven by the desire to represent both the journey and the activity of the journey as *meaning* and as *text*. For not only would Barth's

journey to the Sudan afford him a situation of seeing but also the *representation* of the seeing in the form of a symbolic act of mastery and control in which the Sudan would not only be visually inspected but also re-inscribed, written over. It is little wonder, then, that the hero complains about a native's *harem* which is so secured from visual apprehension that "the dark passages leading to the interior could not be *penetrated by a stranger's eye*" (TD1: 459; my italics).

This Baconian hunger for travel, discovery, and visual appropriation transforms the narrator of the text into the demiurgic subject who would explore, that is, re-trace hidden reality so as to discover, to "trace the historical thread...through this labyrinth of tribes and overthrown Kingdoms [and reflect] on their possible progress and restoration through the intercourse with more civilized parts of the world" (xxxii). All this is designed to make legible what is obscure, or constitute presence out of absence. In this way, the narrator of *Travels and Discoveries* secures the legitimacy and the activity of his presence in the Sudan. This consists in the restoration, or better still insertion, of the secluded Sudan into History through the telling of her exotic presence, so that:

> a lively interest is awakened by reflection of [her] possible *progress* and restoration, through the intercourse with more civilized parts of the world [Europe] (TDI: xxxii; my italics).

To this extent, "discovery" is the lifting, as it were, of the Sudan from its materiality and relationships into the universalizing visionary/visual field of the explorer-observer. Thus the new interest in the Sudan would be a re-description, "a scheme" (TD3: 144), analogous to the predestined authority of the hero in Baconian narrative of discovery (142). This is why exploration implies the "discovery "of the Other as a *story,* as a semantically productive matrice, as a discursive "event", and

as the subject of articulation. However, this subject of articulation is also a visual subject, or rather the subject that represents and "constructs" the visual scene itself.

4.2 Writing and the Visual Scene

In his travels through the Sahara, Katsina, Kano, Bornu, Bagirmi, Sokoto, and Timbuktu, the narrator-hero of *Travels and Discoveries* has, and relies on, one thing: seeing or visuality. He strives to "obtain a glance" at things, and to make things "become visible" (TD1: 387). Villages, trees, bodies and landscapes "greet the eye" (TD1: 399). He sees the "seen", that is, objects "favorable for observation" (Ibid: 443). He burns, he says, "with impatience to see" every piece of the Sudan (TD2: 155), especially its landscape. The narrator is thus a seeing-man who *brings* visual order onto the landscape: he relies on the authority of (his) optical vision. Indeed he frequently constitutes objects, or authors images, by beholding them ("I was so anxious to behold..." [TD2: 158]). That is why discovery, for the narrator, consists in screening objects, or in optically conferring on them significance (as screened objects):

> [I] looked from the bank over the scenery before me, I was quite enchanted, although the whole country bore the character of a desolate wilderness (TD2: 164).

Note here that it is the looking, or the act of seeing, which has led to both the enchantment and the ensuing disenchantment. Yet at other occasions seeing or looking is a transcendental moment, a moment of sudden illumination, the ideal site/sight for a religious epiphany and delirious triumph of the spiritual sentiment of the soul. Yet all this must also lead to naming, claiming, and discursive possession of the object of visuality:

> I *looked* long and *silently* upon the stream; it was one of the *happiest* moments of my life... I had now *with my own eyes*, clearly established the direction and nature of this mighty [Benue] river...(TD2: 167-8; my italics).

A good example of the ideologically loaded significance of visuality can be seen in Barth's encounter with the Niger River. Upon sighting the Niger for the first time, the seeing-man says he is elated with feelings of intense curiosity, and that he cannot wait to "behold with my own eyes that great river" and be "in constant sight of this noble spectacle" (TD3: 171). Thereafter, the narrator falls into a delirious discourse of "discovery": he registers his claim to be the first [European?] to behold what he calls the Eastern branch of the Niger, the Benue. Even the Niger itself is said to have become *known* "by the labors of Mungo Park and Rene Caillie [and] the Landers" (ibid). The point is that it is at such moments of visual discovery that the seeing-man/narrator reaches the zenith of self-consciousness, and also the moment at which the object of vision becomes a textual signified, and the hero-speaker the textual agent within the "sacred" spaces of exploration writing. Notice, on this point, the narrator's short, elliptical sentences, and the use of the noun, *spectacle*, to describe the Niger. As noun, the word "spectacle" functions to effect a symmetry between the Niger, the object, and the narrator's special seeing or visuality. Thus it is *entirely* within the narrator's sight/vision that the Niger is, and becomes, a strange and interesting *scene* or *display*. But note also that previously, the Niger was the longed-for object, the source of innumerable trials and great suffering. But once the hero "obtains a sight of this river", the suffering and the anxiety cease, and are replaced by their simple opposites. However, because the Niger is, as a flowing river, constantly in motion, just like the hero himself, it cannot

be, or rather its "meaning" (as an object *for* discovery) cannot be, "arrested" within a transcendental signified. The hero momentarily circumvents this aporia by recourse to metaphor, that is, by rhetorically abolishing any *distinction* between speaker and object, sight and site. The Niger is the Narrator's, and he its: all opposition between the two orders is effaced. What remains is the *presence* of the absence of the opposition to be re-inscribed as an *absence* (of the original opposition of Barth/Niger). It is this active possession of the object of visibility and visuality that we see in Barth's ocular aggression. This poetic strategy is most evident in the narrator's promontory description of Adamawa (Fombina) countryside:

> Here I spent two delicious hours in the tranquil *contemplation* of the *picturesque* scenery, which I thought the most interesting I had yet seen in this quarter of the world (II: 205 ; my italics).

In this passage, the "eye" is a subject in its own right; it alone confirms the object of sight as a cognitive property. Yet this cognitive property is itself an index of the aesthetic; for the objects of perception inevitably issue as aesthetic objects---- "delicious", "picturesque", and so on. So just as Barth experiences the majesty of the sublime, so he feels an inward and exultant power, the power to create, to confer on infinite totality a poetic catachresis. This indeed is what objectivism, or rather "aesthetic imperialism", entails:

> Objectivism constitutes the social world as a spectacle presented to an observer who takes up a 'point of view' on the action, who stands back so as to observe it and, transferring into his object the principles of his relation to the object, conceives of it as a totality for cognition alone, in which all interactions are reduced to symbolic exchanges (Bourdieu 1984: 96).

That should indicate why the narrator is *the* seeing-man: it is in the beholding of visible objects that the disclosure of their signs[1], their discovery as a story, emerges. Barth's eye actively looks out within a manifold based on what Duncan (1999: 156) calls "double erasure and inscription". As Spurr would say, Barth's eye "moves systematically over the horizon, then returns to the ground which can be inspected in its minute details" (1996: 17). And although Barth is always on the move, in motion, his eye ranges more or less freely over the scene, while at the same time attempting to invest the scene with an ideological imperative from a fixed, secure position. Thus while Barth's fictive manifold conceals itself unceasingly, and is always on the move, his ideological manifold, the general point of reference about the significance of the gazed object, is fixed, arrested, and immobile. This further explains why Barth the narrator and seer moves from the visible "character" of the landscape to its "invisible" character, in a word, to its "virtues" ("beautiful", "picturesque", "desolate", a "wilderness"). In this way, Barth connects the landscape with his story of it, with, to adopt Foucault's words, "the whole semantic network that connect[s] it to the world" (Foucault 1970:129). For Barth, then, both his description of the native landscape and his visual apprehension of it are one and the same thing:

> [I] ascended a broad promontory ... It was a delightful spot, where the heart might have *expanded in the enjoyment of freedom*. In front of us to the South-east, the swampy lands of the lagoon, one immense rice-field (as it ought to be at least), spread out to the borders of the horizon; but no 'white water' or open sea, was to be seen...nothing but one immense swampy flat, stretching out *as far as the eye could reach*. To the south the green pasturages, along which we had come, extended far beyond Ngegimi. It *was a picture of one of the most fertile spots of the earth doomed to desolation*. But there was a feeble spark in me that it would not always be so, and I flattered myself that

> my labors in these new regions might contribute to sow here the first germs of a new life, a new activity (TD2: 252; my italics).

Here is, in condensed form, the ideology of the civilizing mission of European explorers, and of the rhetoric of seeing. Barth combines visual mastery of the scene with ideological rhetoric of European civilizing mission to non-European lands and economic valorization of the land. As the above passage reveals, the alien landscape is the hero's enforced satisfaction, and its visual apprehension connected to, is the lawful prize of, the seer's *desire*, or cultural value, such as "the enjoyment of freedom". In Post-Enlightenment discourse, freedom is a utility, there to be *enjoyed* or used for the gratification of the "soul", the on-looker's soul. But then both the enjoyment, and the object of the enjoyment, freedom, are only *imagined*. This implies that in representing the landscape, the narrator-seer has inevitably to project the imagination onto the landscape. However, the condition of this imagination itself is the inward self-presence of the subject of the imagination---the explorer-writer. This should support Derrida's suggestion that "Imagination inaugurates liberty [because] sensibility [is] filled and satiated by the presence of the perceived" (1976: 183).

On the other hand, however, Barth's visibility must consist in, and issue within, the rhetoric and logic of corrective action. Having *seen* the Sudan, Barth must at the same time affirm her as the object of *his* action. In other words: what to *do* with her. It is in this sense that Barth's gaze is both a rhetoric (a sentiment founded on pleasure) and a pragmatics (a normative doing). He "shows" the Sudan in order to labour for her classification or ordering *in a certain way*. Indeed the phrase "fertile spots of the earth doomed to desolation" is a form of irony because

although it is the visual apprehension of the "fertile spots" that brings them into semantic comprehension, it is the same visual manifold that telescopes their impending *erasure* in the narrator's mind. So the eye may see, but may see only the visual economy of lack, absence, and deficiency. It is this which explains the narrator's speaking about his "labour" which, in this context, amounts to telling the story of the exotic yet potentially productive landscape of the other. Optical vision has led, as in this case, to the disclosure or decoding of the sign, or rather the virtues lodged in the object. For example, the land is beautiful, which makes it transcendentally a sign of freedom, the freedom of the discoverer to represent the land. The land is fertile which makes it mandatory that it be kept that way, until the arrival of European rationality and technology, symbolized by European colonization or appropriation of the land. So in naming the Sudan as a sign of absence, of deficiency, she is revealed, paradoxically, as a presence, the presence of a potential future, a future necessity---the ideological imperative of rectification. This, in essence, is the meaning of discovery: the unveiling of the land as a sign of something larger, grander, epochal. Fertility is *inherent* in the land; and if it is missing it must be restored via Barth's story of its desolation, which would in turn provoke European presence that will then set it right (again).

Now the point of all this is to show that for the explorer-narrator, seeing comes before words. Barth looks and recognizes, that is, sees, before he can say. It is this seeing which establishes his "place" in (and position vis-a-vis) the surrounding native landscape. However, he explains this landscape in, and with, words. Yet because his words cannot undo the fact of the landscape's presence, or its

realism, he strives for permanence, for a self-presence, a structure of repetition, a communicative presence, as when he says that the land will be restored via his "labour" (of telling the story of its degradation by, presumably, the indolent or careless, or non-industrious natives). Here Barth strives for the unity of form and meaning: the Sudan can have, or be, a reality with himself as its visual interpreter.

Thus Barth is able to narrate, tell the story of, the land only to the extent of his ability to see, for he says only what he is able to see. It is this alone which enables him to *name* things and events, to explore what is "seeable". For it is only when he can rise to a visual mastery of the land that Barth is able to slip into a delirious dream of a future history and an empire of Justice, Reason, Progress, Civilization, and Humanism which would rejuvenate the land. Clearly, then, Barth is the speaker, not of an essentially pure or pristine land or people, but of his *vision:* It is his words, preceding from his optical "authority", which record *"his"* discoveries, beliefs and conceptions. He is in this sense that he is the subject to the extent that he sees and recounts "from the starting-point of his sight" (Foucault 1970:130).

In fact exploration (promontory description) and discovery (disclosure of significance) are based, in *Travels and Discoveries,* upon the "presumed adequacy" of the explorer-teller's visual authority over the reality of the objects of vision themselves. For although "exploration" assumes that the object, the native life-way, is directly accessible to perception, it is, for the most part, the landscape, the object, which directly presents itself to the narrator's eyes or sight, as in the following passage:

> Proceeding in a northwesterly direction through this hilly country [of Muniyo], and leaving at a short distance on our right at a higher eminence ...we descended considerably into a hollow of clayey soil of a most peculiar character. *For all of a sudden an isolated date palm started up on our right, while on our left the unwanted aspect of a tall slender gonda... attracted our attention...* Suddenly a large... lake of natron of snowy whiteness... *approached on our right...* I gazed with delight on the rich scenery around, which *presented* such a remarkable contrast to the monotonous plains of Bornu (TD3: 45; my italics).

This passage illustrates one key contradiction in the discourse of the visible, namely the *distance* between the object (the landscape, the exotic other) and the observing eye, or sight. In the passage, a date palm "starts up" to the narrator's right eye, and a lake of natron "approaches" the narrator on his right eye, and so on. As if to neutralize the apparent "irrationality" of inanimate objects behaving as animate ones, that is, as intentional objects, the narrator quickly says that it is he who gazes with delight "on the rich scenery around". It is as if Barth has to locate everything in relation to his sight and presence, and to what is immediately present to his consciousness, with himself as the mediating agent.

The above point can be illustrated with an anecdote, reported by Barth himself. He tells of his encounter with two "native" chiefs around Timbuktu by the names Khozematen and Hanna. Both men are blind, or rather nearly so, since Hanna has only one eye. The other is totally blind. Khozematen asks Barth to cure him of his blindness. However, Barth, being the seeing-man he has to be if he is to invest visibility with a new significance, ends up not curing the blind men but rather "collecting a great deal of information from them" (TD3: 483, 500). The narrator is, in the end, silent about whether Khozematen's confidence that he could cure him is well founded or not. The silence of the passage on this issue is, figuratively, a form

CHAPTER TWO:
LITERATURE REVIEW

"Lists begin with writing"
---Ong (1989:123).

2.1 The Secondary Historical Literature

There is, in the key historical and biographical literature on Barth and his career, a virtual consensus that the modern documentary history of the Western Sudan began with *Travels and Discoveries*. There is, in addition, a remarkable, and in many ways breathtaking, hagiography and Eurocentric sentiment about Barth's work. Bovill (1926:311-12), for example, sees Barth as the intrepid explorer who has done more than any other explorer to reveal the "secrets of Africa", and *Travels and Discoveries* as a "remarkable work" which "remains to this day one of the principal authorities on the Western Sudan, and its historical notes some of the most valuable material of the modern student".

Hodgkin (1975:17-18) reproduces the above view of Barth. He writes, for example, that Barth is "Nigeria's greatest historian who -- so far as northern Nigeria is concerned -- constituted the frame of reference within which all later historical work has been done". The same view is found in Hallet (1976:469) for whom Barth it was who "laid the historical foundations for scholarly research by Europeans into the history of the Sudanic belt of Western Africa". For Hair (1967; 1994:50) Barth is an important precursor to Hausa linguistic studies. For Hrbek (1981), the writing of

African history would be impossible without the "rich, accurate and fine" narrative sources furnished by explorers such as Barth. Hrbek can still say this in spite of his insightful observation that such narrative sources are accompanied by epithets like " 'barbarous', 'primitive' " (1981:128).

According to Cook (1942; 1965), Hourst (1899) and Kirk-Greene (1962) and (1970), Barth is the most important of the discoverers of Africa, for he possessed, writes Cook, the "characteristic German thoroughness" necessary in tackling the great chaos that was the Western Sudan (1965:43). According to Kirk-Greene, Barth's achievement as geographer, historian and linguist "stands out on every page of his journal" (1962:57), and that it was Barth who discovered the empires of Gwandu and Hamdallahi, and of the upper Benue; and that it was Barth who "brought enlightenment to the knowledge of the Sahara, which had hitherto been regarded as no more than a flat wasteland" (57). In a relatively recent article on Barth, Kirk-Greene writes of Barth as an abolitionist who wanted to end African slavery and build up its trade and commerce, and "open up" the cultural history of the Western and Central Sudan to Europe's scholarship (1970:19); that Barth was the "supreme Nigerian scholar" (20), the empathetic explorer who "liked Africans" (38).

The same sentiment is found in Feuser (1975) who, quoting Alexander von Humboldt that it was Barth who "opened [Africa] to us [Europeans]", reads Barth as the great Romantic hero who had done Europe proud and Africa good. For Feuser, Barth is the embodiment of heroic Enlightenment curiosity which had given itself the right to undertake any journey, any exploration, and take stock of the world.

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Barth, Feuser argues, was "born and bred an explorer" (1975:127), and that perhaps because of his services to the British Government, Barth "was [for] long considered an outsider in Germany" (128). Feuser also views Barth as the "last and greatest of [the] disinterested non-imperialist explorers and scholars... He surveyed the new lands without having the thought of conquest or annexation by his own country at the back of his mind" (126).

The image of Barth as a non-imperialist, and "typically a man of the Age of Reason" is argued by Hiskett (1984:207), and by Curtin (1964:381) who writes that Barth is "the least prejudiced and least culture bound of all the [European] travellers in Africa". The same views are found in Davidson (1970) and (1974), for whom Barth is "the most intelligent of all the nineteenth-century travellers in Africa, and sailed these historical narrows with a mastery and brilliance that none has yet repeated" (1970:22), and that it was only with *Travels and Discoveries* that a systematic study of [Western Sudan's] peoples...appeared, and that, finally, it was the European explorers who had "mapped all the main features of the West African interior" (1974:256).[1]

The above description of Barth and his work is remarkably close to Schiffers' characterization of Barth as full of "romantic zest for life" (1950:312). Schiffers is one of a string of historians and anthropologists who see the Sudan as already awaiting discovery by explorers such as Barth, given, Schiffers says, the former's "energy and complex knowledge" (293). Indeed he seems to suggest that it was Barth who discovered Agadez, a town "barely even known to Europeans by name" (294). For Schiffers, Barth was a "youthful white man", who was

everywhere in the Sudan received like a prince, and at every moment dealing with indigenous kings, and "penetrat[ing] into unknown regions, learn[ing] their language, writ[ing] their history and study[ing] their trade" (294). According to Schiffers, it was Barth who made it possible for the Sudan to be read ("lay open for the world to see"), that is, as literary critics might put it, textualized (narrativized) the Sudan as a symbolic structure (a representation).

Another recurring image of Barth is as a diplomatist, humanitarian, and humanist. The *locus classicus* of this view is Ayandele (1979), for whom Barth was a believer in one humanity, especially the humanity of the African; that he possessed, while in the Sudan, abundant, even overflowing, "stoical fibre, equanimity, Christian resignation, and philosophic calmness" (1979:7); and that he did not care a hoot about material reward, but was driven by a purely humanitarian love for Africa, and its pre-industrial culture. Ayandele has a great deal of praise for Barth's "civilizing mission", and even calls it "patently of the excellent kind" (1979:16).[2]

Prothero (1958) is in broad agreement with Bovill and Cook especially in regard to the view of Barth as motivated by the advancement of science, the suppression of the African slave trade, and the spread of (European) civilization in Africa. Nevertheless, Prothero's essay has two points to recommend it. First, he is honest enough to admit that Barth's travels "took place in parts which Europeans had been exploring for more than fifty years", and that by the end of the nineteenth century the Western Sudan was not almost totally unknown" (1958:324). Second, Prothero admits that conditions in the Western Sudan were more peaceful than

anywhere else in Africa (329). This last point belies the so-called "chaos thesis" within which Barth "emplots" the Western Sudan.

There are other virtues in Prothero's account: he mentions, perhaps without realizing the implication, that one objective of Barth's mission was not only to "establish communication and check slavery [but also] to collect statistics on the products of Central Africa and information on its peoples" (327). This suggests espionage/surveillance and reconnaissance, a sort of epistemological preparation for the eventual conquest of the land. Prothero also admits that Barth's "routes were laid down from dead-reckoning and *supplemented by computation of native routes and native records"* (344; my italics). We also read that although the industry displayed by Barth's text is amazing, he did collect, writes Prothero, from the indigenous guides, "day-to-day happenings and acute observations on them" (324). This clearly suggests the contribution of local knowledges to Barth's overall *oeuvre,* which other writers have either ignored or denigrated.

Boahen, too, has great praise for Barth's capacity for detail, his contribution to geographical, historical and ethnographic knowledge about the Sudan which, Boahen argues further, Barth executed with "characteristic thoroughness" (1964:198). For Boahen, Barth's account of the "brutalities of the slave trade" is masterly since he was an "eye-witness". Indeed Boahen's argument is that Barth became an abolitionist only after witnessing the brutalities of the trade while he was engaged in "solving scientific problems" (203). For Boahen, then, Barth was the "greatest of the explorers" of 19th century Sudan; that the "thoroughness and accuracy of his geographical work still stand unimpeached"; that "his linguistic

studies carried a stage further the practice began by earlier explorers and continued ever since" (207). For these, Boahen is prepared to overlook Barth's suggestion that the Sudan be colonized by the European powers. Typical of conventional historical account, Boahen does not offer a close reading of Barth's literary strategies. What is more, although Boahen believes in a one-to-one correspondence between Barth's text and the reality outside the text, or the events described by the text, he is silent on the status of the text, its composition and publication. Equally, we find in Boahen's treatment of Barth no account of the latter's historical, literary and discursive formation. For instance, Boahen could only attribute to Barth things or events which the latter's text authenticates or says had happened. If Barth's published Journal is silent on any matter, Boahen says correspondingly "little is known" about it (197).

It does not occur to Boahen that Barth's claims are not corrigible, but rather verifiable only by the writer --- Barth himself. This surely is similar to the situation of the novelist. It may in fact be assumed that Boahen, too, has taken Barth's textualizations for granted. This is conveyed by his frequent deployment of expressions such as "it is evident from the reports of Barth...", and "Barth discovered that", and so on, without any attempt at qualification or critical reflection. Nevertheless, Boahen does question, even if mildly, Barth's Hobbesian conception of the Sudan as existing wholly in a "state of nature" (chaos), a picture, he adds, readily found among what he calls the "Lugard" or "Pax Britannica" school of thought.

Usman's review of Barth is predicated on a number of assumptions, chief of which is the notion that Barth's book is a historical document, a "primary source"; and that as historical document, it is dependent upon its author's "conceptual framework". Usman accordingly examines the "status of Barth" by reviewing a host of canonical historical views on the issue, but without taking a definite stand. This is most certainly because Usman's interest is not in Barth's methodology as such. This does explain why Usman highlights, for example, Barth's very short "stay in Katsina" without, however, attempting to probe the implication of this to the traveller's overall textual or empirical practice. Usman devotes space to a discussion of Barth's so-called "first-hand observations", that is, his descriptions of his travel arrangements, the landscape, the political and economic situation, and ethnographic portraits of specific indigenous subjects. Usman questions the accuracy of some of Barth's observations, without, however, attempting to analyze the truth-conditions of the narrative sentences within the rhetorical space of which those observations have been constructed. For example, Usman writes that "the identification and description of particular events", which Barth presumably has done, are, "without indicating their inter-relationships", which Barth presumably has failed to do, "not historical reconstruction but the preliminary stages of it [i.e. identification/description of particular events]" (1982/85:144). Yet Usman does not say precisely what the *final or last* stage of this process is.

As for Barth's "framework of explanation", Usman examines Barth's use of racialist categories in his description of indigenous physiognomies. Usman correctly shows how Barth's dogmatic racist-empirical realism functions as a rationalization

of his pre-conceived notions, such as that the ruling race, the Fulbe, have slipped to their present less than admirable situation because of their "racial mixing" with the non-Fulbe subject "races". Yet here again, there is not a mention of Barth's essentially aesthetic attitude to such questions. For instance, although Usman had earlier indicated that a "proper understanding" of Barth's "conceptual framework" requires grasping his intellectual, discursive and ideological formation within the "German bourgeois intelligentsia" at the University of Berlin, and the Prussian court (145), this promise is not fulfilled: there is not a sustained reconstruction, in Usman's account, of Barth's "background". Equally, the precise historical, ideological or discursive connection between Barth and the "colonial system" is not rigorously established.

What is striking about Usman's review of Barth is that first, the question of Barth's Journal as a "historical document" is taken for granted. There is no attempt whatsoever by Usman to problematize Barth's *historical* claims. This leads him to compare Barth and the indigenous historian, Abdulqadir Dan Taffa, from whom Barth says he has learned a lot. Thus both Dan Taffa and Barth are said to be *historians*, with a specifically historical, that is objective, claim to their presentations. Yet Usman does not show clearly the *extent* of Barth's borrowing from, or debt to, Dan Taffa, at least in *intertextual* terms.

Second, Usman envisages a "proper use of Barth as a primary source" (147), through a clear, "definite and specific", understanding of Barth's "conception of the nature of society and historical development" (147). Usman insists, for example, that a correct and adequate study of Barth would entail grasping, identifying and

assessing "the basic categories and assumptions underlying the information" provided by Barth (147). However, Usman does not specify the meaning of the expression, "categories and assumptions".

It should be emphasized that for Usman, it is not Barth as such that matters, but his existence as a convenient device for the grasping, by the historian, of the *meaning* or *purpose* of the "historical process", or what Usman calls the "movement of contemporary forces" (148). It is in this sense that Usman's account of Barth is a teleological one, a theodicy[3]. Not only is the study of Barth a *pretext* for aiming to discover the meaning of the historical process, and thus to judge its overall moral significance, but also the *occasion* to seek to influence the allegedly objective purpose at work in the historical process.

The question remains, of course, whether human beings can, as Usman recommends, practically determine "the direction of [an] epoch" (148) merely by analyzing, *correctly and adequately*, the "conceptual framework" of a *textual* world, or rather the rhetorical-literary constitution or representation of the past which Barth's *oeuvre* has produced. But once it can be shown that Barth *invented* rather than *found* his Sudan; that his text already constitutes an active interpretation of the "nature" of the Sudan as a *sign;* that, indeed, Barth's book is a *literary*, a *textual*, production (a rhetorically mediated inspection of the Sudan), then Usman's confidence that Barth's text could be used to reconstruct, or realize the absolute meaning of, the historical process falls to the ground.

McLynn's picture of Barth is very broadly drawn. He reproduces the conventional wisdom about Barth, such as the view that Barth was erudite, had a

superior German education, had great linguistic abilities, and was the "first European to enter deeply into African culture and the first to bring back scientific results of abiding value" (1993:38). He also endorses the picture of Barth as the "most complete African explorer". Yet McLynn also shows, perhaps for the first time, that Barth was driven by ambition: to return to a Chair at the University of Berlin, and to be the first to discover everything. The latter attitude he calls the "first-at-everything-syndrome." According to McLynn, Barth found it difficult to get on with his European companions. However, McLynn questions the scientific claims of the explorers. For instance, he argues that it would be naive to take the explorers' accounts at face value; that all the European explorers "lived in fantasy worlds of their own" (359); and approvingly quoted Count Teleki's celebrated remark that: "all African travellers are liars ... If I did not discover a lake, I shall say I did, and who would disprove it, until long after I have received the credit" (359). It is to McLynn's credit that he devotes space to showing that all explorers, including Barth, *embroider* their "own feats with down right lies" (359).

For Smith (1997), Barth has seen directly and accurately, and has captured everything in a transparent language. He writes, for example, that Barth's account of Kano between 1851 and 1854 is "easily the fullest account of pre-colonial Kano" (255); and that his systematic survey of Kano is "one of the finest achievements in the history of African exploration" (ibid). Smith even implies that Barth's writing is unmediated, that is, has attained full empirical and epistemological closure and completion. He writes, for example, that Barth has provided a "*complete* description

of Kano ... a tight professional summary of data gathered in a careful and systematic survey" (256; my italics).

Smith also credits Barth's "unrivalled understanding of the people, their language, society and way of life", his remarkable diligence and skill as an "exceptional observer" who has provided historians with the "finest information on the central Sudan" (256).

However, soon after that statement on Barth's Journal being *complete*, Smith finds it necessary to question a large part of the information provided by Barth on specific aspects of the administration of Kano. Example: first, Smith finds that Barth's account of the members of the official council of state fails to mention key officials such as the *Madaki*, the *Makama*, the *Wambai* and the *Dan Iya*, and many other key titleholders. Second, Smith finds large gaps in Barth's information on the population of Kano, which Barth thinks is largely composed of slaves. The logic of Barth's report is that the substantial decline in the population of Kano between 1804-1853 was due wholly to Fulbe slave raiding, and the endemic chaos arising from that.

Smith finds all this questionable, although he has just written that Barth has provided the historian with "a complete description of Kano" (256), and that Barth's is "an excellent general idea of the history of Kano" (256). Yet Smith, not willing to give up his "religious" faith in the accuracy of Barth's account, ends with the aporetic note that although Barth's account is "*incomplete*, it is clear and accurate" (259; my italics). But this claim about the clarity and accuracy of Barth is contradicted by Smith's own discussion of the misleading information and the rush

to an abolitionist judgment of Sudanese social hierarchy to which Barth all too readily resorts.

Smith also writes, at several part of his exposition of Barth's account of Kano, that "Barth reported...", "Barth also reports ...", without, in the least, indicating to *whom* Barth reports or reported. The same applies to Smith's citation of passages where Barth admires "handsome" and "intelligent" youth. He never for once grasps the aesthetic Romanticism which guides Barth's observations. Smith, in other words, has no sense of Barth's textualization as an attempt to persuade some audience; and that the coherence presented by Barth's text rests on a contradiction which Smith himself implicitly highlights --- that Barth's "complete" account is "incomplete", i.e. a rhetorical mode, the mode of metaphor, with its spilling and sliding of meaning, rather than of rigorous method, the mode of allegedly non-rhetorical, non-fictional achievement.

Spittler's Barth is the still familiar one: "If one considers the scientific achievements of the many nineteenth century explorers in Africa, then Heinrich Barth is certainly among the most prominent ... he was a genuine scholar and he knew better than anyone else how to travel" (1996: 241-42). Barth, says Spittler, was the "first European to provide a description of the history and daily life of Agadez, and this is still an important source of reference" (243). These comments are all the more surprising since Spittler's article on Barth is a study of how the latter travelled. First, Spittler does not devote any space to an examination of the centrality of local knowledges (guides, informants and porters) to Barth's endeavour. He mentions that Barth rarely travelled alone, and yet the guides and

informants receive the scantiest attention. Worse, Spittler could only rely on a few quotations from Barth's journal, and on which he offers no close reading. He does not realize the implications of his important insight that Barth spent only a short time in any one place. Questions of the literary genre in which Barth wrote, the political and discursive context in which he travelled, the cultural formation within which he was formed, the institutional support behind his mission, and the readerships for which he performed, are not considered by Spittler, despite his stated intention to examine the integrities and conventions of the media available to Barth, and his method of field research.

Now several conclusions can be drawn from the historians' conceptualization of Barth's textual practice. First, most of them no more than celebrate the "exploits" of Barth the monadic subject of "history", and generally subscribe to a hyper-realist epistemology in which Barth's linguistic practice is treated as the arrival of the definitive truth -- namely "factual" history.

Second, Barth's text is conceptualized by the historians as a *source* of history, history understood as a recoverable "factuality", that is, "reality" gleaned or reconstructed from documentary (written) sources. This may explain why all the historians reviewed above approach Barth as a sensitive, intelligent and reliable discourser, describer and writer of the "history" of the Sudan. Barth is even called an *Africanist* by Kirk-Greene: "an Africanist of the highest intellectual, perceptive and empathetic order" (1971:V), despite Barth's obvious bias, racism, prejudice, factual errors, misconceptions and cultural arrogance, which will be highlighted in the subsequent chapters. It is little wonder, then, that the idea of the isolated and

monadic European explorer as a transparent "source" of non-European history has survived and maintained itself in much historical study regardless of any evidence disputing it. As Said (1978:239) would say, such ideas "produce evidence that proves their validity"!

Third, the historians, without exception, have ignored questions of Barth's conventions of self-presentation. The text's unmistakable storytelling (narrative) form does not raise, for them, any theoretical or ontological problems. The *raison d'etre* of exploration accounts is to tell a story, even though the explorer-writer might "frame" himself as representing factual or irreducibly historical (constellationally significant) events. It is Barth's post-Enlightenment heritage which dictates that he appear as both storyteller (narrativizer) and historian (the demiurgic subject). For as his teacher Ranke[4], the great 19th century historian, has taught, the historian must not only represent (semiotically) events but also imbue them with historical (factual) significance. In this conception of history, or in this conception of narrativity, there is no conflict between "history" and "narrative". This is why for Barth, the imaginative discourse is the key to factual representation, so that both "historical" and "imaginative" (poetic) stories are both real events (what really happened) and imaginary events (events invented/dramatized/styled by the narrator in, and of, historical discourse.

It is instructive that while the historians have inevitably to rely on the interpretation of written texts (for even their so-called "oral evidence" inevitably issues in a text, or is turned into one by the historian), the, on the whole, lack a coherent theory or epistemology of "the text". None of the historians reviewed

above has any worked out "theory" of the text. A notable exception is Usman, but who then draws a sharp distinction between the literary and the historical, *belles lettres* (the creative-affective arts) and the "historical process":

> One of the characteristics which distinguishes [sic] the study of history, as a discipline from *belles lettres* and the genre of literature is the central importance attached by [historians] to the recovery, analysis and use[s] of primary sources... The major task of the student of history is the recovery and study of primary and other sources, in order to get as close to grasp of the historical process as possible. (Usman 1982/85:138).

Contrary to Usman's suggestion above, history writing is a genre of literature. For example, despite Marx's materialist temper, he approaches, in his widely acclaimed *historical* text, the *Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (1969), supposedly specific historical phenomena as if they were literary phenomena. Here he writes in memorable phrase that historical facts and personages occur, as it were, twice, that is, first as tragedy and second as farce. Marx draws his problematic from the theatre and the stage: people are actors, speeches are metaphors; the onlookers are spectators, and spectres walk about. In the same text, curtains are drawn, while actors walk on the stage donning their workaday clothes.

Lawrence Stone, the doyen of Anglo-American history writing argues that: "Historians have always told stories. From Thucydides and Tacitus to Gibbon and Macaulay the composition of narrative in lively and elegant prose was always accounted their highest ambition. History was regarded as a branch of rhetoric" (Stone 1979 : 3). According to Dover, the historian has no choice between history and literature (narrative) because "we study poetry and fiction without being poets and novelists... all classicists, whether they know it or not, are historians: of

linguistic, graphic, and literary behaviour" (1983: 55). Barth sees the whole of the Sudan as a theatre, and a musical *intermezzo* (opera, in which songs and dramatic acts are set to music).

Because every historical account has to utilize the plot-structures of beginning, middle and end, and the tropological resources of language (metaphor, synecdoche, etc), it has to draw on fictional and fictionalizing tropes. On this ground, Usman's estrangement of history and literature has no scholarly or empirical basis.

Indeed exploration literature since Columbus' account of his journey has necessarily to attempt to unite, reconcile and weave together, the two modes of historicalization and narrativization. This development reached a fever pitch in 19th century post-Enlightenment German historicism, for which the historical mode of being was, at one and the same time, the narrative mode of being (of representation). According to Hegel:

> In our language the term *History* united the objective with the subjective...it comprehends not less what has *happened,* than the *narration* of what has happened. This union of the two meanings we must regard as of a higher order than mere outward accident; we must suppose historical narrations to have appeared contemporaneously with historical deeds and events. It is an internal vital principle common to both that produces them synchronously (Hegel 1975:60-61).

If Hegel is right, then it is both a great error and a conceptual blunder for the historian to ignore Barth's skillful exploitation of the techniques of narrative presentation, representation and enframing. From Kirk-Greene to Usman, the historians have nothing to say about the text's rhetorical and tropological dimension, its interaction with the genre of travel and exploration literary style, its symbolic,

fictional and fictionalizing mode of comprehension, its heteroglossic narrative voice, its reflexive, expository and performative conceptions of (authorial) point of view, its construction of the inscribed and ideal reader(s), its contrived features (in syntax and language), and, finally, the text's implication in every variety of post-Renaissance, post-Enlightenment exploration rhetoric: the desire, to quote Spurr, for a "systematic visual knowledge of non-Western cultures" (1996:25).

But even if Barth were to be viewed as a historian, one cannot avoid the question of his text's debt to the narrativist manner of presentation. According to White (1984:29):

> Narrative is more than a mode of explanation, more than a code for conveying information. It is not a discursive strategy or tactic that the historian may or may not use, according to some pragmatic aim or purpose. It is a means of symbolizing events without which their 'historicality' cannot be indicated.

The point is that there is no historical account without it being a story of some sort or kind, without, in other words, a plot (with sub-plots). Storytelling is indispensable to any form of discourse; what writers (historians, economists, journalists, and so on) narrate in their allegedly non-fictional (factual) stories is selected and shaped by the repertoire of genre and textuality available in language and society as a whole. Even as positivist a philosopher of science as Karl Popper has vindicated the centrality of language, storytelling and the poetic imagination in the formulation of scientific theories:

> On the level of scientific discovery two new aspects emerge. The most important one is that scientific theories can be formulated linguistically...The other aspect is also connected with language. It is one of the novelties of human language that it encourages storytelling, and thus creative imagination. *Scientific discovery is akin to explanatory storytelling, to myth*

> *making and to poetic imagination* (Popper 1987:87; my italics).

The point bears repeating: there is a critical dimension of Barth and his text that is still to be explored, even by those who have most appropriated (discursively speaking) the field. For as Foucault would say, the historians have only approached Barth and his text as "an individualized group of statements" (Foucault 1972:80), that is, as an *instance* of factual (documentary and academic) history, and not as a discursive reinvention, re-presentation and symbolic ordering

This is not to suggest, however, that questions of historical reflexivity are irrelevant to the discussion of the literary conventions of exploration writing such as *Travels and Discoveries.* It cannot be denied that all forms of discourse--- literary, meta-critical or otherwise--- are embedded in historical processes. The time-space dimension is basic: the writer, of whatever *kind* of narrative, is conditionally an agent in, and geodesically a signification of, the process he or she describes, and thus part of the temporal-discursive order and not outside it. As Macherey (1978:78) says, all texts are "produced under determinate [historical] conditions". This in a sense explains why the contextualization of Barth is a critical, and not a supplementary, part of the argument developed in this study.

It has been argued by the historians (Boahen and Kirk-Greene, for example) that what Barth speaks of had happened, and can be verified via other sources. But is not a poem or novel about, say the 1900-03 British conquest of the Sokoto Empire also about *real* or actual events? Factual fidelity and mimetic accuracy are not a condition or criterion of "non-fictionality" or "non-literariness". *Travels and Discoveries*, whether as historical or factual text, is paradigmatically and

semantically, *dependent* upon, can meta-critically exist only as, a matrix of *fictional,* narrative, symbolic, literary, and poetic, conventions.[5]

In the final analysis, then, there is no story, neither could there ever exist any story, of any kind without *plot,* event without (the) narration (of it);[6] just as there is no text without an author of some kind, or a symbolic structure. As a specific, discursively, ideologically and temporally determined *form* and *practice* of writing, *Travels and Discoveries* ontologically and tropologically interacts with the *rhetoric* of writing itself, and is amenable, for this very reason alone, to an analysis of its rhetorical strategies, narrative devices and representational styles.

2.2 Previous and on-going Research on Exploration Writing.

Following the paradigmatic shifts within literary and social theory, the last ten years have seen an engaging new interest in exploration literature. The recent seminal works in this area are Adams (1983), Mills (1991), Pratt (1992), MacLaren (1992), Rennie (1995), Spurr (1996), Cheyfitz (1997), Lincoln (1998), and Nicholls (2000). There are other influential texts that have been reviewed below.[7]

These works are united by a critical and deconstructive interest in exploration literature as an instance of the narrativization of the non-European societies, and the enactment of all the fissures, anxieties and instabilities of the knowledge-building project of the post-Enlightenment. Within the literary study of exploration writing, the pioneer works are Work (1928), Cox (1935), Pearce (1953) and George (1958). Among these, the latter is the most influential early scholarly

study of exploration narrative. Its focus is on European perceptions of Africa between the15th and the 18th century, which, George claims, were first "constructed" by explorer-writers such as Azurara, Cadamosto, Malfante, Da Gama, Hawkins and others. Her thesis is that such writing should be seen as a collective symbolic system which has historically produced a discourse of Africa as an exotic subject for the European reading and educated publics. Thus for George, travel writers are purveyors of the discourse of cultural difference, which she sees as a form of ethnocentrism, which she in turn defines as "looking[ing] down with varying degrees of disinterest or antagonism upon other, alien cultures... [and viewing the other as] the strange... malformed deviant from the familiar" (62). George's reading of quoted passages of her selected texts is interesting, the only weakness being the absence in her account of a historical sketch of the explorers' literary and social formation.

Another notable study of travel writing is Obeyesekere (1992). It is focused on the explorer James Cook and the topic of cannibalism which has fascinated European reading publics since Columbus' journey to the New World. Another still is Todorov (1984), a study of early (16th century) exploration writings on the Americans. Other influential studies, though not exclusively devoted to exploration literature, are Hulme (1986), Barker *et al* (1985), Krupat (1992) and Eze (1997). The latter is devoted to a critical account of the impact of exploration literature on the Western philosophical tradition. These works stress the contrived features, and the intrinsically rhetorical nature, of their selected texts.

Said's *Orientalism* (1978) could perhaps be included among the pioneer texts in the study of exploration writing. Although Said's canvass is much wider than this, his was the first systematic attempt to underscore the "literariness" of exploration writing, and its imbrication in power-knowledge, and other forms of dominatory discourses (the colonial discourse of Orientalism). According to Said, it is the whole field of exploration textuality, rather than intrinsically individual or national (German, British, French) exploration texts that should be the primary issue.

However, some criticisms of Said are in order. Said has not, unlike, for example, Hulme (1986), a sense of the explorer's or Western writer's debt to local knowledges. His account of the Orientalist discourse of Western textualities on the Orient construes it as monolithic and all-pervasive, a fault which leads him to miss the opportunity to "deconstruct" its ambivalences, aporias, and discontinuities. Said's formalism and mimeticism leads him to emphasize "style, figures of speech, setting, narrative devices" (1978:21) at the expense of an engagement with the troubled space of representation. The issue of representation has recently been the central problem of a number of new studies of exploration writing. One of such is Rennie (1995), which focuses on the Western representations of non-European tropical islands as gardens of Eden, and as exotic and erotic fantasy. Rennie investigates the continuities of this literary tradition, and traces its ideological construction of "fact" and "fiction".

For Thomas (1994), Western exploration writing is both a form of colonial discourse and symbolic representation, which also interacts with the "complexity of exchange in the colonial process" (64) and that such literature has always been a

"site" on which the imperial relation between colonizer and colonized, same and other, is mediated. It is this sort of scholarship that has influenced Youngs (1997). His study is a critique of the textual processes by which the explorations, observations and representations of non-European landscapes, peoples and societies by explorers and other Western writers have produced what Youngs calls a representation of racial difference. What is admirable about Youngs' study is that it unites the examination of style, figures of speech, settings, and narrative devices with a critical and reflexive sense of the audiences and reading formations of exploration literature.

The study by Msiska and Hyland (1997) is also devoted to the problem of the "representations" of Africa in Western, including exploration, writing; and how such writing (as documentary and fictional "writing") created, from the 15th century onwards, a corpus of literature (or writing) which proved decisive in the colonial and imperial "imaging" of Africa as the "Dark Continent" which required European regeneration.

In an important recent study, Griffiths (1995) contends that Joseph Conrad's early fiction *(Heart of Darkness,* for example), should be seen as Conrad's mediated response to his own travels in the Congo and the Far East; that it was the psychological impact of such travels on Conrad which should account for his fiction's representations; and that, finally, such fiction should itself be viewed as a literal and figurative voyage of Europeans into non-European cultures.

Perhaps the most audacious study of exploration writing is Pratt (1992). It is regarded as the seminal text in the field. It is a study of exploration writing within

the material, ideological and historical contexts of capitalism, European cultural and political expansion, and the dynamics of European meaning-making on the imperial frontiers of North and South America and Africa in the 18th and 19th centuries. The book's ambition is to be not only a critique of the ideology but also of the genre of exploration literature. The book also attempts to show how the European explorers' textualization of the non-European worlds has created, since 1750, both the domestic subject of European imperialism and the very reading publics for which the explorers wrote. Pratt's materialist readings of individual texts are masterly. She shows how other forms of knowledge and expressions produced, and were in turn produced by, exploration writing. In fact Pratt's argument is that it was exploration writing which produced the "rest of the world" (the non-European World) as knowledge, other, object and "text" for the European readerships.

Pratt's account of travel writing is predicated upon the latter's imbrication in Enlightenment natural history. This is the book's strength as well as its weakness. According to Pratt, it is travel writing and natural history (Linnaean and Buffonian racialist taxonomy) which "catalyzed each other to produce a Eurocentered form of global or 'planetary' consciousness" (5). This is a valuable insight, for it shows that the "representational practices" of European writers were part of a wider institutional and material relationships, namely the development of capitalist relations of production and the cultural and ideological "expansion" of bourgeois knowledge-building projects which began, Pratt argues, with the Enlightenment. On this reading, travel writing is one important means of producing "Europe's differential conception of itself in relation to something it has become possible to

call "'the rest of the world'" (5). To capture the complexity of this process, Pratt invents new terms such as "contact zone" (as opposed to the term "colonial frontier"), so as to avoid a Eurocentric perspective, and to underscore, according to her, the "spatial and temporal copresence of subjects previously separated by geographic and historical disjuncture, and whose trajectories now intersect" (7). Another of these terms is "anti-conquest", used by Pratt to characterize the "strategies of representation whereby European explorers seek to secure their innocence in the same moment as they assert European hegemony" (7). This may serve as an important description of Barth's textual practice in *Travels and Discoveries.* On the whole, Pratt's discourse is grounded in the political conception that not only are the conventions and writing strategies of European travel literature inseparable from the dynamics of power and appropriation, but also tied up with the "discourses that legitimate bourgeois authority and delegitimate peasant and subsistence lifeways" (10).

There are, however, important weaknesses in Pratt's study. She greatly exaggerates, for example, the influence, or impact, of natural history on 18th century exploration writing. If Pratt is right, then exploration literature as such was literally created or brought into being solely by the writing and literary cultures pioneered by Carl Linnaeus and his disciples. But this co-exists uneasily with Pratt's Marxist method which stresses a dialectical analysis of generative mechanisms. The Renaissance roots of, and the impact of Romantic sensibility on, European travel writing have escaped Pratt's attention.

And while Pratt gives a pride of place to European natural history in her account, Grove (1995) reminds us that natural history's classificatory system, popularized by Linnaeus, was rather "profoundly indebted to the South Indian Ezhava system of classifying plants" (cited in Loomba 1998:61). Loomba has also argued, echoing Grove, that natural history and Western Science:

> ...developed both as an impulse to master the globe, and by incorporating, learning from, as well as aggressively displacing other knowledge systems. Through the 'objectivity' of observation and science, European penetration into other lands is legitimized (1998:61).

Another influential study is Mudimbe-Boyi (1992), which is devoted to a reading of European exploration narratives from the perspective of an African's (Bernard Dadie's) travel narrative of Paris entitled, *Un Negre a Paris (A Negro in Paris)*. Yet Mudimbe-Boyi's study is of great methodological import for studies of 19th century European travel accounts of other cultures. She attempts to construct a *theory* of European travel narratives about Africa. For her it is the concept of geographical displacement, the journey, which is central to these concerns. It is through this, she argues, that "Europe has come into contact with the non-Western World" (26). However, Mudimbe-Boyi is subtly realizes that, far from being an unproblematic space, the journey, literal or metaphorical, "assumes multiple meanings and goals", from "spiritual or psychological quest" (a knowledge of, or an escape from, the self in the Romantic sense) to a "conquest or a discovery" (26). No authentic cultural encounters, Mudimbe-Boyi argues, are possible "when contact occurs on the vertical axis of a hierarchical relationship" (26), but only the usual

discourse of otherness produced by European explorers, missionaries and colonial administrators.

What recommends Mudimbe-Boyi's work to this study is its insistence that the writings of European missionaries, explorers, travellers, colonizers and novelists have, in various ways, participated in the discursive representation of non-European Otherness, and have, in the same vein, only produced highly mediated textualities in which Europe is the Same, non-Europe the Other. This is true enough since there is no justification for the mystification which separates, say Defoe from Barth, Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* from Park's *Travels into the Interior of Africa*, on the grounds that one is literary the other is not:

> These writings, like other strictly literary works that deal with the representation of different people and cultures, tend to identify Europe as the Self in opposition to the non-European expressed as the Other. In this way, European perspective on the Other is established: a gaze and a voice originating in the West observes and expresses[sic] the Other... Europe is positioned at the centre; becomes the model and reference point for the gaze that observes, defines, interprets, and often 'invents' the Other. (Mudimbe-Boyi, 1992:26)

Mudimbe-Boyi devotes space to a critique of the idealist distinction between the literary and the non-literary text, for she is eager to show the affinities of the travel and imaginative (literary) texts, and how they are permeated by "the very discourse of power" (27) constructed by the "terms of norms promulgated by the self" (27). All this is consistent with the problematic of this study.

However, there are areas of great difficulty, such as Mudimbe-Boyi's claim that it is the triadic structure of Departure -- Adventure -- Return which makes a text a travel narrative, and that by its nature, "journey implies contact with an Otherness,

which, in Western discourse, is often perceived through the filtering lens of a civilizing or evangelizing ideology" (27). The trouble with the first claim is its formalism. Attempts to identify a travel narrative by its (generic) form will always run into conceptual difficulties. For example, in all literature the hero or narrator has to deal with the diachronic moment. But does this imply that a text, say T. Salih's *Season of Migration to the North,* is a travel narrative? In many ways it is, but in this text, the triadic structure is both exploited and refused.[8] Note, also, that the multi-layered narrations in *Season* are not found in many conventional travel narratives written by actual travellers such as Park and Barth. For to study, for example, Barth's *Travels and Discoveries* with that formula is to miss the occasions when the triadic structure is itself "frustrated" or thrown into crisis by the narrator's double movement of erasure and appropriation: erasure of "difference" (the narrator's struggle to assimilate, to learn the local idioms, "to go native") and appropriation (of the landscape, people and local knowledge in a legitimatization of presence which seeks to "naturalize" the narrative).

Second, "the journey", both as literal geographical displacement and as metaphoric grappling with "diachrony", need not imply Otherness.[9] In fact Mudimbe-Boyi's own analysis of Dadie's travel narrative of Paris refutes her claim because, as she shows, Dadie does not see Parisians as an Other, because he does not "translate" their complexity into a rhetorical Other under the sign of the Same.

Part of Mudimbe-Boyi's difficulty is her undifferentiated use of the category of Europe or West. She herself is eager to reproduce the essentializing dichotomies and binaries of Same and Other, Europe and non-Europe. She has no conception of

ambivalence, slippages, fissures and crises within what she herself calls the orientation of travel narratives to imperial discourse. Indeed the very attempt by the travel narrator to describe otherness immediately implies complicity with the discourse of othering. This may or may not be evident in the narrative, but historical, linguistic and semiotic reference remains. Hence the need to articulate the points at which the travel narrative appropriates, incorporates and "ruptures" local knowledges.

Mudimbe-Boyi's otherwise excellent study of travel writing is further vitiated by her insistence that the West, too, be seen as an Other. But what is achieved by a simple reversal of roles? The task lies in striking down the very static dialectic of Same and Other, interiority and exteriority as simple opposites, rather than in merely seeing the issue as one of conceptualizing European travel narratives as an "encratic language", which Mudimbe-Boyi defines as "the language of a hegemonic culture that establishes and determines a hierarchical set of relationships between self and other" (31), on the argument that travel narrative about the other objectifies the gaze and monopolizes the word. But does it? Of course, such narrative does create, invent and project and order everything in terms of itself. But as long as it is a narrative, a rhetorical, verbal practice, it remains a semiotic field, and thus subject to instability, contradiction and dissonance. In other words: *narrativity says no* because to narrate, from whatever vantage point, is to encounter not just space but diachrony (movement, time).[10] The latter, and the more or less suppressed voice of the other (the native informant), must invariably intrude into, or

rather extrude from, the narration, and thus, as we shall see in a later part of this study, frustrate any monopolization of the word by the explorer.

One influential, in many ways innovative, study of travel writing is Spurr (1996). This book, hailed by reviewers as a "richly eclectic" study, is a critique of the rhetorical strategies of European narratives about the non-European world. Spurr's canvass is vast: his is a critique of varieties of colonial discourses in journalism, imperial administration and travel writing in their textual forms. The value of Spurr's book to the present study lies less in its discussion of exploration texts (most of his examples are the relatively recent 20th century exploration texts about the non-European World) than its methodology, and the assumptions underlying it. Spurr's text is certainly rich; he concentrates on the enframing strategies (a term borrowed from Heidegger) by which, he contends, Western writers have represented the non-European World in general. Spurr's is a negative heuristic, that is, a reading of the texts of othering both as fields of "the historical process of colonization" and as "colonial discourse" (1996:1). The book emphasizes rhetorical rather than historical analysis because it is oriented to literary theory and other forms of writing well beyond the traditional boundaries of literature.

Spurr is careful to stress that "colonial discourse" is not monolithic or a set of finite texts but, rather, the "name for a series of colonizing discourses each adapted to a specific historical situation, yet having certain common elements with others. This series is marked by internal repetition but not by all-encompassing totality" (1-2).

Nevertheless, this path breaking study is vitiated by methodological and conceptual problems. Spurr does not pay sufficient attention to the *bearer* of the "colonial discourse" he analyzes. His is, to a great extent, a formalistic procedure: Spurr has not a detailed discussion of the ontology of the rhetorical modes themselves. Of course there could be an *idealist* ontology of forms, but this will not do for Spurr who hopes to go beyond the "bounded textual field". Another explanation is Spurr's great debt to Foucault's Nietzschean genealogy. It is this which has led Spurr to fall into the error of seeing the rhetorical modes themselves as *"logical* operations available for the purposes of representation" (3). Why would Spurr take it as axiomatic that a genealogy, that is the grasping of the repetitions and variations of the modes within a range of (sometimes very different) discourses, alone can capture the complexity of agency? In other words, showing the rhetorical tropes which organize Park's, Barth's and Livingstone's narrativizations of Africa does not mean confronting, cannot replace the fact of, agency (of Park, Barth and Livingstone as complex, historically concrete individuals, for example). It is these difficulties that explain Spurr's emphasis on "internal resistance" to colonial discourse, rather than on a programme of social or human emancipation. The only solution proposed by Spurr to the epistemic violence of "colonial discourse" is a textual/critical strategy, what he calls the "play of difference" which "could range free of the structures of inequality" (20) This, to put it mildly, is no more than a metaphysical gesture because it gets us nowhere, especially on the issue of representation, agency and resistance.

Jardine, Second and Spary (1996) have approached exploration writing as located within the performative context of power and privilege, the cultures of natural history, scientific expeditions and the circulation of such "knowledges" within metropolitan reading publics. This is also the concern of Miller and Reil (1996). Some attention has been paid by critics such as Pemble (1987), Andrews (1989), Ousby (1990) and Buzard (1993) to the interplay of the genre of exploration writing and the ideologies of nationalism, which contributed to the consolidation of bourgeois romantic tastes, especially towards exotic landscapes. This continues the line of research pioneered by Stafford (1984), for whom the explorer is necessarily a Romantic, the "imaginative eye", who voyages, so to speak, into "substance" by establishing, or attempting to establish, natural objects as ensembles of visually accessible properties. Hence Stafford's study of the naturalist and literary cultures behind the illustrated travel narrative.

For Porter (1991), Barrel (1991), and Aldrich (1993), exploration writing is caught up in the fissures and anxieties of fantasy and desire on the one hand, and 19th century colonial dynamics on the other. Mills (1991), Melman (1992), Fawley (1994) and Lawrence (1994) have investigated the shifting rhetorical--and subject--positions of men and women explorers ("the travelling subject"), and the impact of the travel itself on the contradictory constitution of the subject position of the explorer.

Another remarkable study of exploration writing is MacLaren (1992), which argues that the explorers' published version of texts is very different from the field notes or the Journal, since the explorer invariably alters ideas and descriptions after

reflecting on the travels; and that it is this which should be investigated so as to show how the explorer's representations have been re-worked to conform with the expectation of the audience, or the reading publics for whom the published text would then be directed. According to MacLaren, the published text could not have been the unreflected record of the logbook entry or of the field note (the writing *en route*). It is, argues MacLaren, at the stage of Journal writing that explorers transform themselves into authors. The final stage, the stage of the audience, is the publication stage, whereby the explorer aspires to *literary* status (as a published author). These considerations are certainly of great value to the critic. However, MacLaren's has the disadvantage of all inductive methods: the inquirer must proceed inductively, that is, case by case, without the possibility of a deductive generalization.

In a study of the German explorer, Ludwig Leichhardt, Nicholls (2000) suggests that exploration writing is a literary genre, and that we should always expect shifts in the opinions and evaluations of the explorers' own reading publics towards his work.

Recently, that is since 1995, exciting new approaches to exploration writing by geographers have appeared. Most of these new studies are devoted to critiques of 18th and the 19th century explorer narratives. Representative texts in this category are Sibley (1995), Phillips (1996), Driver, (1999), Duncan and Gregory (1999), and Gregory (1999). One could also include earlier texts such as Barnes and Duncan (1991). Sibley's text is a discourse on the "geographies of exclusion" in which textualities "participate" in the construction of socio-spatial boundaries (gender,

racial, sexual) in ways which rationalize and entrench the domination of space and create fear of minorities. Phillips studies exploration texts as "adventure stories" which have historically provided European readers with thrilling images of distant, non-European lands, cultures and peoples. In these stories, Phillips argues, the European writer "enacts" the encounter between Europeans and non-Europeans, European identity and non-European space. Phillips' book is an example of how geographical imagination can enrich literary criticism.

Other important texts in the field are by Duncan and Gregory (1999), and Felix Driver (1999). The former is a highly readable collection of critical articles on travel writing, and on the complex questions of place and ambiguity of identity in the colonial frontier. Driver's *Cultures of Exploration* (1999) shows that exploration was in fact tied to the institutional support of the respective European States, missionary organizations and such institutions as the Geographical Society. Driver discusses the impact of individual explorers such as Livingstone and Stanley on the popular imagination. For Driver, the discourse of exploration is contradictory and contested by the very strategies of "exhibiting the native". Yet he does not mention explorers such as Barth who was arguably more gifted than Livingstone or any other British explorer. Driver's account is vitiated by the lack of close readings of the exploration texts he studies.

Gregory's *Colonizing Geographies* (1999), written from a Marxist position, is very engaging. It is concerned with how 19th century exploration narratives about Cairo (among other cities) have represented the indigenous people of that city. Gregory uses the concept of the "world-as-exhibition" which, he claims, reveals the

dynamics of capitalist modernity (the conception of the object, even of thought, as a producible commodity -- what Lukacs would call reification). Gregory skillfully deploys Edward Said's concept of "imaginative geography" in his attempt to show up European exploration literature as intrinsically about the "politics of vision".

The great value of studies by Gregory, Duncan and Gregory, and Phillips is that they integrate the textual and what may be called the extra-textual analysis of the textual manifestations of writing; the text and the pre-textual contexts of exploration; physical geography and imaginative geography, that is, the multiple *sites* at which exploration writing takes place but which are, in the last analysis, an imaginative construct available only through the literary spaces opened up by representation. This affords the critic the opportunity to see exploration writing not just as the movement of the pen but also as a rhetorically conditioned medium by which the exploration itself is modulated, imagined and created. This also conveys the insight that in scripting a place, the explorer is "loading" the place, replacing it, as it were, with potent symbolic media (of ink, paper, paint, lithography and, of course, the imaginary). Finally, this approach to exploration writing allows us to see, as Duncan and Gregory insist, that "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).

Yet these accounts have not a fully worked out *literary* theory, or a grammatology, a theory of writing. It may be helpful to speak of "spaces of representation" or the "spaces of travel", but, in the absence of a carefully set out

literary theory, this could very quickly degenerate into logocentric notions which seek a "real" geography in an "imaginary" geography, and vice versa. Indeed such investigations have very little to say about the aesthetic, literary and readership contexts of the exploration imaginary.

2.3 Literature on Narrative, Narrativity and Representation

Heinrich Barth's presence in the Sudan is an occasion for the continuous plotting of a narrative in which the Sudan -- its peoples, cultures, and landscapes figure, or are represented, *as a story*. It cannot be otherwise, that is, the Sudan represented as a *literal* fact outside the conventions of narrativity. This is because Barth could not have "represented" the so-called literal facts, without fabricating those same facts. In sum, then, Barth could not ever have dispensed with (literary) form, and used content (reality) instead. The issue of the role or otherwise of narrativity and the narrative frame of writing is what preoccupies the authors and positions reviewed below.

There is an enormous number of works on narrative. Nonetheless, the reader may find good overviews of this massive literature in Chatman (1978), Hawthorn (1987), Toolan (1988), Nash (1990) and Bradford (1997).

A good place to begin this review Said's remark that narrative, narration and narrativity (event, time, point of view) are fundamental processes which are at the heart of the "structuring, assimilating, or excluding one or another version of history (1989:221). In an important recent work Said writes:

> Stories [narratives] are at the heart of what explorers and novelists say about strange regions of the world [and] the method colonized people use to assert their own identity and the

> existence of their history. The battle in imperialism is over land... but when it came to who owned the land, who had the right to settle and work it, who kept it going, who won it back, and who plans its future -- these issues were reflected, contested, and even for a time decided in narrative (1993:xiii)

Said's view is that far from being a supplement or an excess, narrative is interactively tied with our being-in-the world, and with identity as a contested site "in which politics, tradition, history and interpretation converged" (Said 1989:221). If this is the case, then the confidence of the positivist historian that he can dispense with "storytelling" techniques, or that the so-called primary source is a purely factual document, is an illusion. This point is supported by Jameson, for whom narrative is an "all-informing process", the "central function or *instance* of the human mind [the] untranslatable designation in which... *representation* productively intersect[s] with... *presentation* ...the essentially narrative and rhetorical movement of language and writing through time" (1981:13).

Jameson's formulation may be seen as a variation on Aristotle's famous proposition in *Poetics* that narrative plays a crucial social and psychological function in all human societies; that plot is the most important element of narrativity; and that, finally, narrative structure involves the configuration of events within the structure of beginning, middle, and end. This, argues Aristotle, creates/makes a coherent, integrated whole (Aristotle 1991:65-261).

For Barthes, however, neither the configuration of events into a structure nor the plotting of constellationally significant events is innocent or value-free. According to Barthes, the privileging of characters in a narrative, and the hierarchy of knowledge and of power expressed by characters, can be explained by the fact that the narrative mode of representation is an ideological mode of representation.

For him, narrativity's ideological function can be seen in the way it creates the "subject" of power and hierarchy, the "subjectivity", in the words of White, "capable of bearing the 'responsibilities' of an 'object' of the law in all its forms" (White 1984:13). Following an analogy by Lacan, Barthes contends that narrativity, the ability to tell and assimilate stories, inculcates in the child a paradigm of conservative orderly, rule-governed behaviour (Barthes 1972:148-159).

In his seminal 1977 essay, Barthes attacks the illusion of a human-centered consciousness which claims to be able, in narrative, to look down on the world, and apprehend its structure or process, and thus represent the world itself, in the image of narrative, i.e., the formal coherency of narrativity. Such an arrogant and arrogating narrative representation, writes Barthes, is "imaginary", not real, that is, a *constituted* "meaning", not a *found* reality. For Barthes, then, reality, not narrativity (meaning), is always found rather than constituted. Hence his famous remark: "[B]eyond the narrational level begins the world" (1977:115). That is one reason for his argument that:

> Claims concerning the "realism" of narrative are therefore to be discounted... The function of narrative is not to 'represent', it is to constitute a spectacle.. Narrative does not show, does not imitate... 'what takes place' in a narrative is from the referential (reality) point of view literally *nothing;* 'what happens' is language alone, the adventure of language, the unceasing celebration of its coming (1977:124).

For Miller the reordering (configuration) of real events by narrativity does frequently serve the (ideological) "function" of the "affirmation and reinforcement, even the creation, of basic assumptions of a culture about human existence", in other words, its basic ideology or normativity (Miller 1995:71). He argues, for example, that listening to the same story again and again and again makes human beings learn

"the conventions of formulaic beginning and ending" (1995:70), and thus normalizes, and induces, their conformity to the norm (of the story and the "reality" of things). Of course, the story may never "conclude" this or finally achieve this end. Miller also shows how the sequencing of events (narrativity) makes "something happen with a vengeance" (74), that is, impacts on the world and supplies both a normativity to, and a perspective on, the world outside the story. This is why for Miller a narrative must have an initial situation, "a sequence leading to a change or reversal of that situation, and a revelation made possible by the reversal of the situation" (75). This narrational process requires, Miller argues, some use of personification "whereby character is created out of signs for example, the words on the page in a written narrative... However important plot may be, without personification there can be no storytelling" (75). According to Miller:

> Any narrative... to be a narrative... must have some version of these elements: beginning, sequence, reversal; personification, or more accurately and technically stated, *prosopopeia*, bringing protagonist, antagonist, and witness 'to life;' some patterning or repetition of elements surrounding a nuclear figure or a complex world (Miller 1995:75).

This could be used to study travel narratives which are not conventionally seen as fictional. Miller's view that some patterning of elements always surrounds a nuclear figure or a complex word is suggestive. Surely Barth is at one pole a nuclear figure, at another not. The diachronic frame shows him both focalizing and being focalized. As for the concept of the "complex word", it may be construed as a metaphor for many things in *Travels and Discoveries:* "discovery", the explorer-narrator's "gaze", or "sight" or "visual authority", even his nomination of the visible. An example of this is the moment at Kano when Gajere, Barth's guide, spots the

city's Dala Hill which the narrator fails, and admits he has failed, to see; only, however, for the latter to "dramatize" the unseen and "unspotted" Dala Hill by textualizing its absence as a sign of its presence (see TD 1:488). On the other hand, the "complex word" may be a metaphor for Barth the author himself who "coheres", so to speak, as both narrator and focalizer, narrator and narratee. All this suggests, as Miller would, that the "complex word" of a narrative may be the "locus of a set of perhaps incompatible meanings bound together by figurative displacements" (77).

In the light of Miller's insight, *Travels and Discoveries* is the narration (or the narrativity itself) which has *performatively* created the "things that happen" within its narrative universe. However, this "performative power" obscures or conceals the fact that rather than Barth or the narrator (as the case may be) "giving knowledge" to the natives (that is instructing them on how to be industrious natives, or on the direction of flow of their rivers, or the superiority of European ways) he is, in fact, receiving it as in his asking to be "guided" to the object of discovery, how to negotiate with a chieftain, etc. *Travels and Discoveries* gives the illusion of its being patterned (by the central character) around knowledge, that is, Barth's and the fictional narrator's story of "discovery". In truth, however, the narration and narrativity actually do show the narrator as himself patterned (by narration and narrativity!) around the power of narrative. This "power" of course includes the "represented" points of view or speech of the others, who are also indispensable focalizers in the story.

One key issue in the debate on the role of narrativity is whether it is a structure derived from the act of telling the story or is derived from the events

themselves. David Carr's intervention is predicated on the latter: that there is, he argues, a kinship between the "means-end" structure of action and the "beginning-middle-end of narrative" (1986:122). Carr's argument is that every account is "narrated after the fact"; and that it is not only novelists and historians who view "events in terms of their relation to later events" but all human subjects. Hegel's aversion to the preface was couched on the same grounds. Against those such as Louis Mink (1978) who think that stories are not lived but told, or that narrativity is a quality not of life but of art, Carr argues that human existence itself is patterned upon the structure of narrativity, for he claims that human beings strive, with varying degrees of success, to "occupy the story-tellers' position" with respect to their lives (1986:124-5). Carr also advances the proposition that:

> ...narrative texts as literary artefacts, whether fictional or historical ...such narratives must be regarded not as a departure from the structure of the events they depict, much less a distortion or radical transformation of them, but as an extension of their primary features (1986:131).

For Ricoeur, the author of an influential study of time and narrativity, the human experience of time is characterized by "discordance", and that it is in writing (literature) that this discordance is supplied a concord by means of the invention of a plot. Ricoeur's arguments are too complex to be summarized here. However, the gist of his argument is that narrative is a synthesis of the homogeneous and the heterogeneous that unites all the disparate elements of life within a coherent and harmonious whole. In other words, narrative is a "semantic innovation" which, through the resources of language, brings forth a new significance to the world. Thus for Ricoeur, narrativity does not describe the real word: it re-describes it

(1984:14, 102). For Ricoeur, then, narrative structure is distinct from the "real world": "The ideas of beginning, middle and end are not taken [by narrative] from experience: they are not traits of real action but effects of poetic ordering" (1984:67). Now the implication of this is that even seemingly uncomplicated activities such as analytical reflection are necessarily poetic acts, since to reflect on the world or on our place in it is to ascribe an imaginative, and thus meaningful, significance to events or processes.

The issues raised by Ricoeur have been complicated by recent approaches to narrative which aim to show the presence of narrativity even in the physical sciences, as a recent collection of essays on the subject has forcefully argued. According to this view, narrative *per se* is "indifferent to truth and reference" because, argues Lamarque, the appearance of a sentence or a name in a narrative "has no implications for the truth-value of the sentence or the denotation of the name". At the same time, however, "narratives can be about real or fictional characters and their descriptive content can be real or false" (Lamarque 1990:132). The power of this formulation lies in its dialectical treatment of narrativity and fiction. Lamarque shows, for example, that it was the structuralists' linguistic/formal approach to narrative that forced them to lay aside questions of referentiality. Unlike the historian who proceeds to impute a mono-causal structure to the exploration text, that is, as *only* a *factual*, matter-of-fact presentation, Lamarque recognizes that narrativity is indifferent to referentiality, fictionality, subject matter and discursive goals:

> At a deeper level, it is clear that we are not going to be able to distinguish fictional narratives from other kinds merely... in terms of what is "made up" "invented" or "a product of imagination" (Lamarque 1990:132).

Behind the above formulation lies a mass of difficult theories of language, reference, fictionality, consciousness and ontology, a discussion of which would take us far afield. Let us note, for the moment, that this argument of Lamarque's has great epistemic power. It is true, for example, that because narration involves imaginative sequencing, ordering, and structuring, it may be present in scientific, historical, philosophical and other analytical fields or textualities. On this view, *Travels and Discoveries* may or may not be a narrative discourse about a "real world" which may or may not exist independently of *Travels and Discoveries.* One reason for this, Lamarque would argue, is that "there is no pure, unmediated representation of extra-linguistic fact; there are other purposes served by words than merely describing how things are in the world" (137). Thus Lamarque's formulation allows a "positive" and a "negative" conception of "fictionality", respectively: "fiction is constructed and/or imagined; it is false, fabricated, contrary to fact, non-existence" (139).

Certain consequences, however, follow from this: the reader of a narrative could either read it as fictional or as factual; that is either by directing her attention to narrative form, or by adopting the perspective of truth-telling and truth-conditional commitment to narrative. In effect, then, fictionality is "not an inherent property of narrative" chiefly because questions about reference and truth-value are, according to Lamarque, open.

One attraction of this conception of narrativity is that it allows a view of the reading process (of forms of narrative) as an actively *re*-constructing discourse, so that it is the nature of the critical methods that the reader brings to bear on the narrative that would reveal the "secrets" of the text under study. That is, either as a narrativizing/poetic troping, or as a factual, truth-telling discourse. Despite this insight, however, the above proposition may lead to a vacuous relativism. It is hard to accept the proposition that it is the reader alone that either fictionalizes or "factualizes" the text.

Nevertheless, the significance of a pragmatics of narrativity for our study lies in Lamarque's suggestion that there is no logical transition from the formal features of narratives to their truth-value. On this view, the structuralists' mistake lies in reducing a narrative's "referential" commitments to its formal features. On the contrary: the novelist and the historian are both, according to Lamarque, storytellers. This is another way of saying that the task before the literary critic is the interrogation of the "referential" claims of the historian, and the rhetorical maneuvers of the novelist; for both are engaged in the act of "telling".

It is this insight that Bell (1990) and Nash (1990) have inflected from different angles. Bell, for example, seeks to answer the question of the "primordial" nature of narrative. His argument, briefly, is that the difference between two narratives, say a novel and a factual newspaper report, is not found in their formal features (as texts) but in their "recognized intentions, their implied contact with the reader" (Bell 1990:177-8). This is suggestive for studies of travel writing because the "intention" of travel narratives is the construction of otherness, of a discourse of

difference. But the reader (ideal or inscribed) is also implicated in this process. With Bell, one faces the philosophically interesting but hardly tenable postulate that it is the reader, rather than the text or indeed the author, who makes the text what it is, that is, either an exploration text or something else. Bell's is, to this extent, a Heideggerian hermeneutics for which narrative is both a mode of being-in-the-world and a process of "understanding" (the latter being the condition for the de-concealment of narrative).

For Nash, on the other hand, "every narration visibly represses another narration, the narration it leaves out, an alternative construction of signs" (1990:211). This means that narration is tied up with ideological and political questions, in Nash's phrase, with "someone's model of how to behave: of the kinds of things to say to ourselves and to each other, of what comes first, what comes last, what doesn't matter, and what shouldn't be said or thought at all, at least not in public" (212). If this is indeed the case, then narratives, historical, exploratory, or otherwise are, properly speaking, *institutional* and *normative* processes. Thus if *Travels and Discoveries* is conceptualized as a primary historical document, that is because some institution has made it so, or appropriated it as such, rather than the objective outcome of some transcendental criteria.

Wood (1997) echoes the above formulation when he writes that identity and selfhood are not given but constituted or constructed in narrative. And just as narrativity cannot ever achieve completion, so identity and selfhood, which, Wood argues, are necessarily incomplete and relational. His principal thesis is that "narrative could supply for the identity of persons and states what a metaphysical

self could no longer supply. And moreover would do so in a way that was both flexible, open to development, and knitted together the personal and the social, experience and language" (202). Wood insists that we should grasp the essential constructedness of narrative because it is a constructedness produced from a selective process that includes as it excludes. This means, Wood would add, that what is left out or ignored by one narrative calls for another narrative, rather than skepticism about narrative. On this reading, we need to call in another narrative whenever the "narrative of discovery" leaves out, erases, "forgets" or represses the other narrative.

Echoing Soren Kierkegaard and Paul Ricoeur, Wood argues that "what narrative self-interpretation offers is an interweaving of the private and the public in a way that fuses both symbolic and temporal horizons" (205). Thus Wood's double vision is this: while narrative might repress, it is indispensable to selfhood and identity; hence both the necessity of narrative and the "dangers of taking any one narrative too seriously" (208-9). Our task then, is, according to Wood, both to de-construct "these illusory unities" constructed in, and by, narrative and "keep open the dynamic possibilities of narrativizing" (209). Wood's formulations are to the point because it is in narrative, rather than in some extra-metaphorical space, that Barth's identity as a Christian, Explorer, Discoverer, Scientist, European, and all those grandiose claims to objectivity, rigour, and Enlightenment-type identity thinking are fabricated, fortified, and naturalized.

However, Wood does not ask the question, Why narrative? Wood fails to ask this question because for him narrative, or narrativity (the shifts in meaning) is

"natural" enough. It is here that White's work acquires a particular resonance, which is missing in Wood's. White's work is within *meta-history,* or how historical writing draws on a store of figurative language and plot-structures. For White, history is a narrative discourse (verbal fictions) the contents of which are as "much *invented* as *found*" (1978:82; original italics). According to White, to narrativize reality is to impose upon it the form of a story; that it is the impulse to "rank events with respect to their significance for the culture or group that is writing its own history that makes a narrative representation of real events possible" (1980:14).

White's argument, then, is that narrative representation requires, or in fact implicitly suggests, the existence of a *social* centre, indeed *authority:* "When...it is a matter of providing a *narrative* of real events, we must suppose that a subject of the sort that would provide the impulse to record its activities must exist" (16). On the basis of that argument White concludes that:

> ...narrative in general, from the folktale to the novel... has to do with the topics of law, legality, legitimacy, or, more generally, *authority* (1980:17)

On this conception, "narrativization" (the world or event already "speaking itself") is what human subjects do, for the world, White argues, does not present itself in the shape or form of well-made stories, "with central subjects, proper beginnings, middles, and ends". Hence his famous remark that a "narrative account is always a figurative account, an allegory" and that to "leave this figurative account out of consideration in the analysis of a narrative is ... to miss its aspect as allegory" (1984:24). Applied to *Travels and Discoveries,* it emerges that Barth's narrativization of many aspects of the Sudan may not add anything by way of

transfactual information or knowledge (of the Sudan as a "real event") but only a narrativity by which he has imposed a form on the Sudan. This surely says a great deal about historians such as Smith and Usman who think that they could extract "historical" (non-allegorical, non-figurative) information or knowledge from *Travels and Discoveries*. It is thus false to assert that only the "content" of the narrative (referential knowledge) has truth-value, and all other things being mere "ornament". This is the full implication of White's view that narrativization is poetic in nature, and that "the narrative code is drawn from the performative domain of poesis rather than that of noesis" (1984:19. See also White 1973:1ff.).

White also argues that "every fully realized story" points, as an allegory, to a moral, and thus endows real and/or imaginary events "with a significance that they do not possess as a mere sequence" (1980:18). White, then, narrativity always involves moralization:

> ...narrativity, certainly in factual storytelling and probably in fictional storytelling as well, is intimately related to, if not a function of, the impulse to *moralize* reality that is, to *identify* it with the social system that is the source of any morality that we can imagine. (1980:18).[11]

On the above view, Barth's text, whether as historical or fictional, narrative, is a story in which the Sudan, the Other, wears the mask of a meaning (chaos, slavery, degeneration, lack of progress, savagery, barbarism). To that extent, *Travels and Discoveries* is a narrative *par excellence:* It has had a *plot* all along. That is one reason why Barth's historical readers cannot raise these issues because for them, "narrativity" could only be an embarrassment since its presence shows precisely that the "reality" which Barth and his text speak about is *invented,* rather than found. In a

word, then, the Sudan which Barth's text purports to describe has been put there by "narrative techniques", rather by the truth of the presentation.

Certain consequences follow from the above formulation. First, the text or "writing" is not, and cannot be, a direct, simple and unproblematic representation of reality. This again means that thought, or language or text (metaphor or symbolization), cannot "represent" its object *directly* or without mediation. Historians such as Kirk-Greene, Prothero, Ayandele and others generally ignore Barth's narrativization of its object by assuming his text is *co-extensive* with transcendentally real Sudanese societies. But what they never admit is that they are, in the last analysis, implicitly searching for the *truth* of the text.

Second, all writing, or textuality, involves representation which, really, is the re-invention of an object (a person or such) in language (codes) and in narrativity ("meaning"). For example, in *Travels and Discoveries,* the monkey-bread tree *(Adansonia digitata)* metonymically *stands for* the Hausa ethnicity. So here a single concept "*covers*" a multitude of separate individuals. Thus narrative representation may involve, and does involve, a *metonymic reduction,* the narration (representation) of a series of event-sequences *within* other networks of signs (landscapes, places, subjects, food, articles, and so on). That is why narrativity is a *language* ("systems" and "codes"), or what Miller calls a "body of rules for combining and deciphering representational signs" (Miller 1995:13). That is yet again why representation *qua* narrativization is symbolic: "Words and whole texts represen[ting]... states of affairs without in the least resembling what they represent" (Miller 1995:14). In that sense, therefore, representation is tied up with larger social,

ideological and political structures (reading formations, audiences, interpretive communities and textual publics).

Third, in all narratives[12], especially in narrative representations, *reality* is an *absence*. Thus to represent or narrativize something or someone implies to displace, as it were, absence; and to attempt, in a word, to achieve (a) presence. This is borne out by Mick Gidley's insight that in the process of representing the non-European others, the European explorer/writer is also representing (narrativizing) his own self (Gidley 1992: 1-3). And if Fabian is right that representation implies "the prior assumption of a *difference* between reality and its doubles" (Fabian 1990:753-4), then the claims of Ayandele that Barth was imbued with a restless selflessness, with a stoical fibre, misses the fact that it is in narrating and narrativizing others that Barth acquired the *need* to represent himself, and thus the desire for a self-*presence*. It is thus in *writing* that Barth has configured areas of *incompleteness*, namely the areas of *shifting* signifiers (narrativity).

To this extent, the endemic shortcomings of the empiricist historical method come to the fore: historical sources such as *Travels and Discoveries* are, because they were or have been written, forms of representation and narrativity, which are in turn forms of meaning-production in which language is, and has been, used as Hall (1997:1 5) would say "to say something meaningful about, or to represent, the world meaningfully, to other people". It is thus the case that the people, events and experiences that Barth's text conveys are *representations* because they only take on meaning and become objects of "knowledge" within the discursive, rhetorical and tropological (figurative) "space" of representation. Hence the terms "narrative

representation", or "symbolic representation", etc. Hall argues precisely that when he writes that "representation is a practice, a kind of 'work', which uses material object [texts] and effects" (1997:26).

No historian has drawn attention to the fact that Barth in *Travels and Discoveries* presents himself as the rational, modernizing, creative and demiurgic subject. As the example of Bacon has demonstrated, to be a modern, rational, and creative *subject* is, transfactually and analytically, to be a *poetic* subject, to become, in Nietzche's ominous phrase, what one is, a creatively transcendental figure, a *superman* (Nietzsche 1911: 180). The implication of the preceding view for the study of Barth is that to study *Travels and Discoveries* as an accretive form of knowledge founded on plausible, empirically-grounded statements is unsophisticated, perhaps even naive. In the chapters that follows, this Thesis demonstrates that, far from being a scientifically fortified and historically corrigible piece of knowledge, Barth's text is a narrativization, a representation, a rhetoric, a "standing -- for" a *difference* between reality, the Sudan, and the *double* of that reality, the *Travels and Discoveries* itself.

NOTES

1. The Sudan was, contrary to Davidson, first mapped by its indigenous literati before the alien explorers. We know, for example, that the first map of the Sudan that Frederick Hornemann sent to Europe was a rough map sketched specifically for him by a *marabout*. On this map was shown the location of Kebbi, Daura, Kano, and so on. We also know that Hugh Clapperton was presented, by Muhammad Bello, with a map of the Sokoto Empire. This only goes to show that any scholarship on the explorers must come to terms with the issue of the contribution of

local knowledges to the European knowledge-building project on Africa. On Bello's map of the Empire, See Denham *et al* (1985: 331).

2. Ayandele's conception of Barth as a humanist and a great believer in "mankind" does not stand up to critical scrutiny. Blumenberg (1983:409) has pointed out that "mankind", for the Enlightenment *philosophes*, means "the civilized being of the European type". As for Ayandele's praise for Barth's abolitionist sentiment, he fails to realize abolitionist ideology really began when Africans were re-imaged as a market rather than as commodity. According to Newbury (1965:17), the abolitionists were really those who held that "if the soil of Africa were made to produce more goods for export [to Europe] the sale of Africans would cease".

3. Usman's historical "explanation" is oriented towards grasping history as a way of providing the key to understanding its course, so that the historian or such could take the "correct action" (148). This is a conservative Hegelian notion, grounded as it is in Hegel's "philosophy of history", which, Hegel says, "should enable us to comprehend all the ills of the world including the existence of evil, so that the thinking spirit may be reconciled with the negative aspects of existence" (Hegel 1975:42-43). But this reconciliation may take authoritarian and intolerant forms, as may be seen in Usman's emphasis on terms such as "adequate", "correct", "grasp", "faithful", "process", "evidence", "reliability", "accuracy", "penetrated", "veracity", "proper", "prisoner", "direction", etc. This is the vocabulary of violence and aggression.

4. Although Ranke would later (after 1850) come to reject "romanticism", the aesthetic-literary conception, or what White (1973:164) calls "the Comic vision", remained undimmed.

5. White (1978:82) accurately captures this when he writes that historical narratives are "verbal fictions, the contents of which are as much *invented* as *found* and the forms of which have more in common with their counterparts in literature than they have with those in the sciences".

6. This is not to suggest that the world or event is mind-dependent, or that the conditions of being are the conditions of the linguistic expression of being. It is to suggest, rather, that social reality (event) is *not* known before it is interpreted or made constellationally significant by human purposes.

7. Other excellent texts are Blunt (1994), Blunt and Rose (1994) and Mills (1991). Nevertheless, they will not be reviewed here because their focus falls outside the scope of this study.

8. On this powerful novel, see Makdisi (1994) who reads it as "emplotted" in the tragic mode.

9.This criticism of Mudimbe-Boyi should be qualified by the observation of Shortland, who has criticized Roland Barthes' construction of Japan as a "fictive and invented name", not a real country. But according to Shortland, Barthes' "fictive Japan" lives "by its contrast to the other less than fictive West" (Shortland 1989:19). The point is that even Barthes' conscious attempt to avoid the discourse of othering only led him to create Japan as an Other, as a "region of darkness". Perhaps Mudimbe-Boyi is in the end justified in her postulate that the very notion of the journey as "metaphor" implies the notion of othering, and thus the allegorization of space. On this, see Barthes (1983).

10. According to Said (1978:240), the Western explorer's or writer's imperative is to "see" the Other "panoptically". But this, argues Said, is not easy, since to achieve this *means* to "defeat", so to speak, narrative. This, Said contends further, generates a constant pressure, and the "source of this pressure is narrative", and that "narrative is the specific form taken by written history to counter the permanence of vision [synchrony]".

11. Here "narrativity" is synonymous with "meaning-production" through "performance": the narrator emplots the events in such a way as to permit its being read as either tragic or comic or farcical. That is to say: the narrator "imposes" a particular story-type on the events (and thus endows them with "meaning"). On this, see White (1980:20-21).

12. In "narrativity" it is "plot" rather than the "causal laws" (of science) which serves the function of the "universal" in scientific discourse. In any case, there can be no *literal* (factual) representation of events in textual representation.

CHAPTER THREE:

AUDIENCES, READERS, AND TEXTUALITY

> In seeing how the book is made we see also what it is made *from*: this defect which gives it a history and a relation to the historical ---P. Macherey (1978:80).

3.1 The Post-Renaissance Reading Cultures of Travel

Any reader of *Travels and Discoveries* would probably be struck by Barth's anxiety towards his readership, which is indicated by his constant reference and gestures to the reader. His writing is clearly intended for specific audiences and reading subjects, or what reader-response critics have variously called the inscribed reader, the ideal reader or the implied reader[1]

Equally, Barth writes in the preface to his text that the text, that is his Narrative, has been *"enhanced* by the views and illustrations with which it is *embellished"* (TD1: xxxii; my italics). The words *enhanced* and *embellished* should not be lost on the perceptive reader. Ashcroft *et al* (1998:97) relates how, from the mid-18th century onwards, European exploration accounts of foreign lands were required by their reading formations to be not only *factual* but also (fictionally) *embellished* along the inherited canons of Enlightenment self-assertion and Romantic passion, that is, to be as rhetorically "capturing" as military conquest or commercial exploitation.

The point of these remarks is that Barth's text was written for a specific readership, which constituted the text's institutional, or what Roland Barthes (1983) would call extra-textual, support, and that Barth was writing for, and within, a

reading formation governed by a specific set of more or less contradictory cultural and political rhetorics, and that, finally, this very realization should cast doubt on not only the reliability of his account of the Sudan from the referential point of view but also on the conventional view of *Travels and Discoveries* as a non-literary, non-fictional and non-rhetorical text.

This chapter will also attempt to show the cultural and political rhetorics that governed, and still govern, the reception of *Travels and Discoveries* within its first and subsequent reading communities, which, if Stanley Fish (1980) is right, were, and are, also its veritable interpretive communities. The chapter will also analyze what might be called the "productive activation" of the text by Lord Frederick D. Lugard in his endeavour to subjugate the central Sudan, and its subsequent reception or appropriation by academic historians, whose works also constitute the "interested" reading formation of *Travels and Discoveries*.

The strategy of such procedure is meant to show that the text deposited by Barth is, contrary to received wisdom, constituted by its location and activity within a definite intertextual context, and that its "readings" of the Sudan, and the historians' readings of it, are interpretations, or rather reading formations within which Barth himself wrote, and within which historical and cultural responses to his text are presented, adopted, circulated and contested. This means paying close attention to three interrelated issues: the extra-textual support available to Barth, the subject positions of the author and his readers, and finally, the issue of what kind of a text Barth's readers have in their hands. Meanwhile, we should take note of the historical rise of the reading publics of exploration literature.

In an important study of the philosopher John Locke (1634-1704), James Tully (1993:140) notes that virtually every European thinker since the 18th century had, in his library, books or accounts "of European exploration [and] colonization of aboriginal peoples", and that an extensive knowledge and interest in European contact with the non-European world was a "common knowledge" within the European *literati*. Barker (1978:22-3), Nussbaum (1994:138-146) and Wheeler (1999:38-39) have shown how "fantasy literature", very close to modern science-fiction writing about alien planets, was widely consumed in Europe between the 17th and the 18th century. This cultural desire to consume "fantasy, knowledge and literature about Africa", as Wheeler phrases it, was also the stuff of children's literature. It was this, says McLynn (1993:339-359), which formed the childhood fascination with "blank" Africa, or the "Dark Continent" of many a would-be explorer such as Mungo Park, Major Laing, Rene Caillie, Hugh Clapperton, and Heinrich Barth, as the latter himself says in the preface to his Narrative. A common ingredient of education in 18th century Western Europe, says Barker, was geography, which was "an essential ancilliary to history" (1978:22-23). As Barker adds, geographical works, in the form of travellers' tales, formed an important part of these studies, and for the general public, "the most appropriate form of leisure reading, particularly for younger boys" (22).

By the middle of the 18th century, the genre of travel literature had become, argues Pratt (1992:15), the canonical element in the cultural repertoire of Enlightenment Europe. The celebrated novelist Daniel Defoe (1600-1731), for example, could write, in *The Compleat Gentleman* (1730), that the complete

gentleman was he who could "make a tour of the world in books [and] make himself master of the geography of the universe in maps, atlasses and measurements" (cited in Pratt 1997:15). In fact texts of travel to what were considered exotic or savage lands formed a "planetary consciousness", a sort of basic element constructing modern Eurocentrism and the global-scale meaning one finds in *Travels and Discoveries*. These texts "circulated round and round Europe for decades, on oral circuits and written" (Pratt 1992:18). Such writing "in turn produced other parts of the world for the imaginations of Europeans" (ibid). In the case of representations of Africa, Wheeler (1999:15) argues that:

> ...it was through travel that most [Europeans] gained their ideas about Africans and Africa.. Indeed ...travel literature was second only to theological texts in popularity during the eighteenth century, and, although Africa was one of the least-known places, it figured prominently in the many compendiums of travel published during the eighteenth century. In fact, almost four times as many books about Africa appeared in the first half of the eighteenth century as in all of the previous century (Wheeler 1999:15).

The plots of such travel narratives consisted of depictions of cannibals, ferocious creatures, the sickness, the physical discomfort, the death from fevers, disease and the enormous quantities of ants, flies and mosquitoes in those lands. In such narratives, the actor, the principal character, was often the land itself, the so-called "white man's grave". It should also be added that the writers, and the actual travellers, even the armchair ones, were male, "merchants, crews and physicians connected with the slave trade" (Wheeler 1999:19). Eze (1997:4-8) contends that the major philosophers of 18th century Europe relied very heavily on travel narratives in their treatises on Africa and dark-skinned peoples.[2] Both these and the

travel accounts were avidly read and reappeared wholesale in the popular press, magazines and in discussions in coffee houses.

Said (1993:83), echoing work by Adams (1983), suggests that travel narratives and imaginative literature, such as the novel, were virtually indistinguishable. The novel, adds Said, had, since the sixteenth century, interacted directly in "style and form [with] the narratives of... exploration voyages [which] laid the foundations of the great colonial empires'', and that both the novel and the exploration narrative were read carefully by "foreign-office executives, colonial bureaucrats, and military strategists and by intelligent novel-readers educating themselves in the fine points of moral evaluation, literary balance, and stylistic finish''(114). Jardine, Secord, and Spury (1996), and Miller and Reill (1996) have also echoed this point in their studies on the professionalization of writing in Post Enlightenment Europe. Not only was exploration publishing profitable, it was also "professional'' in the sense that exploration writers and publishers increasingly came to rely on professional writers and editors to ensure, in the words of Pratt (1992:88), "a competitive product, often transforming manuscripts completely, usually in the direction of the novel.''

Thus emerged, by the 19th century, a complex "textual'' and "discursive'' Africa, the sort *Travels and Discoveries* would re-present, and which had become, at about the same time, an "Africa'' suitable for study in the "academia, for display in the museum, for reconstruction in the colonial office, for illustration in anthropological, biological, linguistic, racial, and historical theses about mankind'' (Said 1978:7). This was why Barth, despite his academic and historicist pretensions,

had to do the highly popular "manners and customs'' description of the Sudan. This sort of description was intended to create, and in its turn was created by, what Wheeler (1999) and Pratt (1992) call "the domestic paradigm'' whereby the exotic, the strange and the odd was/is assimilated into European popular imagination.

Yet the intense public interest generated by travel literature was sustained by what Pratt calls the intricate alliances of European intellectual and commercial elites, not simply through ideational or ideological apparatuses of reading but through the development of the print and publishing industry. All over Europe, the genre of the exploration narrative was, and had to become, a *genre of publication,* due, largely, to the alliance between the intellectual and commercial wings of the bourgeoisie. It was in the 19th century, for example, that the geographical society became a feature of many cities. These societies were essentially "gentlemen's clubs where men of science, travel writers, government officials, and wealthy amateurs met to share their impressions of distant lands'' Spurr (1996:50). These gentlemen's clubs published monthly or quarterly bulletins, which were often "richly illustrated and filled with travel narratives, memoirs, anecdotes, and speeches by prominent men, including colonial administrators''(ibid). Such "societies'' became some form of intellectual community, which awarded gold medals, cash subsidies, a praise and international recognition to the explorers (Rotberg 1970:1; Trotter 1988:147). It is little surprise, then, that the geographical societies are regarded by the critics of imperialism as "a prime mover in the imperial conquests" of large parts of the non-European world (Ashcroft *et al* 1998:33).

It was in that context that publishing travel narratives became profitable. This in turn gave rise to new forms of knowledge, new ways of framing the unfamiliar, new models for inscribing difference and of encoding the emerging imperial relationship between Europeans and, say, Africans. For example, Trotter (1988:147) narrates the story of many an enthusiast of exploration in the Geographical Societies, of men such as Sir Harry Johnstone, who laboured to compile volumes on the pioneers of Empire, that is, explorers who framed the colonial relations or the imperial frontier; and of publishers who wanted exploration texts in which the daring and heroism of the white male explorer is set against savage peoples, exotic landscapes, wild tribes, "dangerous beasts [and] wonderful birds." In such representations, the domestic or institutional reader is presented with new ways of framing the old subjects of romantic sensibility: passions, culture- or victim-heroes, subjectivist rhetoric, and individuality.

It was this cumulative impact of writing, print and publishing that made *Travels and Discoveries* possible, and created its first reading formation. The information provided by exploration narratives -- accounts of exotic plants, mountain ranges, rich landscapes, mysterious cities and rivers, fertile plains, sensationalist account of slave raiding, powerful chiefmen, exotic sexuality -- were devoured by merchants, foreign and colonial office policy makers, abolitionists, natural historians, anthropologists and imaginative writers such as poets and novelists. Reviews and periodicals employed, and eagerly sought, reviewers and editors of exploration books; publishers put out illustrated travel or exploration books. Thus by 1850, the year of Barth's journey to the Sudan, a veritable public

sphere had formed around such representations, and this was reinforced not only by the material culture described above, but by the rising authority and prestige of science which invested heavily in factual, descriptive texts. These texts were crucial in the legitimation of scientific curiosity and authority as analytically global projects. But as a linguistic apparatus, or practice, of powerful institutional forces, the exploration narrative had to be "journalistic'' if it was to effectively "mediate'' between the allegedly highbrow disinterestedness of the man of science and the larger popular cultural and reading formations.

This explains why *Travels and Discoveries* is a composite discourse, not an integrated text. This is Barth's way of "gesturing'' or responding to his text's more or less contradictory and composite reading formations. For example, *Travels and Discoveries* has to be "journalistic" or approximate to the "tourist's guide,'' hence its creation, for the popular reader, of *site* as *sight,* that is a site that can be both read and "visually'' imagined. Barth surely is acutely aware of the needs of the armchair traveller, hence his inscription of the site within a visualism in which *reading* is, or becomes, *analogous* to sightseeing, namely the conversion, as Gregory (1999:117) would put it, of " 'sites' into sights"[3]

As composite text, *Travels and Discoveries* has to "manage'' the Sudan as a *producible* space, or as what Gregory (1999:116) calls in a different context "a serialized space of constructed visibility'', which has to be rendered as a specific object which, however, has to be seen or viewed as a multi-dimensional object by specific yet heterogeneous audiences or readerships. This can be illustrated with the representative passage below:

> A few cattle were grazing here and there, but they looked very sickly and emaciated, and skeletons of others were lying about in all directions, proving the ravages that disease had made among them; for besides the fact that general epidemic diseases visit the cattle in these regions. The conquering tribe settled in this quarter having had to sustain a long siege against the enemy, most of their cattle, being cooped up in the town, had perished for want of pasture. Not withstanding all these disasters, the inhabitants of Kalliul stood their ground; for the Fulbe hereabouts are a very warlike race, and are excellent archers. Several of them, attracted by the news of the arrival of a caravan with corn, of which they stood much in need, rushed past us on horseback as we were looking out for a place where we might take up our quarters with some degree of safety. Leaving two other salt-manufacturing hamlets... we descended at length from a higher slope crowned by a cluster of well-built but at present deserted huts... We remained in this poor hamlet the following day, and, being aware of the great distress which prevailed in the whole of this tract of country... my servants soon returned with the news that the distressed [Fulbe] had taken from the fataki or native traders all their corn by force... The site of our hamlet was highly interesting to me, and I soon set out for a stroll around this artificial mound of rubbish. It was of considerable size... consisting as it did of nothing but the soil of the valley itself, from which the saline particles had been extracted (TD3:163-64).

As this passage indicates, Barth has something for all categories of his reading formations. For the armchair traveller, or the romantic poet or novelist, the place is "signposted" so that he or she, the reader that is, can read it as a series of sites and thus reproduce it as a sight, a *meaningful sight,* an imaginative landscape. Indeed the artist may even attempt to paint the *scene.* It is instructive that the narrator uses the word *site* (p.164), which, he says, he finds *interesting.* Note the inscription of the "site" as one of "considerable size", and the hint that it is of "the saline particles", and so on. For the "commercial" reader, the abundance of cattle and the hint that there could be abundant corn are doubly significant. For the abolitionist, or the so-called enemy of the slave's suffering, there is the implicit suggestion of slave raiding or the oppression of the local merchants by the

"conquering race", the Fulbe. There is clearly portrayed an active *colonial* or *imperial* relationship between the Fulbe and the larger native population. There is sickness there, mosquitoes here, excellent hunts over there, native *traders* over here. Thus several "discourses" converge in this passage, from naturalist, commercialist, imperialist, journalistic, romantic, scientific to abolitionist and sentimentalist.

The critical reader can easily see how the above passage is inscribed within a figurative economy torn between *popular* and *lettered,* informational and experential writing. Barth, or his text, strives to convey both the *naked truth* of the site, the oppression by the Fulbe and the ravages of nature (disease) *and* the *beauty,* the *serenity* of the site *(embellishment).* Barth as both the author and narrator attends all at once to the informational needs of the man of science, the naturalist, and that of the man of sensibility, the romantic, the artist, the embellisher. This is one reason why Barth's text is embellished, that is, illustrated with sketches and engravings of indigenous scenes of slave hunting, breathtaking scenery, and portraits of exotic subjects.

Embellishment is indeed necessary for exploration narrative. According to Fisher and Bumsted (1982:17), the European explorer-writer just has to embellish his account, or the details of travel, or what he thought he had seen because, from the 1790s onwards, embellishment was, and has been "the stuff of marketable travel writing" (See also, on this, MacLaren 1992:55). Such embellishment, which Barth admittedly carried out for his Narrative, is part of the necessary *transmission* of a travel text in which the text *informs* and *confirms,* and it is itself informed and confirmed by, the imperial or home culture. According to MacLaren (1992:56),

embellishment is the process whereby the exploration text is "prepared/implored/elevated for the press of that culture". A good illustration of this is Barth's abolitionist sentiment, which will be studied in detail below. According to Debrunner (1979:283), 19th century European, especially German, writers stuck to "old cliches whenever Africans appeared in their work at all," and that illustrated and sensationalized anti-slavery books were "the fashion in the 1850s."

The point is that Barth invented as much as he found. In other words, Barth was/is writing within a *literary* tradition and *genre* very well know to both the public and the domestic reader. His text layers and sediments, is itself a layering and sedimentation of now powerful now *aporetic,* now learned now popular, imaginative geographies, histories and natures which shape, have shaped and will shape, the expectations of the reader. The conclusion, then, is inescapable: that *Travels and Discoveries* emerged from, is the complex historical-discursive and literary product of, cultures of abolitionist sentiment, imperial-colonial relations/imagination, learned and popular romance, natural history, commercial geography, and, not least, romantic poetry.

Nowhere is this demonstrated than by the discursive, literary and patronage networks which *funded* Barth's travel, subsequent writing, and the political and cultural rhetoric which influenced the reception of his Narrative by the literary institutions of the day, and by the ideal reader, the arch-imperialist Lord Lugard, and Post-Enlightenment academic historians since 1913. For as Bennett (1992:217) correctly says, a "reading effect", for example, the meaning-effect of *Travels and*

Discoveries, does not pre-exist the "reading formation", the audiences and interpretive communities, in which is it embedded.

An examination of the production, embedding, and re-embedding of these meaning-effects should be preceded by the tracing of the cultural-historical emergence of the institutional and discursive formations, or contexts, within which Barth's travels took place, or unfolded. This brings to light the fact that Barth did not create or write his Narrative out of his lived-experience in the Sudan alone but also textually organized his experiences in ways intended to have a "positive" impact on his audiences and ideal readers. In this context, Boahen's (1964:203) claim that it was Barth's situation as an "eye-witness to the brutalities of the slave trade [that made him] passionately interested in its abolition and civilization of Africa" is simple-minded.

3.2 Ideologies of Reception: Abolition, Commerce, Pax Britannica

In 1788, the African Association was established in London. Its main objective was the discovery of the inland parts of Africa, namely the Sahara and the Western Sudan. There were other societies interested in the exploration of Africa, namely abolitionist, or anti-slavery, societies such as Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade (1787), Anti-Slavery Society, formed in 1823, and the Society for the Extinction of the Slave Trade and for the Civilization of Africa, formed in 1840. There had, before the latter, been missionary societies such as the Society for Missions to Africa and the East, founded in 1799. Even these missionary societies were tied up to commercial interests. As Moorhouse puts it, many prominent missionaries such as Sir Robert Peel and Mr. Gurney "enlarged upon the

commercial opportunities that might follow from cleansing Africa of all pagan practices.'' Moorhouse reports Mr. Gunnery discoursing on the day when the Society for Missions to Africa "might obtain wool and indigo in great quantities from Africa'' (1973:30). Finally, there were numerous geographical societies in Britain and on the Continent, the most famous being the Royal Geographical Society of London. Even the British Library, and the rising natural historians inspired by the work of the Swedish naturalist Carl von Linne (Linnaeus) (1707-1779) were also interested in African exploration. At about the same time (1823-1841), the British Government was taking a more aggressive commercial and imperial policy towards trade with Africa, occasioned by the loss of the North African export outlets. Report after report from British consuls in the Sahara and the Western African coast, and from merchants and Foreign Office bureaucrats spoke of the "commercial opportunities awaiting Britain in the interior and urging that steps should be taken to exploit them'' (Boahen 1964:6).

Thus, in the case of West Africa, exploration went hand in hand with abolitionism, commercial geography, economic and missionary imperatives and scientific curiosity. By the time of Barth's journey (November 1849), abolition, commerce, science and economics had formed one veritable ideological formation of exploration. It was against this background that the travels of Hornemann, Park, Major Paddie, Dochard and Gray, Laing and Denham and Clapperton and Oudney to West Africa took place.[4] For example, Oudney, Denham, and Clapperton were told in their briefs to not only explore the country of Bornu and of the Niger (in terms of their rivers, natural products and vegetable and mineral productions) but

also to popularize "specimens of British manufacturers such as light clothes, knives, razors, files, saws...hammers, tea-trays, fish hooks, drugs, and blotting paper" (Boahen 1964:54).

Virtually every explorer sent to the Sudanese interior came back, if he came back, with sensational stories of slave raiding and slave trading. Richie and Lyon, Clapperton and Denham, for example, argued that as long as the raids for slaves in the interior continued, "no exploration could be done", and that "only by the establishment of commercial contacts with the people of the interior and by supplying their needs in exchange for indigo, ivory, gum, and ostrich feather that the traffic in slaves could be extirpated" (Boahen 1964:69,72). In this endeavour to "open up" West Africa to British capital and the abolitionist sentiment, these explorers were repeating the long-standing arguments of Wilberforce and Granville Sharp, two key abolitionists, that "if the soil of Africa were made to produce goods for export the sale of Africans would cease" (Newbury 1965:17).

This was how abolitionist ideas and commercial aspirations became united. For example, one Paul Read advocated that the British Government should "send an expedition to take possession of one or two of the Islands [on] the Niger" (Boahen 1964:94). Private individuals such as MacGregor Laird established The African Inland Commercial Company, whose objective was direct commerce with the Sudan, and the establishment of a permanent settlement on the Niger-Benue Confluence, "for the purpose of collecting the various products of the country" (Laird and Oldfield 1837:4). It was also argued by Laird and Oldfied that "by introducing legitimate commerce with all its attendant blessings into [the Sudan, the

Company was] striking a mortal blow at that debasing and demoralising traffic which has for centuries cursed that unhappy land.'' (ibid).

In 1837, Thomas F. Buxton, one of the leading propagandists in the Society for the Extinction of the Slave Trade, launched a campaign in which it was said that Africa would be delivered by calling forth its own resources. Buxton wrote, "The real remedy, the true ransome for Africa, will be found in her fertile soil". His memorable phrase, that "it is the Bible and the plough that must regenerate Africa'', became, says Moorhouse (1973:23), "the battle-cry of the missionary''. The practicalities of this principle meant, for Buxton, the military occupation of the continent, including the colonization of the Niger region. According to Buxton, all wars in the interior were occasioned by the hunt for slaves, and that such wars were conducted with extreme brutality and high mortality rate. One notable method of Buxton's was his heavy reliance on the accounts of explorers on the subject, and which he collected together under one cover. Buxton, we are told

> collected together for the first time accounts by African explorers of the wars that were raging in the interior and the raids carried out of the capture of slaves. He also assembled descriptions of the brutalities and loss of life caused by such raids and the march across the Sahara to the north coast. He informed his readers, for instance, that 'the Mohammedan towns of Jenne, Timbuctoo, Kano, Suckatoo [Sokoto] in Houssa, Kouka and Angornu in Bornou, Wawa or Wara [Wao] the capital of Darfur are so many large warehouses where stores of human merchandise are kept for the supply of the Arab carriers or traders who convey them in caravans across the desert (Boahen 1964:101).

Buxton's ideas were extremely popular, and caught the imagination of the British public of the period. His ideas were common currency within the societies of the period, and were also enthusiastically embraced by the African Civilization Society, the various missionary groups, and the British Government through the

Secretary of State for the Colonies, Lord John Russell. It is noteworthy that in May 1857, Barth had baptized one of the two young men he took back to England after Buxton, the so-called "friend of the African race" (Kirk-Greene and Newman 1971: 12). Buxton once appeared before the congress of the Church Missionary Society. His speech is reported in Moorhouse (1973:28) thus:

> What was the state of Africa, exclaimed Buxton. Why, it was one universal slaughterhouse, as was proved upon evidence that could not be disputed. What was its trade! A trade in the bodies of its inhabitants. (Cheers.) Its religion was human sacrifice (Loud cheers.) Its trade swept off and mowed down multitudes every day in the year and every hour in the day. Multitudes, did he say! Why, thousands were destroyed in the nightly combustions which took place -- thousands fell by day travelling the burning sands; and as to a slave-ship, it was impossible to describe, except in the words of Scripture [Bible], which said: 'A pestilence walketh upon the waters'; nay, the very shark knew the slave-ship to be a barque of blood, and expected from it his daily sustenance. (Loud Cheers)[5]

By the 1840s, the abolitionists, the merchants, the naturalists, and the policy makers of the Foreign Office were agreed that it was the political instability of the interior, the chronic wars and slave-hunts more than anything else, that stood in the way of the extension of legitimate trade, and the demise of slave trading within African societies themselves (McLynn 1993:184-212). By the time of Barth's mission, the popular sentiment was that the Government should lead the way and open up the Sudan, the Niger regions, to British commerce by establishing "a colony which would serve a dual purpose as a centre of civilization and a depot for British traders'' (Boahen 1964:97). Lugard would, while citing the authority of Barth's allegedly eye-witness account, make the same arguments in 1900, in his

deep desire to overthrow the sovereignty of the central Sudanese societies, whom he saw as "warrens" for the commercial hunting of the "pagan-slaves".

It is in this context that Debrunner (1979:262) speaks of the exploration of Africa in the 1850s as being watched, in Britain and Germany, for example, in the "same way as the exploration of space is news in our time". The public interest in Africa generated by the abolitionist, missionary and official institutions gave Africa a news value so intense that there was no sector of British or Western European society which had a comparable emotional or informational "investment" in news about what Debrunner calls the interior, the wild bush, the lions, gorillas and the "wild" Africans. In an important sense, both the abolitionists, missionaries and official policy-makers about Africa on the one hand, and the early explorers such as Lyon, Richie, Park, Laing, Clapperton and Denham on the other were, besides their practical-utopian project, satisfying what Debrunner calls the European public's need for stories of "exotic adventure and tough life" (262). This may explain why Barth had to bring back to Europe a collection of *exotica* such as native craft, clothes, manuscripts, and human specimen in the form of Abbega and Dorugu.[6]

3.3 Reception and the Pre-Publication Audiences

The fact that Barth has great anxiety about his audience should alert the critical reader to the ideology behind the writing and reception of texts. Not only does he regularly pause the narrative to indicate the significance of what he is narrating, but also attempts to guide his audience's response. Railton (1993) has usefully introduced a distinction between the "reader" and "audience". The "reader", he suggests, is anyone reading a book at a particular time, while

"audience'' should be used to designate the specific group or the reading public for whom the writer originally wrote or addressed his text. In the light of this distinction, the readers of *Travels and Discoveries* are all those who came into existence *after* Barth's text was written; or rather those who were, or are now, processing the published text, namely, for the purposes of this chapter, Lord Lugard, whom we shall designate as the "ideal reader'', and a selection of academic historians, whom we shall call the "interested readers''.

The audience of *Travels of Discoveries,* on the other hand, are precisely these: the abolitionist movement of the 19th century, the Geographical Societies of Britain, France and Prussia, the merchants and other organized commercial concerns of the period, the British Government (the Foreign Office, and the Colonial Office), the Christian Missionary Movements, and, not least, the popular reader, the domestic subject. Of course, this distinction between the audience and the reader is only an analytical one, and not an ontological requirement.

Barth, in other words, *wrote* for a specific audience, and this should imply that his text is a complex or mediated *response* to the actual reading public available to him as a professional writer in the 1850s. Barth hoped that such an audience would buy, read, and understand his text, and help to execute the programmatic vision of his book. It was this that shaped Barth and his text's ambitions and anxieties about performing for that specific audience. And if, as will be seen, this audience was *there* in his mind as an internalized construct, and if indeed Barth had hoped to *perform successfully* for this audience, then this logically casts doubt on the reliability of his account as an objective, truthful rendition of the real.

A good place to begin an illustration of the above point is a comparison of Barth's preface to his Narrative and the *Draft Instructions* issued to him by the Colonial Office in November 1849. First, the *Draft Instructions:*

> The countries you are about to visit are as yet so little known to the Nations of Europe that every information of every kind respecting them which you may be able to collect will be interesting [and] useful; but besides those Political [and] Scientific Subjects of investigation to which your attention will of course be directed, it is the wish of H.M. Govt. that you should specially endeavour to ascertain by what means the Commercial intercourse between Great Britain and Africa might be extended and developed; what are the Districts and what are the Lines of communication in that country which offer the greatest facilities for Commerce; what are the European Commodities which are sought after by the Natives; and what are the main articles of African produce which could best be obtained in payment for the productions of Europe... You will not fail to take advantage of every suitable opportunity to impress upon the minds of the African Chiefs with whom you may come into contact, the great advantages which they and their country would derive from the extension of Legitimate Commerce with the Natives of other parts of the World; and you will assure them that H.M. Govt. in seeking to put an end to the trade in Slaves are endeavouring most effectually to promote the welfare [and] prosperity of the Nations of Africa (cited in Newbury 1992:71).[7]

The *Draft Instructions* was drawn from Richardson's submission to Lord Palmerston, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. Richardson had specified the object of the mission as "the opening up of a regular and secure way of communication over the Sahara from the Mediterranean to the Banks of the Niger''. Others were the delineation of the tracks of the desert, protection and security for European travellers and merchants, treaties to this effect with the local rulers, the advantages of direct trade links between Europe and the Sudan, the overthrow of the slave trade and slavery through the regeneration of Africa's export economy [8], the development among the Africans of a culture of industry, and of legitimate, or

innocent, trade, the moral upliftment of the Africans through the raising up of the "degraded Africans to the stand of civilized Europe", so that they could "expect in humility the favour and blessings of Almighty God upon [Britain] as a nation and the world at large."[9]

A central contention of this chapter is that *Travels of Discoveries* is, in the last analysis, a *literary* replication of these instructions. It is instructive therefore that Barth opens the preface to the text with a re-statement of his qualifications. He tells his audience that he is indeed qualified to undertake the task of exploring an utterly foreign country. He essays his boyish fascination with the Sudan. He thanks the British Government for honouring him, and indicates his admiration for the British Empire, and for her philanthropy (abolitionist sentiment), her commerce, language and government, and her endeavour to carry out the "progressive civilization of the neglected race of [West] Africa" (xxiv). Barth gratefully defers to Lord Palmerston, the Secretary of State, for his hospitality, and generous disposition towards the non-British explorers sponsored by the Government, and for his allowing the expedition to carry firearms.

The preface literally quotes the *Draft Instructions* with respect to the giving of the specimens of the manufactures of Britain as presents or gifts to the local rulers, and to the necessity of establishing "friendship with the chiefs and rulers of the different territories" (xxv).

The preface repeats the line that the interior, the Sudan, is "in a constant state of war, where no chief or ruler can protect a traveler except with a large escort, which is sure to run away as soon as there is any real danger" (xxv). As Barth

would write in the extended narrative, the Sudan is full of cowards. As an example of this anarchy, he cites the "open or secret warfare'', the "unsafe state of the roads'' on account of the unending struggle between "Islamism and Paganism'' (xxv).

Barth portrays himself as an ambassador of peace, as the *Instructions* advises. He says that in "matters of science and humanity all nations ought to be united by one common interest'' (xxiv), in a direct reference to his non-British citizenship. Barth accordingly establishes and emphasizes his brotherhood with British travellers such as Oudney, Denham, Clapperton, Lyon and Ritchie. He gives them the credit of opening the road to the interior (Fezzan). Then comes the issue of abolition:

> One of the principal objects which her Britannic majesty's government had always in view in these African expeditions was the abolition of the slave-trade. This, too, was zealously advocated by the late Mr. Richardson, and, I trust, has been as zealously carried out by myself whenever it was my power to do so... *There can be no doubt* that the most horrible topic connected with slavery is slave-hunting...Hence it was necessary that I should become acquainted with the real state of these most important features of African society... But having myself accompanied such a host on a grand scale, I shall be able, in the second volume of my narrative, to lay before the public a picture of the cheerful comfort, as well as the domestic happiness, of a considerable portion of the human race, which, though in a low, is not at all in a degraded state of civilization, as well as the wanton cruel manner in which this happiness is destroyed, and its peaceful abodes changed into desolation (xxix).

Typical of the man of science, Barth says that he has, as the *Instructions* required him to do, "delineate [d] the country with greater accuracy and precision (xxvi), calling his endeavour "*my discoveries*'', and also claiming to have discovered the eastern branch of the Niger, the Benue.

In conformity with the demands of the *Instructions,* Barth reports that he has encountered vast countries, fertile lands, ornamented with the finest natural products, "valuable commodities of trade", and lands "so rich with every kind of produce" (xxxi), Barth also mentions his achievement in opening the trade routes.

Barth affirms his identity and character as a Christian, and explains why he had to adopt a non-European, non-Christian dress; and that this was necessary if he were to win the trust of the locals. As he says: "I may say that I have always avowed my religion, and defended the pure principles of Christianity against those of Islam" (xxx).

In conformity with the demands of his sponsors, Barth says that his greatest satisfaction is that he has at last given "a fresh impulse to endeavor to open the fertile regions of central Africa to European commerce and civilization." (xxxii), and that his only wish is to place "*before the eyes of the public a new and animated picture* and connect those *apparently* savage and degraded tribes more intimately with the history of races [Europeans] placed on a higher level of civilization" (xxviii). If he succeeds in this, he will, he says, have been "amply recompensed for the toils and dangers I have gone through" (xxviii).

A constant refrain in this preface is the expression, *"place before the European public"* (xxx), "lay before the *public*" (xxix), "My Narrative" (xxix; xxx; xxxii). The Preface is carefully modelled on the *Draft Instructions.* The Narrative itself concludes with the following remark:

> I have the satisfaction to feel that I have opened the view of *the scientific public of Europe* a most extensive tract of the secluded African world, and not only made it tolerably known, but rendered the opening of a regular intercourse between Europeans and these regions possible (TD3:631).

All this should support the argument that Barth hopes to perform creditably for his audience, and that this performance is regulated by a cultural rhetoric that binds explorer and his audience together. The key refrain of this rhetoric is that Africa, or the Sudan, requires European agency for her regeneration. So in the preface Barth starts with a rhetorical gesture to the audience, a *real* reading formation for his text, not an *ideal* one. It was this historically given audience that occupied his imagination and influenced what he had to write. In fact the entire *Travels and Discoveries* was organized in so strategic a manner as to *work on,* or rhetorically succeed with, the audience.[10]

In the preface, Barth discards the fictional narrator, assumes the position of the authorial narrator proper, and speaks *directly* to his inscribed audience. And it is in this process of inscribing what may be called the text's *aboriginal* audience that Barth sets up, or installs, the colonial/imperial relationship between the European audience and the Sudan, that is *by putting this relationship securely in place* even before the *story* (not the narration of the story) begins or unfolds. In the light of this, it may be said that Barth acknowledges, rhetorically and textually, that the *audience precedes or has preceded, the text*, and even the story itself: it is the European audience (the scientific, or reading, public) rather than Barth the author, writer, speaker, or narrator, who (which) structures, regulates and shapes the relationship, or the story of this relationship, between Europe (represented by Barth and his audience) and the Sudan (represented by the presumably fearfully suffering pagans, the Muslim slave-raiders, and other degraded tribes who inhabit, paradoxically, it is assumed, rich and fertile lands). Every sentence or phrase or line in that preface

draws attention to the audience to the degree it draws everything else to the attention of the audience.

The very existence of the preface is telling: it is clearly a summary of the plot, that is, well *before* the storyline unfolds, although the narration (of the story) is implicit in the preface itself. Barth has not the slightest doubt that the preface is *necessary*. That is, it is his way of telling the audience-reader *how* to read his Narrative. He strives, then, to guide, through the preface, his audience's response to, or reception of, his text. It is here that a fellowship of some sorts between author and audience, writer and readers, is fabricated, negotiated and affirmed. In gesturing to the reader, the audience, how to read the story, Barth the author is surreptitiously fictionalizing the audience-reader,[11] that is, putting, as Railton (1993:143) would say, his "surrogate audience into the text [readers who] would watch them watching the story and learn from them [the real audience] how not to read'' *Travels and Discoveries*.

It is to be expected, therefore, that Barth would fabricate a textual-rhetorical space in which he and his audience would stand in a sort of fellowship of humanists, philanthropists, helpers, redeemers, regenerators and narrators *for* the Sudan. This may be called "interpretive closure'', that is, the rhetorical constitution of the authoritative traveller-writer-eyewitness and the text's ideal recipient. This rhetorical space has historically constituted *Travels and Discoveries* as the "scientific'' and "referential'' text *par excellence*. Barth's audience was overwhelmingly male, middle-class and professional. Steven Mailloux is thus correct in saying that "every act of reading is a reading rhetorically transacted''

(1993:9), for the simple reason that both Barth's audience and his readers have necessarily to function as if they alone occupy what Dimock (1993:90) calls "the position of interpretive authority [and thus function] both as the text's ideal recipient and its necessary coordinate''.

The very existence of the preface itself indicates, against conventional wisdom, that Barth's entire narrative is not, and could not have been, a faithful account of his explorations. Why, may we ask, did Barth have to *reflect retrospectively* on his journey, and on the *writing* of the journey? Unlike Hegel who explicitly says in his preface to *The Phenomenology of Mind* (1807) that he should not be taken seriously in a preface, that the real work is in the larger written text rather than in the preface to it, Barth is, in effect, saying "Take me seriously in this preface''. Barth's preface is not a marginal comment on his Narrative but the *value,* the *pre-face* (the saying before hand), the very *substance* and *structure* of cognition that moves, has moved, the Narrative as an entire *event.* For Barth, the Preface is the *abstract,* or to use a Derridean metaphor, the *"son or seed''* for/to the Narrative as a whole. This means that Barth's textual production is typical of all *mythical* production: it has been conceived before hand.

It is the case that Barth's attempt to impose an "interpretive closure'', *how* his text should be read, and *who,* precisely, should read it, succeeds if his attempt to impose a *centre* on or to his Narrative as the space of *objective meaning,* or the "eye-witness-claim-to-truth'' is uncritically accepted. It is necessary, then, to collapse the distinction favoured by Barth, between a Preface and a Narrative. That is, the two seemingly different things should be apprehended as the same things, or

at least, as semantically open, rather than as closed. Hence the truth of Spivak's argument, that each "act of reading the 'text' is a preface to the text. The reading of a self-professed preface is no exception to this rule''(1976:xii).

The implications of these remarks are, first, the fact that Barth has to gesture to, and "preface'' for, his audience, and has anxiety about what this audience might make of his text, indicates, precisely, that he *had* (that is before the actual writing of the Narrative) to alter, change, modify or revise, many an idea, description or experience *after* reflecting (retrospectively) on his travels. The argument is logical enough: Barth *did,* and necessarily *had* to, alter his field notes, experiences and representations so as to conform to the expectation of the audience for whom the entire Narrative, or the subsequent writing of the Narrative, was prepared. A good illustration of this point is a passage in the preface where Barth refers to Richardson's published narrative after the latter's death:

> Of the first of our expedition there has already appeared the Narrative of the late Mr. Richardson, published from his manuscript journals, which I was fortunately able to send home from Kukawa. It is full of minute incidents of travelling life, *so very instructive to the general reader.* But, *from my point of view,* I had to look very differently at the objects which presented themselves; and Mr. Richardson, *if he had lived to work out his memoranda himself, would not have failed to give to his journal a more lasting* interest (TD1:xxx).

Barth is in this passage explicitly saying that the writing of the published journal is a literary enterprise that requires revision and extra-travel reflection on the material, very much like the writing of novels and poems. Notice, also, that Barth is implicitly saying that he is not, and cannot be, writing for what he calls "the general reader'' but, we can justifiably say, for the scientific reader or public which would readily demand not only the "hard facts'' but also a *creative* or *interesting*

(embellished and animated) speculation or reflection on, or treatment of, the subject. Hence Barth's phrases such as "to lay before the European public'', to "present to the view of the Scientific public of Europe'', and so on.

Second, in narrating his travel, Barth has rendered as *literary* what were, in reality, *literal,* extra-textual, processes or realities or details. For example: Barth repeatedly says, in the preface and in the larger narrative, that he *was* there, that he *saw* with his own eyes. And on the authority of this visual authority he says, for instance, that half the population of Kano in 1851 was composed of slaves, or that the town's population was between 30,000 and 40,000. These clearly are extra-textual "things''. But then what we have in the narrative is a literary replication of these presumably extra-textual facts (that is if we are even prepared to accede to the veracity of Barth's statement that he truly visited Kano in February 1851). The point is that Barth knew, while he was in Kano in 1851, that his audience or readers could not be there, hence his *fleshing out* of his experiences in and of Kano in literary-textual terms. Thus Barth has no option but to turn the event into a *literary* event, that is a play of linguistic replications, a mere *representation.*

Third, we must cast doubt on the allegedly factual (non-metaphysical) claim that Barth's text is the true, accurate, reliable, *record* or *statement* of what he, its author, experienced while in the field. For example: Barth claims throughout his Narrative that there are more slaves in the Sudan than free subjects. In volume two of the Narrative (pp.174; 190-1) he says that in Adamawa, every slave owner has more than a thousand slaves. Even landless peasants, the Emir's bodyguards, everyone, except some highly favoured political office holders, are slaves. (On this,

see these passages: TD2:201, 204, 228, 331, 343, 346-48, 456, 457, 548). He is emphatic that slaves form the principal currency of Bornu, that all the wars are slave-hunting *razzias,* that he was offered a female slave in Bagirmi (TD2: 538), and, finally, that some Emirs even sell their own subjects into slavery (TD1: 553-54).

It would not do to dismiss these claims of Barth's as lies or exaggerations. Barth's preface supplies the clue to the truth or otherwise of these assertions: he is laying before the European public, the abolitionist movement, people like Sharpe, Buxton, Palmerston and Clarendon, as he says, *"a view"*. The issue, then, is not whether Barth's statements on slavery or the allegedly chronic slave-hunting and civil wars in the Sudan can be verified or corroborated by a native, or local, "source" (books or archaeological artifact) but the ideological, rhetorical, and documentary *conditioning* of his literary practice on this issue by a specific audience or reading public who had directly or indirectly demanded of him such literary portrait or inscription of the Sudan. McLynn argues in fact that given the psychology of the explorers, their own accounts of their motives may constitute "valuable evidence" for whatever reason, but that for obvious reasons we should not take their accounts as unproblematic representations of their lived experiences.

This seems to support the contention of the eminent historian, Roland Oliver, that "all worthwhile historical writing is *primarily an artistic exercise,* consisting in an attempt to master a large body of facts and to present a small *selection* of them in the *proportion* and *form* seem most meaningful at a particular moment [and audience] in time" (Cited in Moorhouse 1973:17, my italics). Thus

Barth has *artistically* chosen, in proportion to his *oeuvre*, and in conformity with the demands of *form* (the genre of travel writing, its narrative requirements and conventions, the special needs of its audience) and a particular way of opening to the view of his audience, a particular perspective on the Sudan, that is, as the latter has been inscribed in the literary tradition inherited by Barth, and within which he was/is writing. These comments apply to Barth's descriptions of the Sudanese landscape, leaders, characters and living spaces.

In fact Boahen informs his reader that Barth's expedition was "financed from the Secret Service Fund instead of from the Civil Contingencies Fund, as has been the usual practice" (1964:186). It is to be expected, then, that Barth would structure, plot and phrase the events he reports in the way he has, and emphasize some things more than others. For example, in Barth's Narrative, the Sudan is racked by universal chaos and insecurity, and yet these did not prevent him from successfully exploring the land. Also, despite the massive narrative, there is not a single line devoted to a description of such basic things as Sudanese marriage or burial rites.

What should be our primary focus, therefore, is not the extra-textual Sudan, which in any case is *absent*, or is an ontological *absence*, in Barth's text but the following four problematics: first, "the Sudan" he has *inscribed*, written down, second, the *writer*, the real Author and fictional narrator of *Travels and Discoveries*, third, the *writing*, the literary-linguistic rendition or replication, of the events, and finally the audience/readers of the text. This is necessary if what Derrida calls *logocentrism*, the assumption of a one-to-one correspondence between word and

referent, signifier and signified is to be avoided. This is why the colonial apologists and academic historians who focus on the world that the explorer brings to textual life are not focusing on a real or matter-of-fact intransitive reality but on a literary one, a *fiction*.[12] To show why this is indeed the case, would require a consideration of the relationship between *Travels and Discoveries* and the imperial culture of its day.

3.4 Audiences, Publication and Imperialism

There is some truth to the statement by Saynor (1998:18) that exploration writing gives one "the sense of an author in search of a book". Perhaps he should have added," in search of an audience". It is arguable that Barth's development, or "evolution" from traveller to authoritative explorer became complete only with the writing and publishing of his Narrative.[13] It is, paradoxically, not the actual travelling or exploring or journeying that bestowed upon Barth the stamp of authority (as an eye-witness or discourser) but the publication or publishing of his Narrative (which bestows upon him the authority of an expert "reader" of the allegedly extra-textual Sudan). It may surely be said that Barth went out to the Sudan not necessarily to build up knowledge (about the Sudan or any other topic) but to become an Author, to, in effect, be read with all the potential personal profit that that entailed by the greatest, most prestigious and most sophisticated of all European reading publics -- the British reading public. Barth says precisely this in his Preface:

> During my three years' travelling [1845-1848]. I had ample opportunity of testing the *efficacy* of British protection; I experienced the kindness of all her Britannic majesty's consuls... and often enjoyed their hospitality...*my admiration of*

> *the wide extension of the British over the globe, their influence, their language,* and their government, was such that *I felt a strong inclination to become the humble means of carrying out their philanthropic views* for the progressive civilization of the neglected races of Central Africa (TD1:xxiv; my italics).

While in the field, Barth referred to himself as an Englishman, *Abd-el-Karim Barth el Inglisi* (Abd al karim Barth the Englishman). He completely suppressed his Prussian (German) identity. There is hardly a reference to this in the Preface either. Although Barth had written and published in German a travel text before, his account of his "Wanderings" in the Mediterranean and Asia Minor, the book was not a success, and sold no more than a few copies. In fact the second volume was never published (Kirk-Greene 1962:5). Barth followed up on the success of the *Travels and Discoveries* with a famous essay which he read before the Royal Geographical Society of London in 1857. Barth generally relished in writing in English, and standing before English-speaking audiences.[14]

Surely, then, it was by, or in, writing for the British audience that Barth transformed himself from a mere traveller (in the field) to an Author (the writer of an "authoritative" narrative). This is true because even the German scholars of Barth writing in English generally cite not the German, but the original English text of *Travels and Discoveries,* and the 1857-58 Essay[15]. These two English texts have become the standard reference material on Barth. Even Lugard could only quote Barth's English Narrative. Adu Boahen who submitted in 1964 a doctoral thesis on British exploration of the Sahara and the Sudan relied wholly on Barth's English texts. He cites not a single German-speaking "source material". This is one reason why any adequate study of Barth's career or writing must address the question of his

audience, and how Barth's anxiety about his audience has imposed limits on what he could honesty and truthfully say about the Sudan. It should be noted that Barth is only able to *rhetorically look down* on the Sudan to the extent he is able to successfully perform for his actual audience, the reading publics of late 19th century Britain.

Thus the issue of publication is interactively tied up with that of audience. For even at the level of publication, *Travels and Discoveries* was found fit for publication only because Barth wrote in a fashion that both the Foreign Office, which financially supported the publication, and the publisher, Longmans Green, considered, or found, sufficiently *profitable* and *literary* enough to secure a respectable readership. Note that Barth was instructed, while receiving his briefs, to submit a literary account of his journey to the Foreign Office (in return for a life pension) (Boahen 1964:184; Richardson to Palmerston, 12 Oct. 1849)[16]

The original English text of Barth's Narrative is, to this extent, the official, sanctioned account, published by the Order of Her Britannic Majesty's Government. It is said in the title that it is the journal of an expedition undertaken under the auspices of H.B. M's Government (Her Britannic Majesty's Government [Queen Victoria]) in the years 1849-1855 by Dr. Heinrich Barth. The book is dedicated to the Right Honourable, The Earl of Clarendon (K.C.B.), Her Majesty's Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs by the author, or rather the Earl of Clarendon's "obliged and faithful servant" in "grateful acknowledgement for many acts of kindness".

According to MacLaren, from the time of James Cook's voyages between 1768 and 1772, the official policy among European nations such as Britain was that

the laying of imperial claim to the land discovered and to "knowledge" about the land and its resources "consisted pre-eminently in the *publication* of the narrative by the explorer whom [the king] appointed. The form of the official account thereby exercised a weighty significance well beyond the sum of its contents" (1992:44; my italics). It is significant that the Foreign Office, in consultation with Longmans Green, the publisher, appointed Dr. Cauvin to act as Barth's principal adviser and literary editor for the writing of the Journal (Kirk-Greene 1962:54). This is why all other non-English versions of *Travels and Discoveries* are not only translations (literally, a transfer, a substitution) but also unofficial, unsanctioned and unauthoritative.

This leads us to the issue of the relationship of Barth's Narrative and the imperial culture of 19th century Britain. When Barth came out to the Sudan in the 1850s, Britain was the foremost imperialist country, with an aggressive, imperially conscious policy toward the non-European world (Calder 1981; Lloyd 1984; Said 1993). Barth was acutely aware of this, for he recommends the colonization of what would today be called Northern Nigeria (see, on this TD1: 592; TD2: 501; TD3: 299). So it is not just that Barth had to measure up to the expectations of his reading public and his audience, and to the contemporary standard of stylistic propriety they expected of him, but also *entertain* them, and, to the same degree, project their cultural rhetoric and *weltanschauung*.[17]

In the briefs given to Barth, he was required to preserve his character and disposition as a worthy "Englishman" in the eyes of the people he would be visiting (Newbury 1965:57-59; 62-66). To all intents and purposes, this meant a literary

endeavour in which the explorer becomes a textually embodied "eye/I" in which the real author is transformed into the fictional narrator, that is, from an adventuring explorer/enquirer into, first and foremost, the polite, patient and travelling gentleman possessed of, and exhibiting, decorum, trustworthiness, honesty and morality. Barth, whether as Author or fictional narrator, is never shown harming, or maiming any one, or harbouring a malicious thought or intent. He is the perfect moral subject, something very close to Fichte's "I" or Kant's Transcendental Subject. All this is consistent with British imperial mythology, which, Trotter writes, stressed that "the vitality of the [white] race could be renewed by journeys to the frontier [where civilization meets barbarism]... [and] attributed great significance to exploration" (1988:145, 147).

This may explain why both author and fictional narrator are shown in *Travels and Discoveries* to be on all occasions possessed of manners befitting the British character, and the court of Queen Victoria. It is little wonder, then, that Barth, according to Boahen, "increased even further Britain's reputation and popularity in the Western Sudan. When Baikie visited Kano in 1862 he found the British so highly esteemed that he experienced no difficulty in raising loans and drawing bills on the [British] Consul-General in Tripoli" (1964:211). It was all, Boahen assures us, largely due to "Barth [who] was a great success" (ibid). But since Barth advocates the conquest of the Sudan, he must have imagined an ideal reader for his text. The ideal reader could, in the 19th century, have been either Lord Palmerston or Lord Clarendon (who were both at one time secretaries at the Foreign Office and Colonial Office, and were also dogmatic abolitionists). Hence the

dedication of the narrative to the latter: Barth *knew* that although Lord Clarendon could not visit the Sudan, he was no mere armchair traveller, for he could easily order the conquest of the Sudan. That is why the dedication of the Narrative to Lord Clarendon is, properly speaking, a *poetic* act, an attempt at *making* the propositions of a story, a discourse, a narrative, acquire the *force* of a material sign, the Empire:

> There is a convergence between the great geographical scope of the [European] empires... and universalizing cultural discourses. Power makes this convergence possible ... with it goes the ability to be in far-flung places, to learn about other people, to codify and disseminate knowledge, to characterize, transport, install, and display instances of other cultures (through exhibits, photographs, paintings, surveys...), and above all to rule them. All this in turn produces what has been called 'a duty' to natives, the requirement in Africa and elsewhere to establish colonies for the 'benefit' of the natives or for the 'prestige' of the mother country (Said 1993: 130).

As a texture of linguistic and cultural determinations of, and for, a specific audience and reading public, *Travels and Discoveries* emerged from, was itself the creator of, an imperial culture of thinking and planning for other societies and lands, despite this culture's and this Narrative's subscription to the supposedly humane ideas or values of 19th century mainstream European thought such as Humanitarianism, Philanthropy, Abolition, Legitimate Commerce, and Progress. Yet all these, argues Kiernan, were the "mould of ideas and conditioned reflexes into which the whole business of empire later flowed" (cited in Said 1993:99) [18]. Rotberg is, on this score, justified in his contention that as far as the printed accounts of the nineteenth century explorers are concerned, they were "influenced by the narrow expectations of a Victorian readership" (1970: 7).

3.5 The Early Reading Public (1857-1858).

In June 1857, *Travels and Discoveries* was issued, or to quote the original blurb, "placed before the public", by the publisher Longmans Green. The text was lavishly decorated with J.M. Bernatz's sixty colour lithographs[19] based on Barth's pencil sketches; and with fifteen very detailed foldout maps by the Anglo-German geographer, August Petermann. There were also over thirty woodcuts illustrating many aspects of Sudanese life. It is clear that the illustrations were designed to convey, in pictorial form, Barth's authoritative presence and representational authenticity in the Sudan,[20] as evident from his effusive gratitude to J.M. Bernatz for the colour lithographs, which Barth says, " have been executed with *artistic skill* and the strictest fidelity, from my sketches" (TD1: xxxii; my italics. For some of these lithographs, see the Appendix).

There is something distinctive about the early reception of Barth's narrative. Contrary to conventional thinking, his Narrative was first reviewed in the popular press, rather than in the learned journals of the time. As is emphasized by Jameson (1981:9-10) and Gaitet (1992:42), texts, all texts, are the always-already-read because not only are they apprehended through what Jameson calls the "sedimented layers of previous interpretations" or the "sedimented reading habits and categories" of previous interpretive formations, but also already "conditioned by the status of [its] author and publisher" (Gaitet:1992:42). Nowhere is this illustrated more than in the first reviews of the Narrative in the *Athenaeum*, (May 16, 1857) *Spectator* (May 16, 1857) and *Guardian* (June 1, 1857). The differences of emphasis not

withstanding, the reviewers in these periodicals were unanimous in their estimation of *Travels and Discoveries* as the greatest book of African travel, and of Barth as the "indefatigable traveller". The publisher was commended for including the "unexampled" maps and the "beautiful plates and woodcuts". Specifically, the Narrative was favourably reviewed for its thoroughness, clear narration of the events, and its excellent and authoritative description of the political anarchy in the Sudan. Barth's accuracy and scholarship were affirmed, his text's freshness and novelty was emphasized, although its "tedious length" and massive details were said to be "too much for any reader".[21]

It should be emphasized that those reviews did not depart from what might be called "genre expectations", which are normally brought to bear, in textual analysis, on specific texts. Notice that these popular reviews did not depart from the broad expectations of the 19th century reading formations of exploration literature. For example, Barth's reviewers took it for granted that he really did travel in the Sudan, had witnessed the anarchic and slave-raiding situation there, had delivered the Sudan with all its complexities *within* his text, and that, finally, his seeing, and the textualization of this seeing, possessed the status of scientific truth. The reviewers were also unanimous that Barth should entertain the reader; hence their critical comments on the text's "tedious length", its almost "heavy" academic mode of delivery, and the author's clear (they thought) neglect of the need to stimulate in the reader the pleasure of the text. For the reviewers, Barth's readers should be *informed* as well as *entertained.*

Now these press reviews of *Travels and Discoveries* should not be underestimated, or seen as marginal to the discursive formations within which official readers or institutional audiences of European exploration accounts had traditionally approached their subject matter. Rather, they were an important indication of the "discursive bonding" between the highbrow official reader or audience (in the Royal Geographical Society, the Anti-Slavery Society or the Linnaean Society), and the educated reading public at large. According to Terdiman (1985b: 52), the 1850s was a period during which "newspapers as institutionalized discourse [experienced] an extraordinary multiplication in its pervasiveness of the world of words and social representation".

Now the assessment of *Travels and Discoveries* in the press and popular periodicals meant that the content of the work (as selectively reviewed) would reach a much wider audience. Gaitet (1992:42) writes that in the 19th century, the assessments of a "non-fictional" work or text in the press did address a much wider audience than, for example, "the novel could ever hope to reach [and that] by providing unabashed value judgments and clear cut interpretations these reactions [would] help determine by whom the work is read, as well as how".

We can test this out by considering the reactions of the highbrow or official readers of Barth's Narrative. Below are the reactions of Sir Roderick Murchison, the President of the Royal Geographical Society, *soon after* the reviews of *Travels and Discoveries* had appeared in the periodicals mentioned above:

> Referring to the publication of the first three volumes in his annual address to the [Society] in 1857, its President, Sir Roderick Murchison, reported that 'this meritorious explorer of vast regions has issued to the public three volumes, which ... are to be followed by two others, completing a work which

> will doubtless be considered the worthy termination of so many years of patient research on the great privations'. [Sir Roderick] praised the excellence of the maps and the richness of the volumes which showed 'that Dr. Barth was so completely at home among the natives, with seven of those languages, he has familiar, and made such very diligent inquiries, that the information thus gathered is far more complex and minute than that of his precursors' (Cited and paraphrased in Kirk-Greene 1962:50-51).

Again in 1858, when the last two volumes of the narrative were about to be published, Sir Roderick said of Barth that he truly possessed "indefatigable industry" (cited in Kirk-Greene 1962:54). This is the standard judgment of Barth and his narrative one finds in Morel (1902:44), Flora Shaw (1905), Bovill (1926), Rodd (1926:22), Wellesley (1934:94), Flint (1960:18-19), and a host of other academic authorities.

The learned or academic readings of Barth were a reproduction and/or replication of the popular, or run-of-the-mill, reading in that the former reading of Barth's Narrative, or *oeuvre,* shares, excepting the secondary differences, the same historical, ideological and material foundations or determinations with the latter. Yet both readings are specific reading relations which existed, had to exist, within specific social relations of reading.

The point being made is: the consensus that can be observed in both the popular and high readings of Barth share the same cultural rhetoric, or have rhetorically transacted the same cultural interpretations of the Narrative, or again have constituted the same interpretive-reading community. As Machor says of the Euro-American reading communities of the 1850s, "reviewers in popular periodicals [constituted] the primary vehicle for the public dissemination and assimilation of ideas about how to read [exploration writing] in an informed manner" (1993: xv).

In an acclaimed study of 18th-19th century British reading publics (especially around periodicals such as the *Tatler, Edinburgh Review* and the *Spectator*, Eagleton says of such that they were the "central institutions" of the bourgeois public sphere (1984:10); and that the *Spectator* in particular aimed at the creation of a consensual space in which would be cultivated the mercantile class and the upliftment of the "profligate aristocracy" (11), that is, in Eagleton's ominous phrase, "the cementing of a new power block at the level of the sign" (14).[22]

The fact, then, is that it was not sound or scientific or disinterested research or study which found or reached the conclusion that Barth was the greatest African explorer and his Narrative the most authoritative account of 19th century Sudan but the historically specific cultural or reading rhetoric of a historically specific reading formation. This is not to suggest, however, that there were no important points of emphasis within this reading formation. We should, in fact, view this reading formation in the plural, that is, to quote Bennett (1987:70-71), as a "set of discursive and inter-textual determinations". This view stresses the relatedness of these reading strategies as opposed to a view of them as unrelated to one another, or as passive respondents to cultural, linguistic or ideological signals.

The significance of these arguments about the reception of *Travels and Discoveries* is that the inherited tradition of reading the text has had its roots in specific imperial, rhetorical, and cultural ideologies, and that it *is* these which have, since 1857, organized and animated the practice of reading the narrative. Far from *Travels and Discoveries* creating or constituting, through its allegedly disinterested "context", a specific readership, it is the readership, first as the audience, and then as

a reading/interpretive community, which created, constituted or in fact brought the Narrative into interpretive existence. Bennett suggests that "texts have and can have no existence independently of ... reading formations ... Texts exist only as always-already organized or activated to be read in certain ways" (1987:70-71). Bennett's point is a paraphrase of Macherey's contention that:

> The [text] only establishes the difference which brings it into being, by establishing relations to that which it is not; otherwise it would have no reality and would actually be unreadable and invisible (1978:53).

Just like the Sudan in Barth's Narrative, *Travels and Discoveries* turns out to be an *absence* (that is, as a thing-in-itself), a silence, a vacant space around which specific reading communities or formations have erected, constructed, and weaved, more or less contradictory cultural rhetorics. These rhetorics are similar to what Macherey and Bennett would call " productive activations," namely variantly modulated discourses of textual intervention, or reading practices organized within specific corpuses of intersecting (discourses of) interpretations.

It is then not true that *Travels and Discoveries* exists as a coherent or stable object, with a stable or objective meaning attached to it. It is equally not true that the reading of Barth produced by the academic historian carries more cultural or epistemological weight than the readings produced by reviewers in the popular press. Neither is it true that *Travels and Discoveries* has settled down into an enduring meaning (or a pattern or framework of response). The simple reason is that Barth had to, while writing that text, accommodate the divergent, contradictory, and, in many cases consensual, expectations of variantly inserted reading audiences, from the solitary writer in the home, to institutional audience such as abolitionists,

bureaucrats, merchants, historians, naturalists, novelists, poets, artists, embellishers, literary agents, editors, publishers, Christian missionaries, voyeurs, aristocrats, middle-class professionals, and, finally, his own very self with its specific tastes and temperament.

In that sense, the system of address within and outside *Travels and Discoveries* within which "the reader" is constructed or interpellated cannot be exhausted chiefly because the effectivity of the text (its impact or semantic presence) is not exhausted by, nor is it equivalent to, the text's potential effects. For example: although Barth advocates in his text the military conquest of the whole of the Sudan by the European powers, it is not these passages that Lord Lugard quotes in his justification of the conquest of a part of the Sudan, but the passages dealing with chaos and slave raiding in the Sudan. In the same vein, the most important historical studies of Barth's account of the Sudan have ignored the pre-publication history of the Narrative. Indeed Barth is, in general, selectively used, or inserted into a discursive formation already constituted by the historian even before the actual "reading" of the text begins.

From this perspective, to say that *Travels and Discoveries* is an absence is not to say that it has no semantic or rhetorical self-presence of a recognizable kind. It is to suggest, rather, that its "meaning effect" does not, and cannot, pre-exist the discursive formation in which it is constituted. And since a "meaning effect" is, and can only be, a "reading effect", it is itself the after-effect of the activity of a reading formation or formations. Again, an example: Lord Lugard conceives or approaches Barth's Narrative not as a *fictional* but as a *factual* account. Lugard has thus clearly

organized the text externally (from the outside in) through the specific (factual) construction of the text as a text-to-be-read, a process which he then effects.

That is the sense in which the concept of "reading formation" is critical to any meta-critical study of Barth's Narrative. For it shows the ways by which a text and its Audience and Reading Subjects productively and intertextually interact, and by which the context of a text (the 19th century) is, in the last analysis, a "set of inter-textual and discursive relations which produce readers for texts and texts for readers" (Bennett 1987:74). This insight permits us to see how the "meanings" of texts are embedded, dis-embedded and re-embedded in historically varying discursive/reading formations. Yet it also permits us to study, as in the case of *Travels and Discoveries*, how the text's reading formations and audiences have themselves been intertextually put to work "within reading relations of different kinds, as texts, in the course of their histories, are constantly re-written into a variety of material, social, institutional, and ideological contexts" (Bennett 1992:218).

3.6 **The Ideal Reader: Lugard**

The above citation from Bennett should shed light on how Lord Lugard historically read, and now textually reads, the *Travels and Discoveries* in his own textual production, or intervention, on the Sudan. Lugard started life as an armchair reader of *Travels and Discoveries*, and ended it as its real reader. That is, Lugard's discursive formation was within what Curtin (1964) calls the image (or, in our usage, discourse) of the "Dark Continent", according to which Africa was the benighted land, the land of slavery, the slave trade, universal chaos, governmental

collapse, and savagery. This image, according to Curtin, had, "by the 1850s ... hardened [and] was found in children's books, in Sunday school tracts, in the popular press [and that its] major affirmations were the 'common knowledge' of the educated class" (1964:vi).

In an important recent book on the images of Africa and black people in Western popular culture, Pieterse (1995) argues that the western popular conception of the Africa and black people especially since the Renaissance (16th century) was as an exotic land and savages respectively. By the mid-19th century, this image of Africa, or what Curtin calls the "common knowledge" had conferred on many a European child or would-be explorer of Africa "a prior impression of what they will find. Most often, they found it, and their writings in turn confirmed the older image --- or at most altered it only slightly" (Curtin 1964:vi). This "common knowledge" meant that the abolitionists, missionaries, romantics, imperial ideologists, and commercial adventurers all looked on Africa as a space within which they could act out their fantasies in the name of philanthropy, humanitarianism, conversion, legitimate trade, and discovery or exploration, among others. As Curtin puts it, such people had a tendency "to see Africa, not merely as it was, but as it might be, and with a full consideration for the Africa in the scheme of things": (vi). When Lugard came to read Barth's Narrative, both he and the text co-existed within what Gadamer (1975)) calls a "fusion of horizons". And if indeed racism had coloured "British attitudes towards other peoples across a whole spectrum of thought, from the theory of history at one end to explicit provisions for African education at the other" as Curtin claims (ix, 363 ff), then Lugard would be

the text's ideal reader, who would not only place a new discursive wrapping around it, but also be the insightful reader who would follow the author's every textual move.

Lugard opens his *The Dual Mandate* (1922) with the image of Africa as the "Dark Continent". It is such, claims Lugard, because the continent has remained undisclosed to the European eye, or what he calls "modern civilization". His claim is that Africa had to be discovered by explorers such Livingstone and Barth because its people had left no civilization (monuments or buried cities) and also because it was a "great blank space".

The invocation of Barth's name is significant. As we have seen above, Barth constructs the Sudan as a lawless and chaotic land, "scene of the most frightful desolation" (TD1: xxxi), and ruled by insecurity (TD1: 544-550). He inscribes the Sokoto empire as ruled by "disorder and anarchy ... as if there were no government at all "(TD3: 204). He frequently records the "state of anarchy' which, he says, rules much of the Sudan (TD3: 205). The local rulers, especially the Fulbe rulers of the Empire, are "effeminate conquerors" or "ineffectual rulers", whose degraded state is conveyed by their lack of "national honor" (TD3: 125) Barth even believes that Aliyu, the Sultan of Sokoto, is "effeminate" because he was descended maternally from a Hausa slave (TD3: 107). In many cases, Barth attributes the creeping decay of the "Fulani Empire" to the Fulbe rulers' intermarriage with the non-Fulbe "subject races" (TD3: 111-12). Barth also inscribes the Fulani as a fanatical, conquering race, fired by their zeal for Islam. He writes that their leader, Othman bin Fudi, preached merciless warfare against both pagans and

"Mohammedans", and that he "ended his life in a sort of fanatical ecstasy or madness".

Barth also has a largely negative conception of Islam which he sees as a deviant version of Christianity (TD3: 344,349,378,384) and a fanatical religion whose "God lives in the east" (TD3: 409) and which also teaches children to recite Arabic words whose meaning they do not understand (TD2: 222). Islam, says Barth, also encourages slavery. He laments "the national well-being and humble happiness of these pagan communities [being] trodden down so mercilessly by their Mohammedan neighbours" (TD2: 109). Also, Islam, he writes, "gave the first impulse to that continual struggle [the enslavement of pagans] which, always extending further, seems destined to overpower the nations at the very equator, if Christianity does not presently step in to dispute the ground with it" (TD1: 310; my italics).[23]

For Barth, therefore, the Sudan is a bastion of slavery and slave hunting. He even says that slaves are the principal export of Bornu (TD2: 78) and that there is no free individuality in the Sudan: all are slaves or liberated slaves, except the rulers. Even the ruler's wives are slaves (TD2: 79,80,186). In diction reminiscent of the British Anti-slavery rhetoric, Barth writes:

> slaves are the only articles which the conquerors want from the subject tribes; by carrying into slavery great numbers of them they force them into subjection, and even the tribute which they levy, after having subdued them, consists of slaves (TD2: 401).

In page after page of breathtaking hyperbole, Barth admittedly records scenes of merciless slave hunts, fearful suffering by the enslaved, heartrending scenes as when women and children are either separated or cut down (TD2: 304-5,

364-67, 354-55, 386ff). Barth's solution to all this chaos, slave hunting and fanaticism is simple: legitimate trade and philanthropy (abolitionism):

> All this will be changed as soon as a regular and legitimate intercourse has been opened along the River Benue into the heart of these regions, when the natural procedure of the soil will be in constant request.., (TD2: 401).

This is not original, as this was the view held, since the 1830s, by abolitionists such as Buxton, Richardson and the British Anti-Slavery movement as a whole. Barth's "solution" to Sudan's immersion in chaos, slavery and suffering, via the agency of European trade, humanitarianism and Christian philanthropy, obscures the fact that it is a way of dissociating European agency from the history of the slave trade in Africa. Here at last is a discourse, in the form of *Travels and Discoveries,* in which it is the Europeans who are trying to save the Africans from the African slave-holder; and also, here at last is a discourse of slavery and slave-trade by a European who is not a slaver, or slave-hunter.

But before we look at how Lugard appropriated, and in many cases deepened, those Barthian discourses, we need to emphasize the *aporias* of Barth's typologies of the Sudan. First, despite his condemnation of the Fulbe, Barth deeply admires what he regards as their enterprising energy (TD3:419), their conquering abilities. He finds them "the most intelligent of all the African tribes", "the conquering tribe --- sweeping over a wide expanse of provinces" (TD3: 110-11). In an important passage in which he advocates the colonization by the European powers of the central Sudan, Barth advises the future colonizers to rule through the agency of the Fulbe, the empire builders (TD2: 353). With regard to the expansion of the Fulbe into the Adamawa or Fombina area, he writes :

> the Fulbe are continually advancing, as they have not to do with one strong enemy, but with a number of small tribes without any bond of union. It remains to be seen whether it be their destiny to colonize this fine country for themselves, or in the course of time to be disturbed by the intrusion of Europeans. It is difficult to decide how a Christian government is to deal with these countries, where none but Mohammedans maintain any sort of government. It can not be denied that they alone here succeed in giving to distant regions a certain bond of unity, and in making the land more accessible to trade and intercourse (TD2: 196).

In this passage, Barth both undermines and reinforces his typology of the Fulbe. They are superior to the pagans who lack the ability to form lasting unions. Yet he laments the destruction of the pagans. The Fulbe are effeminate rulers, and yet they alone are capable of central government which alone makes trade and commerce possible. There is also an implicit racial/political hierarchy: the Fulbe are supreme but not *after* the "Christian government" is established. The Christians (Europeans) are superior to the Fulbe, the Fulbe to the pagans, the very pagans Barth says suffer from "the miseries arising from slavery and the slave-trade" (TD1:xxxii).

There is another aporia of Barth's that is worth noting, and which is reproduced wholesale by Lugard. Although Barth is an abolitionist and an enemy of slavery, he does not find it decent to be in the company of slaves, or people of slave origin:

> *I did not find them sufficiently interesting to have much* intercourse with them, for they have very little of that noble independent carriage which distinguishes, in such an eminent degree, their southeastern countrymen; and their stature, as well as their features, *seemed to indicate plainly a very strong intermixture with Mosi slaves* (TD3: 440; my italics).

Again and again, Barth finds the suffering pagans forming "altogether a most barbarous and savage spectacle" (TD2: 353). The pagans are also ugly, dirty

black, that is, an anti-aesthetic. Surely, Barth deeply admires the very people, among them Haj Beshir and Sheik Omar, he holds responsible for the misery and suffering produced by slave-hunting. In fact Bornu, whom he considers the foremost slaver, serves as the base for his mission, which also received a generous support from the paramount ruler, Sheik Omar. Despite his description of the slave hunting, burning, pillaging and terrorizing of the slave-pagans, Barth does not as express any discomfort, any anguish or a sigh. For he repeatedly regrets the political decay of the Fulbe's enterprising or conquering spirit:

> It is delightful for a [European] traveller to meet with these [Fulbe] nomadic settlers, after the disgust he has felt at the degraded character of their countrymen in Wurno (TD3: 199. Also TD3: 84, 186).

Lugard would reproduce these discourses, and all their *aporias*, in his single-minded struggle to overthrow the sovereignty of the central Sudanese societies. Even before he arrived in the central Sudan in 1894, Lugard had written, under the influence of Barth and East African explorers such as Teleki and Livingstone, in *The Rise of our East African Empire* (1893) that the "Dark Continent" needed to be saved by Europe from fanatical Islam and slave-raiding and economic decline. Here he makes explicit his "debt to European explorers, and other more modern travellers" (vol.1: i, ix, 169-216).[24]

At the inception of his career as High Commissioner of what would turn out to be Northern Nigeria in 1900, Lugard began by declaiming the alleged slave-raiding propensities of the Fulani rulers, whom he saw as "ineffectual rulers", and their towns as "great centres of the slave-trade". According to Lugard:

> There is, probably, no part of the 'Dark Continent' in what the worst forms of slave-raiding still exist to so terrible an extent,

> and the slave raiders are not even provident of their hunting grounds, for those who are useless as slaves are killed in large numbers, villages burnt, and the fugitives left to starve in the bush... the country is depopulated, and hundreds of ruins attest the former existence of a population and a prosperity which have gone (Lugard 1912: 10-11).

The vocabulary of "slave raiding" "Mohammedan chiefs", "depopulation" and "ruins" and of "population and a prosperity" was lifted verbatim from Barth's preface, and passages describing the slave-raiding activities of the Bornu army (TD2: 379, 386ff). Lugard would repeat this in his *The Dual Mandate* (pp.361-362). Even here the authority invoked is Barth's, for the reader is told, *"Barth noted, as we do to-day"*. Lugard repeats Barth's identification of slavery with Islam, calling it "the most serious charge against Islam in Africa that it has encouraged and given religious sanction to slavery" (1922:365). Lugard's authority is not the Koran or any authentically Muslim text but Heinrich Barth.

For example, Lugard writes that even by 1902, the Muslim Emirs were organizing "slave-raiding armies of 10,000 or 15,000 men [who] laid waste the country, and wiped out its population annually in the quest for slaves. Hundreds of square miles of rich well-watered land were depopulated" (1922:618). To give authenticity and eye witness authority to these claims Lugard writes:

> *Barth bore witness to a similar condition of things fifty years ago.* Men were impaled in the market place of Kano ... Nowhere was there security for life and property (1922:618; my italics).

Barth writes in the preface that the Sudan was an anarchic and warring interior full of cowards (TD1:xxv), and that his writing of it was an attempt to create order out of chaos (ibid: xxviii). So Lugard calls, for example, Emir Muhammadu Kwasau of Zazzau a coward, a slave-raider and "cruel and treacherous" and a "*Munafiki*"

[hypocrite] (1912:71,72-73). He writes in his *The Dual Mandate* that his exertions in the Sudan are intended to "bring order out of chaos" (607).

Lugard also draws on Barth for his discourse of the fanatical Fulani, and of the Fulani as an alien race. For example, Lugard notes how in the 19th century emerged the figure of "Dan Fodio, the founder of Sokoto", who, he continues, armed with "a flag of conquest" and "inspired by a fanatical zeal" conquered the surrounding country, the land of the "Habe dynasty" (1912:77). Lugard then accuses the Fulani rulers of depopulating the country:

> *When Barth reached Hausaland in 1851* he described it as the most densely populated country in all Africa, and *its population was estimated at from thirty to fifty millions* (77, my italics).

It is clear that Lugard has no regard for factual accuracy on this issue. Barth estimates the population of Kano, which by many accounts was the most populous of the Hausa states, as follows:

> In estimating the population of the town at 30,000, I am certainly not above the truth. Captain Clapperton estimated it at from 30,000 to 40,000 (TD1:509-10).

Contrary to the figures Lugard attributes to Barth, Barth estimates the population of the Kano emirate at two hundred thousand people, "besides an equal number of slaves", so that "whole population of the province amounts to half a million, though it may great exceed this number" (TD1:523). This is not to suggest that Barth is more accurate than Lugard, but to show that Lugard does not care a hoot about reportorial accuracy on this question. It should be asked, however, whether forty million people could disappear or perish or sold off to slavers within a span of fifty years (1851-1902)?

It seems, then, that Lugard is quoting Barth selectively, or, to put it in another way, creating a new (fictional) text out of Barth's narrative. For Lugard is eager to demonize the Fulani rulers in order to justify their conquest by British power, exactly as Barth has demanded in his Narrative. Notice that the bulk of Lugard's *Annual Reports* (1912), written between 1900 and 1911, is devoted to detailing the supposedly evil deeds of the Fulani rulers. For Lugard, then, the Fulani and the Devil are virtually synonymous. In passages reminiscent of Barth's, Lugard says that wherever "a Fulani army had been it left a depopulated desert" and that greed was one of the chief characteristics of Fulani rule. Once again, it is Barth that is deployed to hold the argument together, or supply it with an authoritative authenticity:

> Though only some eighty or ninety years have passed since the Fulani conquest, *the decadence which was already apparent in the time of Barth* had reached its extreme before the end of the nineteenth century (1912:78; my italics).

Like Barth before him, Lugard sees the Fulbe as an alien race. In fact he reproduces Barth's myth of the Fulbe as a conquering, alien race writ large over the non-Fulbe formation (TD3: 110-117). According to Lugard, echoing Barth, the "Fulahs or Fulani appear to have been a pastoral race who spread themselves throughout Northern Nigeria" (1912:77). Quoting Clapperton and Barth, Lugard details what he considers the "Fulahs' " rise from " a merely servile ... nomadic position" to victory (ibid: 77). Yet Lugard also notes, just as Barth does, that:

> The Fulani never thoroughly conquered the country, and succeeded only in gaining the submission of the great towns in the plains where their horsemen were effective. The pagan tribes in the hills and broken country and even in large areas of the plains maintained their independence. They are constantly raided for slaves ... This state of chronic war and unrest

> devastated the country. Caravans could only reach the Niger from the North if powerfully escorted, while the tribute in slaves to Sokoto and the number retained for use in each Emirate led to the depopulation of the country not merely by reason of the numbers captured - vast as they were - but by the numbers killed in these raids or left to starve in the bush (1912:77-78).

In *The Dual Mandate* Lugard writes that the "writings of all African explorers are full of evidence of the ruthless destruction of life and the human misery caused by slave-raids" (p.356). Based on this so-called "evidence" from European travel or exploration accounts, Lugard postulates that the "Fulani, therefore, held their suzerainty by right of recent conquest", and thus he can "see no injustice in the transfer of the suzerainty thus acquired to the British government by the same right of conquest" (1912:83). Lugard has, in a single stroke appropriated and domesticated Barth's discourse of the "Dark Continent" as set out in his scattered references to the chaos and anarchy in the Sudan, and the inability of its conquering rulers to manage their affairs.

But just as Barth thinks the Fulbe intelligent and enterprising, so Lugard would make a *volte-face* in the aftermath of the conquest, and begin to resurrect the image of the Fulani as a capable race that could serve British imperial interest. For example, despite his demonization of the Fulbe, Lugard writes that he is anxious to "utilize, if possible, [the Fulbe's] wonderful intelligence, for they are born rulers, and incomparably above the negroid tribes in ability" (1912:13). This, too, is taken straight from Barth:

> There is no doubt that, if any African tribe deserves the full attention of the learned European, it is the Fulbe ...No doubt they are the most intelligent of all the African tribes. (TD3:110).

When Lugard writes that "I believe myself that the future of the virile races of this protectorate lies largely in the regeneration of the Fulani" (1912:84) he is re-echoing Barth's view of the Fulani as the most intelligent, the conquering, race of the Sudan whose rule alone, Barth emphasizes, succeeds in "giving to distant regions a certain bond of unity, in making the land more accessible to trade and intercourse" (TD2: 196).

The preceding pages have documented how Lugard, as the ideal reader of Barth's Narrative, has consciously constituted himself into a competent or even official, perhaps even the necessary, reader. As a "reader formation" of some sort, Lugard has *produced* his own text *from* Barth's Narrative, that is, he has read Barth's text into the context of early 20th century central Sudan, and the imperatives of British colonial policies. We may therefore say that Barth's Narrative has "invited" Lugard to read it as fact, as extra-textual reality, to the same degree Lugard has read the Narrative *productively*. So here a social relationship of reading between text and reader has given rise to what might be called the "naturalization effect"[25], a process where by a text, and a specific reading of it, become one, that is naturalized within the cultural-political rhetorics or values held by both the text, and the subsequent reading (s) of it at different periods or contexts.

It is instructive that Lugard thinks that the world, or the Sudan, that Barth's Narrative speaks of or about really existed, or that it *stood* (note the past tense) in a one-to-one relationship to something outside the Narrative, namely a transfactually existing and *historical* Sudan. Lugard, in other words, assumes a central Sudan, or Northern Nigeria, which he thinks Barth's Narrative has delivered in its pristine

forms for his reading-interpretation. And Lugard does apparently think that he has read correctly and authoritatively what Barth's text has semantically and graphically "presented" before his gaze.

In truth, therefore, Lugard's reading of Barth is, despite its material and practical consequences, the mediated product of a set of discursive and intertextual determinations. For it is these, rather than Barth's Narrative, or text, that have *operated* materially and institutionally upon Barth's text *externally* by mobilizing its "effects" from the outside in, and *internally* by shaping and re-shaping the text in the direction of a "desired end" which Barth himself has advocated, and would, if he were to contemplate the results, applaud.

3.7 The Interested Reader: the Historians

Yet it is not just Lugard's reading of Barth's Narrative that is a construct, the product of historically specific discourse or discursive/epistemic frame, but also the kind of reading of Barth offered by academic historians. Despite the claims of historians that they possess an awesomely critical method of interrogating "primary source" (source criticism), as far as the issue of using Barth's text as a "source" of recounting the history of 19th century Sudan is concerned, they have tended to focus wholly on the world that the Narrative has brought into (allegedly extra-discursive) life. It will be shown below that the historians who have "used" Barth as a historical authority on the Sudan have either read the Narrative as a straightforward eye-witness report, or treated Barth not as an imaginative embellisher but as a reliable witness. It will also be highlighted that Barth has enjoyed the same prestige within

both conservative and radical, expatriate and indigenous, colonialist and nationalist, historical circles.

We propose, in the context of this argument, to study the reception of Barth by the German colonialist historian Shultze (1913), nationalist historian Adeleye (1971), and, not least, the supposedly radical, or left wing, historian Usman (1981). This choice is dictated by two key considerations. First, having discussed the key historical authorities on Barth in detail in chapter two above, it now remains to confront the uses of Barth as a historical source material within substantive academic historical discourses. This accords us the opportunity to discuss Shultze, and Adeleye, all of whom have not been discussed in chapter two. In addition to his essay on Barth which has been reviewed in chapter two above, Usman has deployed Barth in his substantive historical research on Katsina (1400-1883). Perhaps this is the place to test out Usman's claim (1982/85:138) that *belles lettres* or literature is qualitatively different from History, and that it is the method adopted for the interrogation of the primary source that indicates the quality of a historical study.

Second, Both Adeleye and Usman have been influential figures in that they have engendered substantial research through their students, as Saulawa (1989) and Kapteijins (1977) correctly claim. Even Shultze is a veritable source within secondary historical studies of the Sudanic past. Also, it will be interesting to show that despite their analytic, conceptual and political divergences, Schultze, Adeleye, and Usman do not differ fundamentally in their appropriation of Barth as an historical authority, for their assessments or usage of Barth rest on the same paradigmatic and institutional premises.

Shultze's work on the history of Bornu was stimulated by his career in German colonial institutions in the Cameroons in 1903-4, where he served as a member of the Anglo-German Yola-Chad Boundary Commission (Shultze 1913:7). Out of a desire to know more about his country's newly acquired colonies, Shultze read up works on the central and eastern Sudan, especially Bornu most of them written by travellers such as Barth, Nachtigal, Rohlfs and Flegel. These he regards as *primary* sources of the history of the Lake Chad area. As he writes, it was "German travellers above all, and amongst them the most scientifically important and authoritative of all African explorers, Heinrich Barth" who made known to Europe the existence of "these remarkable countries" (11). Barth, Shultze enthusiastically reports to his reader, especially brought news of the "unheard-of atrocities of the slave trade in the heart of Africa, and thus gave impetus to the anti-slavery movement" (11). With an admirable honesty, however, Shultze writes:

> Scarcely were the main avenues of exploration closed at the end of the nineteenth century than events happened such that these parts of Africa had never seen hitherto ... The end of these events was the present political understanding, which brought large potential empires under the protection of the three chief European powers. *Thus Germany at the present day again claims a share in those lands in which the self-denying and indefatigable activity of her great sons, the explorers Barth, Overweg, Vogel* ... had been so valiantly displayed of old, and in the great scientific and economic problems that have still to be solved in the Sudan (1913:12; my italics).

With these prefatory remarks, Shultze proceeds to draw on Barth to show that it was Barth, among other German travellers, who made the Sudan to become (intransitively) *known.* He credits Barth for his superior powers of observation, and an unrivalled historical account of ancient and pre-colonial Bornu (13-21). Barth is said to be the first European to trod on "land hitherto untrodden" (23); that his

detailed descriptions "cannot be superseded in essentials even to-day" (924); that in his journeys across "the dark continent", Barth reported the "thoroughly unsafe" situation of the Sudan (23-28); and that as Barth correctly said, "slaves were still the principal export of Bornu" (216).

There is hardly a page in Shultze without a reference to Barth. In his general sketch of the eastern Sudan in the 19th century, even in his account of the climate, flora, fauna, population and commerce of the Lake Chad area, Barth is the authoritative source. For example, Shultze writes that it is to Barth's measurements that we know that it was normally in the month of September that there were periods of heavy dew on the banks of Lake Chad (72). It is also to Barth that the modern reader owes the insight that the dum-palm was widely distributed in the Chad area: "According to Barth the fruit may be used in large quantities for food" (84). Barth is also quoted as reporting that "Everywhere in the woods and fields is to be heard the cooing and laughter of the many varieties of doves and pigeons both large and small" (138). Barth is also cited to confirm that the central Sudan is the ancestral home of the driver-ant (155). On all these and other trivial romanticist issues, Barth is the leading light for Shultze.

It is to Barth that Shultze owes his racial geography of Bornu, namely that the Kanuris were originally a mixed race of Arab tribes and Hamitic Kanembu and Tubu" (169); that the "extremely coquettish Kanuri lady" is the ugliest in all "Negroland". Shultze concludes his "historical account" with the supposition that "according to Barth's investigations [the Fulbe] were originally herdsmen ... from the Senegal"; and that "Barth says of them with absolute truth" that the Fulbe are

"the most intelligent of all African tribes", who, although possessed of "mental superiority" have been imbued by Islam with "special fanaticism" (199-200), whose spiritualism consists only in the "thoughtless repetition by rote of the first chapters of the Koran" (172).

Thus Shultze's "history of the Lake Chad" or Bornu consists largely in quotations from Barth's narrative. From the issue of slave raiding, the fanaticism or superiority of the Fulbe, to the commercial potential of the central Sudan, Shultze relies on Barth as the authoritative eye witness. Shultze does evidently firmly believe that Barth's Narrative is the most complete historical record, through which one could have a full and unmediated access to the Sudan.

Unfortunately, however, these problems are not mitigated even in the Africanist-nationalist tradition of history writing exemplified by R.A. Adeleye's influential text, *Power and Diplomacy in Northern Nigeria* (1971). Adeleye's work emerged in the context of what was then called "Ibadan History Series", which aimed at vindicating the African Historical Consciousness, and the continent's past political achievements, that is prior to colonial history. The ambition was to create a new African historiography by which the African past would be appraised by the Africans themselves.[26] For example, Adeleye writes, in his study of the Sokoto Caliphate in the 19th century, that, contrary to, for instance, Barth's account of the Caliphate, "the adequacy of the Caliphate's system for its nineteenth-century needs is stressed the overall picture that emerges is that 'there was nothing particularly weak or strong' about the Caliphate. Albeit its remarkable unity and the intactness

of its machinery of government up to the European conquest are demonstrated" (1971:xv).

Yet Adeleye is largely uncritical of one of the very sources of the idea of the Caliphate's weakness and impending collapse --- Barth. Not only is Barth one of the veritable sources of the study; he is also referred to as the authority on the Jihadists' conquest of Katsina, and the rebel Bukhari's routing of the combined army of Sokoto, Katagum, Bauchi, Kano and Missau (28;62); and cited to fortify Adeleye's view of the Fulbe conquests of Adamawa as "undigested conquests":

> Dr Barth's picture of Adamawa in the mid-nineteenth century, as a kingdom in which the conquerors possessed only detached settlements with the intervening regions and mountainous terrains in the hands of heathens, *aptly summarizes Adamawa's problems of consolidation.*

And in his discussion of the sources for the book, Adeleye writes that the explorers' accounts are of "chief value", for they "provide contemporary information" (346). As for Barth, his travels are said to be "outstanding", and that Barth in particular is a "close and penetrating observer". And although Adeleye insists that the explorers' "judgments on the historical situation which they observed" should not be uncritically accepted as "gospel truth", he nevertheless is prepared to credit their accounts at crucial parts of his historical account, as will be shown below.

It is clear that Adeleye has credited Barth's word because it is the writer's authoritative self, or presence as writer or traveller, which, for Adeleye, ultimately certifies it. Adeleye is, apparently, not bothered by the ontologically incorrigible claim of Barth's that Lawal's messenger *really* said that Adamawa was "a fresh, unconsolidated conquest". Adeleye is oblivious of Barth's need to portray to his

Audience in London that the Fulbe are on a career of conquest, much like European countries were in the 19th century in India, South America and Africa.

Even in his account of the Caliphate's struggle to beat back its enemies, Adeleye relies on Barth's account. For he agrees with the latter that there was a feeling "of great insecurity caused by the pressure of the forces of the Caliphate's enemies" in Katsina; and that by 1854, the Gobirawa raiders were pressing hard on Wurno, and thus rendering *unsafe* the road from Sokoto to Timbuktu. These are Barth's views, and Adeleye indicates this by the bibliographical reference to Barth's text. Although Adeleye does not accept Barth's conclusions, he credits his phrasing of the events:

> These revolts produced such a seemingly chronic state of warfare that Dr Barth was led to the conclusion that they indicated that the Caliphate was crumbling. But seen in their proper historical setting, these revolts formed a mere passing phase, a trying phase nevertheless, in Sokoto's perennial problem of consolidation during the first half of the nineteenth century (69).

Now the disqualifying adverb "seemingly" conveys Adeleye's ambivalence or undecidable stance towards Barth's postulate. Surely, Adeleye has credited Barth with the "correct" (i.e. optical-realist) observation (which is obvious) but is silent on the latter's dogmatic empiricist epistemology. That is, Barth, Adeleye *is* saying, did see the obvious; the only problem is his inadequate "reading" of the "seemingly chronic state of warfare".

Also, in Adeleye's text, Barth is repeatedly said to have "reported that", or that he "records that" he met this or that (85), or that this or that incident had this or that significance (70-71). For example, Adeleye questions, on the strength of his intuition or inference, Barth's estimation that Zaria sent, in March 1853, a tribute to

Sokoto amounting to 2 million cowries, 500 gowns and 30 horses. Adeleye thinks that this is an exaggeration "based on misinformation" (86). Yet Adeleye does not probe the source of Barth's misinformation. Paradoxically, Adeleye takes away what he had previously given when he writes in a note next to the bibliographical reference to Barth that: "However, considering the large number of towns and districts which were dependent on Zaria, Barth's estimates may *in fact* not be far out" (86 [n.36]; my italics). The italicized declarative phrase *"in fact"* is, in the last analysis, a fictional device since it is not an explicit claim, but the declaration of an assumed "aesthetic proximity"[27] between Barth on the one hand and Adeleye on the other. But "aesthetic proximity", even of the strongest version, can follow "aesthetic distance". This is indeed illustrated in Usman's reception of Barth.

Usman is arguably largely critical of Barth. Yet he has an "interest", nay an epistemological investment, in Barth's history writing. Usman's work shares much with that of the historians of the "Ibadan History Series" because he, too, is, as his research on the history of Katsina shows, dedicated to the vindication of the pre-colonial African past. His nationalist-Africanism means that he would place much stress on the oral traditions of the people. As he writes in the preface to his text, he is concerned with "the nature of the historical process which ... produced the successive political systems" which have historically defined Katsina's identity as a West African Sudanese society (1981:3). For Usman, the "historical process" means "not the movements and conflicts of races and tribes and their armies, but the changes in the nature and configuration of productive occupations, in the

composition of settlements, in the structure of lineages, and the changes in beliefs and the associated political ideology" (4).

Usman's book, which emerged out of his Ph.D. Thesis which was submitted in 1974 (Saulawa 1989:81), was an intervention into the debates engendered by the relevance of historical studies in the vindication of the African past, and the challenges of contemporary development. This observation might apply for much of the Nigerian academic historical scene in the mid-1960s and late 1970s (Kafteijins 1977; Hess 1972; Saulawa 1989).

Early in his book, Usman discusses Barth's recording of the early history of Katsina, and the latter's attempt to reconstruct this history based on the oral information he recorded while travelling in Katsina. Barth, Usman claims, has failed to critically and properly examine the evidence he uses. Usman is emphatic that Barth's attempt to use the oral sources to reconstruct the early history of Katsina "suffers not only from ... methodological limitations [of failing to properly examine the evidence used], but also from a neglect of the actual social and political conditions which enabled [the early dynasties] to arise" (912). For example, Usman says of Barth's "hypothesis" that a new Habe dynasty followed the fall of Korau about 1643 A.D., until early 19th century, that it is not "supported by any of the evidence available" (63).

It should thus be noted that Barth is struck down on the basis of the lack of *evidence* to support his "hypothesis". This shows that Usman is committed to a rationalist account of historical adequacy. That is, a "hypothesis" must be supported, or corroborated, by the *evidence*. Usman never defines, in conceptual or ontological

terms, what *evidence* is, or amounts to. Yet he credits Barth with an estimation of the population of Katsina town as between 8,000 and 9,000, which the latter obtained while he was travelling in Katsina in March 1853. Usman writes that Barth noted the town's "special gates, the triple walls in front of them and the double moat" (153). It seems, then, that Usman exercises no skepticism in regard to Barth's presence in, or optical or textual apprehension of, Katsina at a particular time (that is in March 1853, rather than, say, April 1865).

For example, Usman discounts Barth's account of Mohammed Bello, the governor (Barth's word) of Katsina (see TD1: 456-469). Usman says that Barth's criticism of Bello as an "unjust man" and a "comedian" is unjustified owing to the Barth's "worrisome and sour temperament" (158). Yet Usman *does* also agree with Barth that Bello was "an actor", " a lively humorist", and "the eccentric man". It is said by Usman that Barth does correctly perceive this aspect of Bello character" [sic] (158). The point is that Usman regards Barth's *published* observations as *exact representations of reality as Barth, the author-writer more or less correctly experienced it.* This means, therefore, that Usman's sharp focus is not on the author, or the icon, the emir, but on the "world" which Barth has brought to (textual) life. This is the case because Usman seems, in general, to merge his "I" with Barth's. He finds justifications for doing this in the directives, injunctions and disputations of Barth's text itself.

To illustrate the point above: Usman takes it as axiomatic that the reader should believe that Barth met Saddiku, a chieftain, and ex-emir, of Katsina on February 3, 1853, not before or after that precise date (60); or that he met, in

Katsina, the Galadiman Gari of Sokoto, Umaru Dan Doshero in February 1851 (169); or that the Galadima had "20 mounted horsemen with him" when Barth accompanied him in March 1853 (171). Indeed Barth is said to have *reported* (or *reports* in other verbal constructions) that in "Katsina the land tax was levied at the rate of 2,500 cowries annually on every head of family"; or that he "estimated the emirate's population at 300,000" (187). In one particular case, Usman writes that Barth "reports that each of the freeborn Abzinawa ... he accompanied to Katsina in January 1851 paid one *Kantu* (block) of salt and 500 cowries" (189). It is significant that Usman's book does not even discuss the "status" or "identity" of Barth's Narrative in the section dealing with "note on sources" (pp.26-223). Now Usman's use of the reporting clauses and the *"that"* subordinator (Barth says *that* ... reports *that*) is interesting. First, Usman's use of the subordinator "*that*" implies a consensual solidarity with Barth on the information being disseminated. Second, Usman never pauses to ask: to whom is Barth reporting *that* particular piece of information? In other words, if Barth is reporting, to whom is he reporting at that particular time? It cannot be said that Barth was/is reporting to no one in particular, as the discussion of his audience (s) and reading formations above makes clear.

More seriously, Usman directly and unconditionally (bibliographically and referentially) attributes to Barth supposedly factual statements (of a specific or general validity). Examples of these are Usman's statements that the Galadiman Gari of Sokoto, Umaru Dan Doshero, was "responsible for collecting that portion of revenue raised by the Katsina government, which was sent annually to the Caliph" (170) and that some areas of Katsina remained uncultivated in the wake of the

rebellions and wars of the 19th century, up to the time "Barth passed through ... in January 1851" (201; also 202, 217). Usman says, for instance, that "Barth was told" that a certain Abubakar "even aspired to the emirship when Saddiku was deposed" (174) yet he does not mention the person *who* told Barth so.

In a revealing passage, Usman quotes Barth's description of Saddiku:

> Saddiku was a stately person, of tall figure, a serious expression of countenance, and a high, powerful chest, *such as I have rarely seen in Negroland, and still less among the Fulbe. However, he is not a pure Pullo, being the offspring of a Bornu female slave.* He had something melancholy about him; and this was very natural, as he could not well be sincerely beloved by those among whom he was obliged to live (TD3:81; my italics).

The italicized lines are those *omitted* by Usman (see p. 161). His response to Barth's description comes in the form of a defensive comment that "the rest of the description tells us more about Barth's attitudes than about Saddiku" (161). Yet Usman writes immediately after the above sentence.

> But Barth observed that he [Saddiku] understood Arabic tolerably well and was quite pleased to get a copy of the Linjilah [sic]. This fits in with what is remembered in Katsina about his [Saddiku's] personality --- serious, deeply religious, but something of a 'loner' (161).

Why, it should be asked, is Usman willing to credit Barth's *positive* description of Saddiku and not the presumably "negative" one, namely Saddiku's ethnic origin? When Barth says that Saddiku does not exhibit the ethnic features of the Fulbe, Usman says that is Barth's attitude; and when, *correspondingly,* Barth says Saddiku is pious and deeply religious, Usman readily agrees. So one portion of Barth's discourse is accorded the status of "historical", or evidential fact (that is, Barth is allowed the "last word") irrespective of the plausible realization that

Barth's other, presumably negative, reading of Saddiku is *conditionally* and *allegorically* dependent on the first (positive) one. Indeed Usman does not notice that Barth is deploying, in his discourse of Saddiku, the rhetorical trope of *isocolon*, the allegorical-metaphorical *repetition* of a grammatical structure: "Saddiku: freeborn [stately person ... non-Fulbe 'offspring of a Bornu female slave']; powerful ... not beloved". Faced with this figural-chiasmic economy, Usman could only get out, or attempt to get out, of it by *factualizing* Saddiku while also *fictionalizing* Barth.[28]

In other moments, it is Barth, as it has been demonstrated above, who is factualized, or rather turned into an instance of the hyper-realist matter of fact, as is the case in Usman's use, or reading, of the following passage from Barth:

> The governor... about noon held a sort of review of several horsemen, whose horses, in general, were in *excellent* condition. They were armed with a *straight* sword *hanging* on the left, a *long heavy* spear for *thrusting*, and a shield, either of the *same description as that of the Tawarek*, of *oblong* shape, made of the *large* antelope ...or else bullock's or elephant's hide, and *forming* an *immense circular disk* of about five feet in diameter; some of them wore also the dagger at the left arm, while I counted not more than four or five muskets. Their dress was *picturesque*, and not too flowing for warlike purposes, the large shirt, or shirts (for they generally wear two), being fastened round the breast with an *Egyptian shawl* with a *red* border; and even those who were dressed in a bernus [Arab cloak] had it *wound round* their breast. Most of them wore *black* 'rawani' or shawls, *round their faces*, a custom which the Fellani of Hausa have adopted from the Tawarek merely on account of its looking warlike... (TD1: 454; my italics).

The task here is to show how Usman handles, or reads, this passage. In his reading, the passage conveys the reality of the organizational and military strength or sophistication of the Katsina cavalry. Usman hardly notices the unmistakably metaphorical, metonymic and ironic mode of the inscription of the passage, for this

powerful and richly attired and equipped army is only a mass of colour! The army of this passage is an aesthetic or aestheticized *body* of the exotic-savage. Yet Usman proceeds to build on the semantic authority of Barth's description, a huge monument, so to speak, of empirical, factual discourse on the "military organization", "judiciary", "taxation" and the like of Katsina in the 19th century. Usman behaves as if it is this passage that conveys the *ontology* of Katsina as a whole (that is, as cultural, material and historical space). This is conveyed by Usman's *demonstrative* clause which immediately follows the citation from Barth: *"This seems to have been a contingent of light cavalry..."* (Usman 1981: 185; my italics).

Several conclusions can be drawn about the historians' reception of Barth. Although the historian is sometimes critical of Barth, he is, still, unable to give up his "interested" approach to, or "academic investment" in, Barth. None of the historians discussed above has been able to direct a sharp focus on Barth the writer, so as to establish more coherently or adequately the nature of this written and writing self, its self-divisions, hesitations and aporias.

In their reception of Barth, the historians have failed to investigate, or offer an adequate account of, the status or identity of the exploration text on which they have so wholly depended in their reconstruction of the histories of a people or a place. Neither Shultze, Adeleye nor Usman has an account of the agential, transdictional, indexical or bibliographical history of the composition of *Travels and Discoveries*, not to speak of the critical examination of its real authorship, fictional narrative and

writing strategies, including its use of the *signs* which, to quote McKenzie (1986:8), "constitute texts and the materials on which they are recorded".

To read Barth's Narrative straightforwardly as an eye-witness report rather than as a complex response to mediated, ideational processes, as Adeleye and Usman, not speak of Shultze, have done is to deny that 19th century exploration narratives "construct every bit as much as they bear witness" (MacLaren 1992:41). It is the failure to conceive *Travels and Discoveries* as a *literary* text, with multiple narrative voices, a real author and fictional narrator, and inscribed within the "genre expectations" of 19th century reportorial strategies, circumscribed, as the novel, by a specific Post-Enlightenment Audience and Reading Formation, that has misled the historians in question to ascribe, or attribute, to Barth's Narrative a textual integrity, or a referential presence it clearly lacks, and will never possess, or at least it cannot itself sustain.

In the case of Usman, his reading of *Travels and Discoveries* oscillates between the factual (that it was Barth who wrote the text), the factitious (that he travelled in the Katsina area between 1850 and 1853) and the fictional (that Barth was describing himself when he described Saddiku). These are entangled in his reading or reception of the text. The peculiar way in which Usman's insightful *aporetic* readings are knotted and woven together should indicate what he has made of the past (the historical process, including Barth's Narrative), and to what *extent* he is *responsible* for the enduring presence of Barth's legacy within Nigerian historical studies.

One striking point that emerges from our study of the reception of Barth by the historians is that although they might deprecate literature, the literary text or literary criticism, as Usman does in his article on Barth (1982/85:138), for them, Barth's text has greater authority and use than the very places, people or experiences it purportedly describes. In Usman, Shultze, and Adeleye one finds that it is Barth's text (and other texts) rather than the extra-textual Sudan, or the Sudan as it really was in itself, which possesses discursive or linguistic or semantic authority and presence. This is what Said (1978:93) has called the "textual attitude", a process whereby a "book (or text) acquires greater authority and use, even than the actuality it describes". Paradoxically, it is the historians, rather than the literary critics, who have proved to be the unproblematic textualists.

Although Adeleye, Shultze and Usman may differ here and there in their readings of Barth, in the final analysis they are all readings in the same manner. For it does not matter that they claim that their approach is distinctively historical: they are virtually oblivious of the semiotic dimension of textual analysis, especially when dealing with a book which gives the illusion of the (analogical) unity of reference and referent, real author and (fictional) narrator, word and referent. Yet whether historical or otherwise, the historians' method must come to grips with what may be called the frame of the "symbolic". For it is the frame of the symbolic which makes a text *appear* "real" or "imaginative", that is, deceptively organized as either the "factual" or the "fictional".

It is thus pointless elaborately to attempt to *prove* or verify the truth-claims of *Travels and Discoveries*. The text was written for an audience, or a set of reading

publics, which did not require, as far as the Sudan was concerned, corrigible, matter-of-fact statements. That precisely is why it is the case that when Barth writes that Kano is a rich commercial centre, that the Mossi are savages, that the Fulbe are a conquering race, that Saddiku is well-built and pious, that Aliyu is not a noble Pullo, that the Empire is crumbling, that he met the Galadiman Gari of Sokoto, or, finally, that Kano emirate has a population of 500,000 half of whom are slaves, this is not *historical* information, nor will it ever be. It is *immune* to any external test or corroboration by any other text or account. *Barth's statements are, on the whole, unverifiable outside his text.* Yet even Barth himself, as far as the ongoing reading of his Narrative is concerned, is a *text,* and a fictional narrator, not a matter-of-fact person or entity. This is the implication of Ong's entirely correct postulate that "extratextual context is missing not only for readers but also for writers" (1982:102).

This does to a great extent explain the crisis in the reception of Barth within, especially empiricist, or what might be called the hyper-realist, historical circles. Either Barth's premises are fully endorsed, or half-heartedly, but nevertheless ultimately, assimilated as a set of incorrigible statements. But, to quote Lang on the issue of the corrigibility or otherwise of written accounts, "whatever engages the reader about such statements, it cannot be due to any external assurance of their correspondence to the facts or events" (1990:176). Rather, it is the historians' *confidence,* as readers of Barth's Narrative, in the description of the "facts" or "events" he encodes than the Narrative's matter-of-fact authority, which prevails, or is raised by the historian to academic or documentary respectability.

However, our analysis of the historians' reception of Barth is not meant to reveal the *truth* or *falsity* of their reading; it is to highlight that a text such as *Travels and Discoveries* is, and can only be, rhetorically constituted by its *location* and *activity* within an intertextual space of political and cultural rhetoric which binds author and reader together. The point of this is to emphasize that the reading of Barth's Narrative, whether by the historian or the literary critic, can only consist in the creation of a (new) reading formation around the Narrative, and that all such readings are, and can only be, textual strategies or conventions normally considered the traditional domain of Literary Criticism. Of course, the historians' readings frequently fail to be adequately or properly *literary critical.*

3.8 **The Meaning-Effects of Reading**

However, to say that a particular "reading" of Barth's Narrative is, or fails to be, literary critical is not to divorce it from "knowledge" altogether. On the contrary: any reading of Barth must account for the (reading) effects of his text. For Barth himself wrote for a specific audience in order to convey to them, or to say to them, what the Sudan was/is *like,* and what could be *done* with her. And among the "technology" at his disposal is the technology of writing. This is the truth of Peckham's suggestion that travel or exploration be seen as "*prompted* by readings" which, in any case, not only determined the places to be visited, but also constructed the far-away place as an artifact, which in turn was defined "in terms of its legibility, while the traveller was cast in the role of the reader who activated the meanings of the manuscript" (1999:172).

In the last paragraphs of his Narrative, Barth's narrator informs the reader that he alone has "opened to the view of the scientific public of Europe" the " *secluded* African world", that is, has made it, as he says, "*tolerably known"* (TD3: 631; my italics). Here Barth the narrator, indeed Barth the real author, becomes, or is, in textual reality, the ideal or competent or necessary reader of the Sudan. He has lifted her veil by reading, by *penetrating,* her. Writing is the *mechanism* for this reading, this unveiling, which, in turn, enacts Barth's desire for "transparent" knowledge of, and about, the Sudan. Yet this knowledge is a form of reading of the object that "pacifies" it, which in turn has the Sudan-object reduced to its reader's "colonizing" knowledge. To borrow a metaphor from Fanon (1967:143), in unveiling the Sudan, Barth reveals "her" beauty, bares her secret, and makes her available for (European) adventure.

This, surely, is one *effect* of the reading-exploring practice: in reading the *Travels and Discoveries,* the reader is invited to read, to experience, to command the Sudan as a series of spaces, icons, bodies, and *scenes.* Hence Barth's frequent use of the metaphor of the theatre, musical intermezzo, and the opera in his reading-scripting of the Sudanese "scenes". That is, he puts her on display-play, maps her as a space of/for *his* European knowledge. Barth's anxiety in this respect is towards his audience: he seeks to convince the members of his audience, to seek their commitment to his, and his Narrative's, fundamental terms. It has been argued, with justice, that all narrative, of whatever kind, has to seek to impinge on the world of the (or its) reader:

> Narrative meaning exists dialectically in the *tension* between its world and that of the reader. We must not be mesmerized by the fact that only the former of these appears to be there on

> the page. The narrative is itself inscribed in a language already *inhabited* by the reader (Bell 1990:197; my italics).

Ultimately, then, the reader is implicated in the very project Barth's Narrative has set for itself, and which also, as the quotation above implies, *defines* it. Yet while *Travels and Discoveries* is meant to persuade or initiate its audience into an interpretive closure, the truth is that its own interpretive community, the Geographical Societies, the abolitionists, colonial officials, and the 19th century imperial readers and, since then, its present *ideal* and *interested* readers, have, paradoxically, been brought into existence by their very *experience* of the Narrative itself, whose "very last line" is an invitation to the reader-audience to join the project by reading the text.

But by so doing, the Narrative leaves the reader-audience with a project of their own, namely to join the reading community or the interpretive audience. By doing so, they would see, or project into, *Travels and Discoveries* as, the belief that it is the *sign* that speaks to the high Post-Enlightenment categorical imperative which declares that the Sudan must be rescued from chaos, slavery and slave-hunting for the benefit of the Sudan, or mankind. This, precisely, is what Lugard, the ideal reader of *Travels and Discoveries,* insists the point of Barth's travels was/is all about:

> In all these cases a higher civilisation was brought into contact with barbarism ... in the effort to protect the weak from the tyranny of the strong to extend the rule of justice and liberty, to protect traders, settlers, and missions, and to check anarchy and bloodshed ... Nor must we ignore the very real desire of the people of [the Sudan] to assist in the suppression of slavery and barbarous practices (Lugard 1922:613).

There is no doubt that Barth saw beyond the mere writing of a "philanthropic" narrative, or a historical book, on the Sudan. He was, in this sense, paradigmatically conscious of the wider significance of his writing. As Rodgers (1997) has found in a study of the contribution of mid-Victorian writers such as H. Haggard to imperial discourse, Barth's text not only helped to condition Britain's, even Europeans', own developing imperial and racial identity, but also reflected imperialist-Victorian attitudes towards the Sudan in an age of imperial expansion.

It has been emphasized by McLynn (1993:312) that European explorers have always been the handmaidens to imperialism because they carried out "economic surveys of the lands through which they travelled". Nearly all of them, Barth included, stressed, in the fashion of Lugard's "dual mandate", the two-way "benefits of a partnership between African labour and European capital and technology". Yet it is also true that they did this--- and Barth's distinctive contribution in this should be noted--- first and foremost through writing. As an imperialist, Barth constructed the image of the Sudan by turning her into a "heart of darkness" racked by insecurity, tribal wars, the slave-hunts, cruelty, religious superstition and fanaticism, and cultural inferiority. It was this which discursively and ideologically enabled Lugard to speak of his special role as a "trustee, charged with bringing the benighted primitive to light" (McLynn 1993:312). Thus the fictive, factitious and cultural power which Barth's Narrative possesses is not unrelated to the literary, imaginative and discursive demands of his Audience for the very documentary model of non-European Identity and Otherness which Lugard and others like him found in *Travels and Discoveries*.

To that extent, Barth himself is the ideal reader for imperial audiences, for he not only entertained and informed his reading publics but also delivered the Sudan in distinctive literary form, symbolic-fictitious images, and reified and reifying discourses for the imperial policymakers, the domestic reader, and for colonial adventurers. Yet this has been lost on both the nationalist and radical historians. There is no attempt whatever on their part to see the text or the narrative that they study, or from which they derive "factual knowledge", or "first-hand information" as part of the 19th century imperialist effort to hold on to and plan for Africa.

As Barkindo suggests (1984:32), the "writings of Barth [were] the theoretical justification for European colonisation" of the Lake Chad area, and that "colonial agents and adventurers all seemed to have worked towards the implementation of his ideas". This shows that Barth's text was not, nor is it, a rarefied text, a mere space of writing, but a veritable sign of social representation:

> Through the writings of Barth ... Adamawa seemed the El Dorado for European colonialism. This was why there was a race to Adamawa by the three European powers Britain, France and Germany (Barkindo 1984:33).

It is in this sense that the reception of a text such as *Travels and Discoveries* is inseparable from its existence as an accentuation, displacement and condensation of arguably "insidious" meaning effects. This, in truth, is why the *Travels and Discoveries* which the modern, or more precisely, post-1857 (post-publication) reader encounters is the *recursively embedded* result of a series of readings by a host of reading formations which have, to the same degree, overworked, over-coded, or productively activated the text through the generations. Yet these reading

formations are, or have been, in their turns, social, ideological, material and institutional relationships.

A good illustration is Barth's "chaos thesis" within which he encodes the Sudan. It should not be surprising for Barth to find "chaos" everywhere in the Sudan because his career was devoted to finding one, as has been demonstrated above. Boahen's argument that Barth "painted the [Sokoto Empire] as a Hobbesian state of nature" is to the point. Yet he does not attempt to explain the durable reasons for Barth's misleading conceptions. Interestingly, Barth himself in 1850-55 left behind literally chaotic German provinces. Thus if Barth finds "chaos" all over the Sudan, that must be the meaning-effect which both he and his inscribed audience and reading publics have *recursively* embedded within his narrativizations. It is little surprise then that Barth's transpositional inscription of the Sudan as a plot structure of his own heroic deeds and superhuman accomplishments should please and delight his readers. It is therefore pointless to argue, as Boahen does, that although there were uprisings and revolts within the Sudan, it was not "chaos" or slave raiding as Barth conceives it, but occasional disturbances which Barth *mis*-interpreted or *mis*-described. In the final analysis, then, Barth's text has no meaning effects that can be constituted or realized *outside* of such relationships or reading formations which both his text and his readers have semiotically and intertextually brought into being.

This, it should again be emphasized, is the same process that governs the production or reception of literary texts such as poems, novels and plays. As Bennett (1992:219) might put it, *Travels and Discoveries* has no meanings, only

meaning-effects, that is, "has no meanings that can be traduced". And so, like any novel or play, *Travels and Discoveries* is the result of Barth's impressions of his reading public and audience, interacting creatively and intertextually with the requirements of textual composition. His text is therefore not a given but an *instance* of wider social and literary processes of representation. As such, *it is both the first and the last thing* we should speak about since the text has no existence outside the reading relations which have historically and analytically constituted its audiences, reading formations and its literary-informational or aesthetic-documentary value.

However, to raise the question of the literary-documentary value of *Travels and Discoveries* is to move, analytically at least, from the consumers and receptors of its representations to the objects and techniques of the representation itself.

NOTES

1. For the literature on reception theory, see Holub (1984), Suleiman and Crosman (1980) and Tompkins (1980).

2. Eze (1997:6) has highlighted the "intertextuality" which binds together, so to speak, these philosophers: "There is ... quite a promiscuous theoretical as well as stylistic dependence of one writer on another".

3. It should be noted that Barth, in a pre-photographic era, had had to convey to his readers an almost "pictorial" representation within a graphic one.

4. See the account in Newbury (1992:1-45) and McLynn (1993: 13-38).

5. According Moorhouse, Buxton's solution to Africa's alleged miseries was "legitimate trade", which Buxton remarked, "should carry away the superfluities of Africa [and] above all, to establish [the Christian] religion in Africa" (1973:28).

6. When Barth brought back these two African lads, he presented them to Queen Victoria and the Kaiser in Berlin. Yet it is very likely that Barth was more interested in their conversion to Christianity, as part of the then effort by missionaries and colonialists to plan for the Sudan. On this point, see Kirk-Greene and Newman (1971:1-25), Suleiman (1997:37-51). I have benefited from reading an unpublished paper on this by Sani Abba Aliyu (forthcoming in *Kano Studies*).

7. The eminent geographer, and Barth's former teacher, Carl Ritter asked Barth to explore the eastern part of the Lake Chad area. On this see Boahen (1964:181-196).

8. There is a text of the draft treaty in Boahen (1964:237) and a copy of the treaty between Great Britain and Umar the Sheik of Bornu in 1851 and the treaty between Great Britain and the Sultan of Sokoto, Aliyu Babba (1853) in Adeleye (1971:331-334).

9. See the communication between Richardson and Bidwell (Foreign Office Papers in the British Public Record Office, or F.O. 101/23, Oct. 11, 1849. It is also cited in Boahen (1964:182).

10. The engravings, woodcuts, and other illustrations do not contain captions. These are clearly meant for the readers' ocular penetration, that is, in silence. Allegorically, this is an invitation to the reader to fill in. "Space here", writes Ong "is the equivalent of silence (1982:128)".

11. Ong (1982:102) has argued that there is no extra-textual context either for readers or for the author (writer):

> "Lack of veritable context is what makes writing normally so much more agonizing an activity than oral presentation to a real audience ... The writer's audience is always a

> fiction. The writer must set up a role in which absent and often unknown readers can cast themselves".

12. "Fiction" is not synonymous with "falsification", or unreality. See the debate on this in Lang (1990:189), and sections of chapter six below.

13. In 1849, Barth published a narrative of his Journeys in the Mediterranean area and Asia Minor, his *Wanderungen durch die Kustenlander des Mittel Meeres, ausgefuhrt in den Jahren 1845 1846 and 1847* (vol. I).

14. After intermittent quarrels with the Foreign Office, and the London Royal Geographical Society, Barth returned to Germany, travelled again to Spain, (1861), the Balkan Peninsula (1862), and Western Turkey (1865). It was in 1864 that he published the *Essay* which he had read to the Royal Geographical Society in 1857. For a detailed treatment, see Kirk-Greene (1965: ix- xviii).

15. For example, Spittler (1995) and Lange (1995). Lange's text is particularly instructive since he apparently wrote the text in German, and then translated it into English for the English-speaking German Journal *Saeculum*.

16. For the text of these *Instructions* and other relevant texts on the exploration of Africa, see Newbury (1995:44-79).

17. It might have been the realization of this by Barth that spurred him to produce a German translation which appeared together with the English original in 1857-58. Urvoy (1936) has claimed that the English and the German texts are identical, except the dedication in the German edition, which was to Kaiser Williams, rather than Lord Clarendon. Benton (1913:5), the translator of Arnold Shultze (1913) says that he has been informed by J. Arthur that "the English and German editions [of Barth's Narrative] vary considerably, and whole paragraphs are missing [in the German edition]".

18. True enough, Barth's text was read in 1857-58 in the immediate context of abolitionist and imperialist rhetorics, for it was, above all, privileged in terms of its wealth of abolitionist, commercial and political "information". These rhetorics functioned as allegories not only for Barth's scientific meticulousness but also for his audience's "humanitarian" values.

19. Subsequent editions of the Narrative, especially the 3-volume edition of 1965, have the black and white illustrations engraved by Loosing-Barritt. His engravings are also based on Barth's pencil sketches.

20. Thus far from conveying Barth's realistic method, or pre-occupation with the matter of fact, the drawing of sketches is one way by which the alien explorer seeks to authenticate his presence at the scene, which is also another way of conferring representational authority on his writing, which, naturally, should wish to give the impression that it has truly disclosed the "real".

21. For the text of these reviews, see Kirk-Greene (1962:48-52).

22. Yet Eagleton also finds that periodicals such as the *Spectator* sold only about three thousand copies, in a population of between five and six million; and that the periodicals were aimed at the literate middle-class and bourgeois, not farm labourers or domestic servants (1984:14).

23. In a passage in TD1: 310, Barth speaks sarcastically of "Mohammedan learning".

24. I am indebted to Umar (1997) for some of the points in my readings of Lugard, although I find his argument about a specifically European or Lugardian discourse of the "Dark Continent", as distinct from imperialist ideology in general, unconvincing. For example, Umar does not probe the "psychological" aspects of

Lugard's upbringing (as a boy he wrote adulatory essays about Livingstone and some of the other explorers; had a failed love affair, thought of suicide or death in action) and his imperialist dispositions (wanted to join the Italian army which was preparing to invade Ethiopia). On this, see McLynn (1993:344).

25. Culler (1975:135) has argued that "writing" (arguably both "fictional" and "non-fictional") "depends on [the] readers' ability to naturalize it and to recognize the common world which serves as point of reference". Perhaps this partly explains the propensity of historians to "naturalize" Barth's narrativizations, or to assume implicitly the "world" brought to (textual) life by Barth's text.

26. See the introduction to the series written by K.O. Dike, appended to many books in the series, such as Adeleye (1971), and Last (1967). Professor Dike writes:

> "... In the nineteenth century, when Europe occupied Africa, her scholars did not attempt to understand or to build on the historical traditions in existence there; they sought instead to challenge and supplant them. The history of European traders, missionaries, explorers, conquerors and rulers constituted, in their views, the sum of total African history".

It is debatable whether this ambition has been realized, given the heavy reliance on the European explorers by indigenous historians in recounting Sudanese history.

27. In Lang's formulation of the issue, there is "aesthetic proximity" between the author and the reader where the latter's discourse is privileged by the reader in such a way that his statements are rendered incorrigible. This, argues Lang, "accompanies even the strongest versions of the concept of "aesthetic distance" (1990:190).

28. Here is an illustration of this. Usman reviews Barth's view on the commercial decline of Katsina on account of the wars and upheavals of the 19th century. Usman cites Bovill, and other authorities on the issue. In the end, Usman reaches the conclusion that "the *fragmentary* evidence available does not conclusively support Barth's view of the commercial decline [of Katsina] after the Jihad" (211; my

italics). Usman's next sentence is as follows: "There are certainly indications which point towards a decline..." (211). After the initial evasive maneuvers, Usman certifies the very notions of Barth's that he had earlier questioned. That is, at one pole Barth is seen as deploying what might be called "fiction of authority"; and at another the "authority of fact".

CHAPTER FOUR:

WRITING, VISUALISM, AND PRESENCE

> The image cannot re-present and add the representer to the represented, except in so far as the presence of the re-presented is already folded back upon itself in the world, in so far as life refers to its own wish for a supplement J. Derrida (1976:184).

4.1 The Mobile Signified

In his account of his journey in the Sudan, Barth inscribes himself, much like Columbus before him, as the protagonist, the authorial narrator, of the very story he tells of his exploration of an alien and exotic land. He also claims for himself the intentionality of direct address. In the preface to his narrative of this journey, the reader is informed that Barth-- the hero and real author, the inscribing agent and narrator ego-- is an explorer on a journey of discovery" (TDI: xxviii), and that he is an "African explorer" who seeks to "*penetrate* into the interior" (TDI: xxiv; my italics). Yet this journey into the interior of the Sudan is undertaken not by a disembodied mind, or a serial consciousness, but by the subject of exploration, who has had boyish thoughts of visiting the blank or little known regions in the interior of Africa. The protagonist says that he had, before his journey, often cast a wishful look towards those unknown or little known regions in the interior" (xxiii).

Barth's text thus takes the form of the *inscription* of this "wishful look towards" the other, now veiled, now inscrutable. But this story is also the narrative of the protagonist's high "humanitarian" ideals, the "progressive civilization of the neglected races [of the Sudan"] (xxiv). This is what Pratt calls the "male discovery rhetoric" (1992:104) which inscribes the Other within the narrative of *desire,* the

protagonist's desire, to expand his imagination into new and exotic areas so as to *affect* himself with his own re-presentation. Yet as desire, Barth's impending journey is a signifier for his need for fulfillment in which his full presence would be registered, or rather repeated as a working system supported not only by an institutionalized audience-reading formation but also by the literary powers of visualism, writing, and representation. As Derrida writes, "Desire desires the exteriority of presence and absence" (1976: 167). For example, the narrator says that his endeavor to explore the Sudan consisted in a "desire to know something *more* about [those regions, and it] acted on me like a charm" (TDI: xxiv). But this desire is presented as a signifier for knowledge: to know more about the exotic other, to get a "clearer insight into the customs and the polity" of the Other; to "represent" them, and to place before the European reader "a new and animate picture" of "those apparently savage and degraded tribes" (xxviii).

But because this enterprise requires, and is itself a, representation, it would consist in an ocular penetration of the other space that would seek to conquer the anxiety of representation. For this, the traveller must be several things all at once: investing eye, which must remain mobile and active; a writing and written subject, which transforms the visual image into the signified content of experience; and an originary presence, which invests perception with the symbolic resources of textuality for the edification, instruction, and entertainment of the inscribed audience and the reading subject at home. This is why the hero is on a search for knowledge, knowledge that is driven by the desire to represent both the journey and the activity of the journey as *meaning* and as *text*. For not only would Barth's

journey to the Sudan afford him a situation of seeing but also the *representation* of the seeing in the form of a symbolic act of mastery and control in which the Sudan would not only be visually inspected but also re-inscribed, written over. It is little wonder, then, that the hero complains about a native's *harem* which is so secured from visual apprehension that "the dark passages leading to the interior could not be *penetrated by a stranger's eye*" (TD1: 459; my italics).

This Baconian hunger for travel, discovery, and visual appropriation transforms the narrator of the text into the demiurgic subject who would explore, that is, re-trace hidden reality so as to discover, to "trace the historical thread...through this labyrinth of tribes and overthrown Kingdoms [and reflect] on their possible progress and restoration through the intercourse with more civilized parts of the world" (xxxii). All this is designed to make legible what is obscure, or constitute presence out of absence. In this way, the narrator of *Travels and Discoveries* secures the legitimacy and the activity of his presence in the Sudan. This consists in the restoration, or better still insertion, of the secluded Sudan into History through the telling of her exotic presence, so that:

> a lively interest is awakened by reflection of [her] possible *progress* and restoration, through the intercourse with more civilized parts of the world [Europe] (TD1: xxxii; my italics).

To this extent, "discovery" is the lifting, as it were, of the Sudan from its materiality and relationships into the universalizing visionary/visual field of the explorer-observer. Thus the new interest in the Sudan would be a re-description, "a scheme" (TD3: 144), analogous to the predestined authority of the hero in Baconian narrative of discovery (142). This is why exploration implies the "discovery "of the Other as a *story*, as a semantically productive matrice, as a discursive "event", and

as the subject of articulation. However, this subject of articulation is also a visual subject, or rather the subject that represents and "constructs" the visual scene itself.

4.2 **Writing and the Visual Scene**

In his travels through the Sahara, Katsina, Kano, Bornu, Bagirmi, Sokoto, and Timbuktu, the narrator-hero of *Travels and Discoveries* has, and relies on, one thing: seeing or visuality. He strives to "obtain a glance" at things, and to make things "become visible" (TD1: 387). Villages, trees, bodies and landscapes "greet the eye" (TD1: 399). He sees the "seen", that is, objects "favorable for observation" (Ibid: 443). He burns, he says, "with impatience to see" every piece of the Sudan (TD2: 155), especially its landscape. The narrator is thus a seeing-man who *brings* visual order onto the landscape: he relies on the authority of (his) optical vision. Indeed he frequently constitutes objects, or authors images, by beholding them ("I was so anxious to behold..." [TD2: 158]). That is why discovery, for the narrator, consists in screening objects, or in optically conferring on them significance (as screened objects):

> [I] looked from the bank over the scenery before me, I was quite enchanted, although the whole country bore the character of a desolate wilderness (TD2: 164).

Note here that it is the looking, or the act of seeing, which has led to both the enchantment and the ensuing disenchantment. Yet at other occasions seeing or looking is a transcendental moment, a moment of sudden illumination, the ideal site/sight for a religious epiphany and delirious triumph of the spiritual sentiment of the soul. Yet all this must also lead to naming, claiming, and discursive possession of the object of visuality:

> I *looked* long and *silently* upon the stream; it was one of the *happiest* moments of my life... I had now *with my own eyes*, clearly established the direction and nature of this mighty [Benue] river...(TD2: 167-8; my italics).

A good example of the ideologically loaded significance of visuality can be seen in Barth's encounter with the Niger River. Upon sighting the Niger for the first time, the seeing-man says he is elated with feelings of intense curiosity, and that he cannot wait to "behold with my own eyes that great river" and be "in constant sight of this noble spectacle" (TD3: 171). Thereafter, the narrator falls into a delirious discourse of "discovery": he registers his claim to be the first [European?] to behold what he calls the Eastern branch of the Niger, the Benue. Even the Niger itself is said to have become *known* "by the labors of Mungo Park and Rene Caillie [and] the Landers" (ibid). The point is that it is at such moments of visual discovery that the seeing-man/narrator reaches the zenith of self-consciousness, and also the moment at which the object of vision becomes a textual signified, and the hero-speaker the textual agent within the "sacred" spaces of exploration writing. Notice, on this point, the narrator's short, elliptical sentences, and the use of the noun, *spectacle,* to describe the Niger. As noun, the word "spectacle" functions to effect a symmetry between the Niger, the object, and the narrator's special seeing or visuality. Thus it is *entirely* within the narrator's sight/vision that the Niger is, and becomes, a strange and interesting *scene* or *display*. But note also that previously, the Niger was the longed-for object, the source of innumerable trials and great suffering. But once the hero "obtains a sight of this river", the suffering and the anxiety cease, and are replaced by their simple opposites. However, because the Niger is, as a flowing river, constantly in motion, just like the hero himself, it cannot

be, or rather its "meaning" (as an object *for* discovery) cannot be, "arrested" within a transcendental signified. The hero momentarily circumvents this aporia by recourse to metaphor, that is, by rhetorically abolishing any *distinction* between speaker and object, sight and site. The Niger is the Narrator's, and he its: all opposition between the two orders is effaced. What remains is the *presence* of the absence of the opposition to be re-inscribed as an *absence* (of the original opposition of Barth/Niger). It is this active possession of the object of visibility and visuality that we see in Barth's ocular aggression. This poetic strategy is most evident in the narrator's promontory description of Adamawa (Fombina) countryside:

> Here I spent two delicious hours in the tranquil *contemplation* of the *picturesque* scenery, which I thought the most interesting I had yet seen in this quarter of the world (II: 205 ; my italics).

In this passage, the "eye" is a subject in its own right; it alone confirms the object of sight as a cognitive property. Yet this cognitive property is itself an index of the aesthetic; for the objects of perception inevitably issue as aesthetic objects---- "delicious", "picturesque", and so on. So just as Barth experiences the majesty of the sublime, so he feels an inward and exultant power, the power to create, to confer on infinite totality a poetic catachresis. This indeed is what objectivism, or rather "aesthetic imperialism", entails:

> Objectivism constitutes the social world as a spectacle presented to an observer who takes up a 'point of view' on the action, who stands back so as to observe it and, transferring into his object the principles of his relation to the object, conceives of it as a totality for cognition alone, in which all interactions are reduced to symbolic exchanges (Bourdieu 1984: 96).

That should indicate why the narrator is *the* seeing-man: it is in the beholding of visible objects that the disclosure of their signs[1], their discovery as a story, emerges. Barth's eye actively looks out within a manifold based on what Duncan (1999: 156) calls "double erasure and inscription". As Spurr would say, Barth's eye "moves systematically over the horizon, then returns to the ground which can be inspected in its minute details" (1996: 17). And although Barth is always on the move, in motion, his eye ranges more or less freely over the scene, while at the same time attempting to invest the scene with an ideological imperative from a fixed, secure position. Thus while Barth's fictive manifold conceals itself unceasingly, and is always on the move, his ideological manifold, the general point of reference about the significance of the gazed object, is fixed, arrested, and immobile. This further explains why Barth the narrator and seer moves from the visible "character" of the landscape to its "invisible" character, in a word, to its "virtues" ("beautiful", "picturesque", "desolate", a "wilderness"). In this way, Barth connects the landscape with his story of it, with, to adopt Foucault's words, "the whole semantic network that connect[s] it to the world" (Foucault 1970:129). For Barth, then, both his description of the native landscape and his visual apprehension of it are one and the same thing:

> [I] ascended a broad promontory ... It was a delightful spot, where the heart might have *expanded in the enjoyment of freedom*. In front of us to the South-east, the swampy lands of the lagoon, one immense rice-field (as it ought to be at least), spread out to the borders of the horizon; but no 'white water' or open sea, was to be seen...nothing but one immense swampy flat, stretching out *as far as the eye could reach*. To the south the green pasturages, along which we had come, extended far beyond Ngegimi. It *was a picture of one of the most fertile spots of the earth doomed to desolation*. But there was a feeble spark in me that it would not always be so, and I flattered myself that

> my labors in these new regions might contribute to sow here the first germs of a new life, a new activity (TD2: 252; my italics).

Here is, in condensed form, the ideology of the civilizing mission of European explorers, and of the rhetoric of seeing. Barth combines visual mastery of the scene with ideological rhetoric of European civilizing mission to non-European lands and economic valorization of the land. As the above passage reveals, the alien landscape is the hero's enforced satisfaction, and its visual apprehension connected to, is the lawful prize of, the seer's *desire*, or cultural value, such as "the enjoyment of freedom". In Post-Enlightenment discourse, freedom is a utility, there to be *enjoyed* or used for the gratification of the "soul", the on-looker's soul. But then both the enjoyment, and the object of the enjoyment, freedom, are only *imagined*. This implies that in representing the landscape, the narrator-seer has inevitably to project the imagination onto the landscape. However, the condition of this imagination itself is the inward self-presence of the subject of the imagination---the explorer-writer. This should support Derrida's suggestion that "Imagination inaugurates liberty [because] sensibility [is] filled and satiated by the presence of the perceived" (1976: 183).

On the other hand, however, Barth's visibility must consist in, and issue within, the rhetoric and logic of corrective action. Having *seen* the Sudan, Barth must at the same time affirm her as the object of *his* action. In other words: what to *do* with her. It is in this sense that Barth's gaze is both a rhetoric (a sentiment founded on pleasure) and a pragmatics (a normative doing). He "shows" the Sudan in order to labour for her classification or ordering *in a certain way*. Indeed the phrase "fertile spots of the earth doomed to desolation" is a form of irony because

although it is the visual apprehension of the "fertile spots" that brings them into semantic comprehension, it is the same visual manifold that telescopes their impending *erasure* in the narrator's mind. So the eye may see, but may see only the visual economy of lack, absence, and deficiency. It is this which explains the narrator's speaking about his "labour" which, in this context, amounts to telling the story of the exotic yet potentially productive landscape of the other. Optical vision has led, as in this case, to the disclosure or decoding of the sign, or rather the virtues lodged in the object. For example, the land is beautiful, which makes it transcendentally a sign of freedom, the freedom of the discoverer to represent the land. The land is fertile which makes it mandatory that it be kept that way, until the arrival of European rationality and technology, symbolized by European colonization or appropriation of the land. So in naming the Sudan as a sign of absence, of deficiency, she is revealed, paradoxically, as a presence, the presence of a potential future, a future necessity---the ideological imperative of rectification. This, in essence, is the meaning of discovery: the unveiling of the land as a sign of something larger, grander, epochal. Fertility is *inherent* in the land; and if it is missing it must be restored via Barth's story of its desolation, which would in turn provoke European presence that will then set it right (again).

Now the point of all this is to show that for the explorer-narrator, seeing comes before words. Barth looks and recognizes, that is, sees, before he can say. It is this seeing which establishes his "place" in (and position vis-a-vis) the surrounding native landscape. However, he explains this landscape in, and with, words. Yet because his words cannot undo the fact of the landscape's presence, or its

realism, he strives for permanence, for a self-presence, a structure of repetition, a communicative presence, as when he says that the land will be restored via his "labour" (of telling the story of its degradation by, presumably, the indolent or careless, or non-industrious natives). Here Barth strives for the unity of form and meaning: the Sudan can have, or be, a reality with himself as its visual interpreter.

Thus Barth is able to narrate, tell the story of, the land only to the extent of his ability to see, for he says only what he is able to see. It is this alone which enables him to *name* things and events, to explore what is "secable". For it is only when he can rise to a visual mastery of the land that Barth is able to slip into a delirious dream of a future history and an empire of Justice, Reason, Progress, Civilization, and Humanism which would rejuvenate the land. Clearly, then, Barth is the speaker, not of an essentially pure or pristine land or people, but of his *vision:* It is his words, preceding from his optical "authority", which record *"his"* discoveries, beliefs and conceptions. He is in this sense that he is the subject to the extent that he sees and recounts "from the starting-point of his sight" (Foucault 1970:130).

In fact exploration (promontory description) and discovery (disclosure of significance) are based, in *Travels and Discoveries,* upon the "presumed adequacy" of the explorer-teller's visual authority over the reality of the objects of vision themselves. For although "exploration" assumes that the object, the native life-way, is directly accessible to perception, it is, for the most part, the landscape, the object, which directly presents itself to the narrator's eyes or sight, as in the following passage:

> Proceeding in a northwesterly direction through this hilly country [of Muniyo], and leaving at a short distance on our right at a higher eminence ...we descended considerably into a hollow of clayey soil of a most peculiar character. *For all of a sudden an isolated date palm started up on our right, while on our left the unwanted aspect of a tall slender gonda... attracted our attention...* Suddenly a large... lake of natron of snowy whiteness... *approached on our right...* I gazed with delight on the rich scenery around, which *presented* such a remarkable contrast to the monotonous plains of Bornu (TD3: 45; my italics).

This passage illustrates one key contradiction in the discourse of the visible, namely the *distance* between the object (the landscape, the exotic other) and the observing eye, or sight. In the passage, a date palm "starts up" to the narrator's right eye, and a lake of natron "approaches" the narrator on his right eye, and so on. As if to neutralize the apparent "irrationality" of inanimate objects behaving as animate ones, that is, as intentional objects, the narrator quickly says that it is he who gazes with delight "on the rich scenery around". It is as if Barth has to locate everything in relation to his sight and presence, and to what is immediately present to his consciousness, with himself as the mediating agent.

The above point can be illustrated with an anecdote, reported by Barth himself. He tells of his encounter with two "native" chiefs around Timbuktu by the names Khozematen and Hanna. Both men are blind, or rather nearly so, since Hanna has only one eye. The other is totally blind. Khozematen asks Barth to cure him of his blindness. However, Barth, being the seeing-man he has to be if he is to invest visibility with a new significance, ends up not curing the blind men but rather "collecting a great deal of information from them" (TD3: 483, 500). The narrator is, in the end, silent about whether Khozematen's confidence that he could cure him is well founded or not. The silence of the passage on this issue is, figuratively, a form

of speech, namely the symbolic allusiveness of blind local rulers asking an alien explorer for a *sight* that, within the metaphysics and logics of discovery, only he can lay claim to. To that extent, then, the blind chiefs must remain blind if Barth is to remain the formidably insured seeing-man.

On the other hand, however, the screened object within the hero's sight must cease to be an independent object, but become wholly constituted within his perceptual field. But to do this successfully, the seeing-man must describe the object, as White (1989:297) would say "in some kind of natural or technical language". For the object of perception must, to be apprehended as a stable system or structure of signs, be described in a "process of linguistic condensation, displacement, symbolization, and secondary revision" (White 1989:297). This process of symbolization and displacement is *writing*. Hence the eye which gazes must be shown textually to be in "command" of what falls within its gaze, what presents itself to it, what show themselves within its perceptual field. In the same vein, the object of vision must be *shown* by its textual field to open up before the gaze that "disciplines" it. The "eye" has thus become a "presence" whose being, so to speak, is absolutely uncontested, an object within its own perceptual field. As Marx might say, the eye, Barth's eye, has become directly in its practice a theoretician. For in Barth's text, vision or visuality or the "eye" *confirms* the object as a sense-impression while symbolization (the text) confirms it as an object of a particular virtue *and* spatial configuration. This symbolization is writing itself which is a kind of *productive* mechanism, a productivity allied to communicative presence, the sight as immediacy, as original presence (of Barth at the scene).

4.3 The Rise of the Writing Subject

The explorer-narrator must, as highlighted previously, attempt to bridge the gap or close the distance between seeing and saying, optical vision and description, words and objects. He thus must *represent* himself as the subject of assertions, as the authorial "I" or consciousness, as the observer and agent actively "producing" the object of discovery, as *the* constituting discourser, and as creating himself in the act of expression. Barth cannot, however, rely on mere nomination of the visible, or on the "authority" of optical vision. He must somehow have recourse to textuality, to writing as a *supplement* to sight chiefly because the only "permanent" way by which Barth could remain, and thus consolidate himself as the explorer-teller is by connecting the objects of discovery both to the eye, his eye, and to the supplement to visibility, the substitute signification, namely writing.

The explorer must also resort to writing because vision is not, and will not be, enough for it can never establish the objectivity of objects, especially in a discourse, which claims a universal validity for its assertions. It is the textual system, or the writing process, which can, at least at this level, attempt the bridging of the gap between objects and the language in which they are narrated or described. And to see things systematically, as Barth claims to, and to make the Sudan the legible object, Barth must *write,* or have recourse to writing. But this cannot undo the fact that he can see only what he looks at. But looking, contrary to Berger (1972) is not necessarily an act of choice, for, as mentioned above, Barth is sometimes literally forced to see.

Yet the story of exploration or discovery has to be "true" or credible, at least for the reader. This truth must aspire to be a retracing of the already known, the *repetition* of the same. Hence, Barth must aspire to be the writing subject if he is to leave a trace, a textual trace, (for the reader) of his labour, or the story of this labour. We could illustrate this point by considering Barth's attitude to his two companions' method of fieldwork. He credits Richardson for the care with which he kept his journal. It is as if the Journal is the *raison d'etre* for discovery. Overweg, on the other hand, is criticized for neglecting his Journal on the argument that "if all the information which [the deceased] occasionally collected were joined to mine, those countries would be better known than they now are" (TD2: 233). For Barth, then, Overweg is the unheroic hero, for he has failed to affirm and trace himself, and leave a trace of himself in the word-world.

This is why exploration cannot for long remain the nomination of the visible but must establish a mechanism for its self-articulation, and be a fortified self-articulation, and a semantically-controlled form of observation. It is in this specific sense that writing or textual production is a structure for, as Foucault would say, the "fundamental articulation of the visible, the first confrontation of language and things... that excludes all uncertainty" (1970:134). On this view, writing emerges as sensible and finite, and, as Derrida would say, "on the side of culture, technique, and artifice" (Derrida 1976:15).

The point being developed can be illustrated through an analysis of a celebrated passage in which Barth offers a description of the famous Kano Kurmi market in such a way as to give the impression that he is in command of the signs he

uses, signs as the direct representation of a natural presence, the presence of the objects themselves. It is one of a number of passages in which the narrator consciously seeks to achieve a *density* of meaning through a complicated deployment of plain and nominal adjectives colour. Pratt has called such technique verbal painting, according to which the verbal painter "must render momentously significant what is, especially from a narrative point of view, practically a non-event" (1992:202). What she does not mention is that there is no verbal painting without linguistic condensation, symbolization, or articulation of the visible through the graphic image, namely the text (as writing). Consider the passage below:

> ...I mounted on horseback... and guided by a lad well acquainted with the topography of the town, I rode for several hours round all the inhabited quarters, enjoying at my leisure... the manifold scenes of public and private life... Here a row of shops, filled with articles of native and foreign produce, with buyers and sellers in every variety of figure, complexion, and dress, yet all intent upon their little gain, endeavouring to cheat each other; there a large shed, like a hurdle, full of half-naked, half-starved slaves torn from their native homes... In another part were seen all the necessaries of life; the wealthy buying the most palatable things for his table; the poor stopping and looking greedily upon a handful of grain: here a rich governor, dressed in silk and gaudy clothes, mounted upon a spirited and rich caparisoned horse, and followed by a host of idle, insolent slaves; there a poor blind man groping his way through the multitude, and fearing at every step to be trodden down; here a yard neatly fenced with mats of reed, and provided with all the comforts which the country affords -- a clear, snug-looking cottage, the clay walls nicely polished, a shutter of reeds...forbidding intrusion on the privacy of life, a cool shade for the daily household work -- a fine spreading alleluba-tree, affording a pleasant shade... or beautiful gonda or papaya unfolding its large, feature-like leaves above a slender, smooth, and undivided stem, or the tall date-tree, waving over the whole scene; the matron, in a clean black cotton gown wound round her waist, her hair neatly dressed ...busy preparing the meal for her absent husband, or spinning cotton, and, at the same time, urging the female slaves to pound the corn; the children, naked and merry, playing about in the sand... earthen pots and wooden bowls, all clearly washed, standing in order. Further on a dashing Cyprian, homeless, comfortless, and childless, but affecting merriment or

> forcing a wanton laugh, gaudily ornamented with numerous strings of beads round her neck, her hair fancifully dressed, and bound with a diadem, her gown of various colors loosely fastened under her luxuriant breast, and trailing behind in the sand; near her a diseased wretch covered with ulcers or with elephantiasis (TDI: 495-498).

In this passage, Barth deploys a concrete vocabulary within a symbolic structure designed to limit and filter the visible within a structure (writing) meant to convey, again in writing, an extraordinary density of meaning. The flux of images, and bewildering array of details are marshalled in the "interest" of this density of meaning. Barth reports on the Other to the reader, and strives to give the impression of being in direct contact with real, rather than symbolized, objects. In the above passage, Barth is the subject of the seeing, and the active narrator of the seeing-turned-text. And the fact that he is mounted means that he can *rhetorically look down upon the "manifold scenes of public and private life". The concrete realism of* the shops, articles, buyers, sellers, grain, clothes, mats, horse, and so on can only be conveyed in/by writing. Thus the bewildering array of *different* objects that the passage presents can only be represented within a differential grid----namely writing. This is the situation very well described by Derrida when he writes that writing *is*, and signifies, "the most formidable difference" (1976: 56). Clearly, the passage under discussion can be made intelligible only via a non-intuitive structure that supplements visibility or sight. This supplement is the logic of writing. That is: Barth can only convey difference, massive detail, and dense signification only *in* writing, in a textual system, a system of traces in which the signified content that the text transports and attempts to make visible is held together within a system of marks and notations. This is why Barth has at the same time to implicitly make his

commitments to speak: he looks out, as it were, out of what is being optically apprehended, and assumes, at least for the reader, that he has spoken/seen outside optical vision as such. It may in fact be said that the passage, with its accelerating, mobile and graphocentrist absorption of the exotic, is a series of inscriptions and oppositions set out across an otherwise empty yet actively re-constructing page----- all designed to capture the allegedly representational plenitude of a foreign life, systems, normativities, landscapes, sites, bodies, and dimensions. Finally, the passage is very cinematographic, with its profusion of *mobile* signifiers, steams of signs and a shifting plenitude of objects observed, and so on. Thus Barth seeks to articulate the exploration process.

But all this is paradigmatically possible only if what Barth describes is a text, and not a mere vision or sight. In this context, exploration is not a desire for knowledge or reliable information, or a truthful account of reality outside the process of symbolization, or even a sensitivity to the density of the contents of the real, intransitive world, but the production of textualized discursive language, what Macherey would call "something newly raised up, an *addition* to the reality from which [the so-called knowledge of things] begins" (1978:6; my italics). Barth's text exists as the very attempt to preserve his sight. It is, in other words, the filing system for his visual productivity, a way of leaving the traces of the speaker/writer within the fundamental structure of continuity and memory established, through the symbolization process, between the explorer (Barth) and the native scene. This structure allows Barth to assume the position of the writing subject, and constitute the Sudan, in every respect, as a *text*, as the signified content, and his text itself as

the writing and the speaking of the Sudan as an *image*. This also explains why Barth says he is a discoverer, and his special seeing as the nomination and textualization of the visible, the creation of a legibility, and a model called the Sudan, the non-European Other. To this extent, then, beyond and behind Barth's text there is nothing but writing, or rather "supplements, substitutive significations which could only come forth in a chain of differential traces" (Derrida 1976: 159). The sheer density of the passage, its massive plenitude of movements, psychologies, stases, hopes and impediments, is symbolic of Barth's striving for a representation of the Sudan which promises to redeem her as it *should* be----a Sudan as a full being, an originary presence, a self-evident Plenitude. However, this "logic" is the logic of writing, a structure of self-affection, not disinterested optical or visual perception.

4.4 Discovery as Self-affection

Barth's career as an explorer means that he is also a discoverer. But discovery is a desire for order, or for the forces of order and control. Yet there is none of these in optical vision, that is, there is order and control only if the ordering subject is present. But there can be no presence in the optical apprehension of objects. This is possible only in writing, or rather in the self-presence of the writing subject.

That is, again, one reason why the exploration narrative is a structure of writing designed for presence. In the structure of seeing, the author's presence and the object of sight might vanish. Thus it is the structure of writing which "enables" exploration, for it involves the creation of a sovereign consciousness, or the egoistic powers of a centralizing consciousness which sets itself up as the subject of its own

process. This is why the Sudan is *there* for Barth: he observes it in its many dimensions. In fact the internal structure of *Travels and Discoveries* replicates the odyssey of a consciousness at once set apart from, and at another transcending, its surroundings. Hence it strives for a comprehensive interpretation of the Sudan. But this interpretation is also an attempt at the restructuring of the Sudan, a revision of the Sudan, a revision which seeks to restore it redemptively to the present.

Barth the narrator justifies his presence to Sudanese rulers as a traveller seeing God's creation, and an ambassador of goodwill, out to forge links with the princes of the world (TD2: 505,542,575; TD3: 105). Yet his "transformative" powers and work are confined to writing, or scribbling impressions into a journal or a note-book. Surely, writing is an act of life for Barth: nothing remains scriptively unapprehended by him if he is to stay alive, and justify his high "office".

Barth is therefore both explorer and narrator *because* he *is* the writer; for exploration is writing all over the indigenous life-ways; it is also the explorer's self-inscription into the local landscape. And this is why exploration writing claims to be a form of knowledge about non-European cultures, and also why *Travels and Discoveries* wears the garb of scientific scholarship. Barth's presence as the writing subject allows him to literally create the narrative scene, chiefly because he has to present and encode his consciousness as the central authority.

Travels and Discoveries is, then, the embodiment of the writing subject himself in textual form. For example, the narrator is presented as the writer, who exists outside the text, and the writer, the real author, is narrated as the imaginative ego, which measures, quantifies, surveys, describes, calculates, retraces and

explains. We encounter, for example, this narrative ego at the Saharan Oasis of Mizda. It lays down the circumference of the village, and says that there are about 200 trees about the oasis, and that the eastern side of the palm-grove in the middle of the oasis is 2,260 paces, although no practical measurement is actually taken: it all happens in discursively textualized optical measurement. The village or Oasis of Mizda ceases to be an actual landscape, but the "text" inscribed in geographical and mathematical discourse.

It is thus in the textualization or the "writing" of Mizda that the oasis becomes a, and about, dimension. For the narrator says that the oasis is "very diminutive" and "ruined by neglect" (TD1: 103). Mizda is said to be width, length, expanse and paces. It is disenchanted by "the declivity of the valley", adorned by "small gardens", and is, in a way, "a large Zawiya", and its houses "built of gypsum". Mizda is thus cast, or symbolized, within, and is itself, a forest of signs made up of centre, margin, ruin, neglect, wall, country, circumference, angles, decay, and loopholes. These are the visible signs in which Mizda is, and can be, read. Barth assumes that it is his reading of these signs which would "represent" what we may call Mizda-the-object. Clearly, therefore, Barth shifts back and forth between the primacy of the signifier (form) and signified (meaning). In one instance, he encodes the signifier as the signified expressed by other signs; in another, he records the signified as the signifier expressed by other signs. Hence he presents the signified both as the "meaning promised by the signifier" *and* as an effect "whose signifier must be sought" (Culler 1975:20). Thus Barth strives to *discover* the signs (virtues) of Mizda in the very process of inscribing it, and vice

versa. Here lies the truth of Macherey's suggestion that the *sign* "denotes itself as such by its obsessional character", and that its efficacy "derives from its various repetitions" (1978": 175). Barth, too, proceeds by repetition, by attempting, in other words, to "attach" expressive causality (truth) to every sign, so as to unite signifier (form) and signified (meaning). This means repeating the original plenitude of the unity of signifier and signified in his own thought or consciousness. Barth attempts, to borrow a phrase from Culler, to "pass through the signifier to the meaning that is the truth and origin of the sign and of which the signifier is but the visible mark, the outer shell" (1975:19). This is what Derrida would call logocentrism, a desire for the truth of every sign, and this is most evident in the writing process in which, says Culler, "an organized surface of signifiers insistently promises meaning but where the notion of a full and determinate original meaning that the text 'expresses' is highly problematic" (19).

It is therefore in the very process of textualizing the dimension of Mizda that its *sign* is, or will be, discovered, or rather that Mizda is depicted as "ruined by neglect". Here, Barth strives to grasp the supposedly full and determinate *original meaning* which the "text" of Mizda is supposed to "express". So it is as the discover of signs ("virtues" or the lack of them) that Barth paradoxically *duplicates* himself, or becomes a "veritable series", namely "demiurgic subject", objective mind, authorial "I" and writing subject. It is also here that his enterprise, the enterprise of telling and reconstructing, becomes the allegory of scientific work, or the work of knowledge-production.

For example: the authorial narrator comes, en route to Murzuk, across the ruins of a Roman gate. The gate, he says, is "massive and regular [and] formed a remarkable contrast to the frail and half-ruined structures of [Ghariya] village" (TDI: 121). The sight of the gate provokes the narrator's curiosity and ardent scientific energy. He measures the width, length, breath and circumference of the gate. His language becomes strongly visual and analytic. His prose bristles with scientific and technical diction. So devoted is he to the scene that he is transformed into the instrument of textual production itself: he decodes and encodes inscriptions after inscriptions:

> The two smaller gateways have been almost entirely filled with rubbish; the upper layer likewise is gone, and only those stones which form the arch itself are prescribed, the centre stone above the principal arch bearing 'PRO. AFR. ILL.' ...encircled by a coronal, while that above the eastern side-gate is ornamented with a large sculpture, the lower part of which it is difficult to make out distinctively, except the trace of a chariot and a person *in curious attire following it...an inscription is found in another* place, which I shall soon mention...was probably originally placed over the small archway on the right...while I was busy making a drawing of the ruins, Overweg [sent to] inform me that on the tower was a large Roman inscription...and as soon as I had finished my sketch I went hither... (TDI: 122-23).

Thus in inscribing the gate, the narrator also inscribes his activity, the vigour of decoding another text. His text is, and emerges only as, the text of self-tracing, the activity of the writing subject. Notice the narrator's passion for self-reference as he evokes exteriority: "I shall soon mention"; "while I was busy making a drawing of the ruins..."; "as soon as I had finished my sketch I went hither [to decode another large Roman inscription]" (TDI: 122-3). Barth the narrator is thus born as *the* writing subject in the very process of his "resurrection" of the "dead" (the arrested object -- the ancient inscription). It is because the ruins and the inscription can be

mastered, integrated, that the narrator becomes the subject of his assertions. And for this subject, nature or the world of objects is *prepared* for its discovery through writing.

In such scenes, whenever the writing subject fails to decode or read an inscription on a ruin, he sits down, he says, to sketch it because, he adds, it "might contribute something [to the future] history of the country" (TD1: 146). This connection between history and writing is highly suggestive. In fact Barth links writing with civilization and history, for he says that only barbaric states, such as Songhai and Bornu, do not possess a written constitution (TD3: 292). This implies that the absence of writing is a double absence----of history as the self-inscription of the people into Reason in the Enlightenment sense (constitutional monarchy, parliament, economic regulation, deeds and contracts which, in Europe, were institutionalized by the written word) and of history as a progress towards a manifest destiny, as symbolized by the expression "the future history of the country". In the passage under analysis, the protagonist is hard at work *trying* to both *encode* and *decode*. Encode a distinct meaning-effect *for* the inscription; and decode a teleological structure that he assumes is buried deep in the text of the inscription, hence the passive expression "an inscription is found in another place", which effectively conceals the reader/discoverer of the inscription; and the active construction "while I was busy making a drawing of the ruins" which anchors the action to a mobile subject. For Barth, then, writing, like history, is the ability to leave a permanent trace or mark on the self or the landscape. Whenever there is inscription there is "success", the ability to create rational and enduring institutions

(constitutions, laws, deeds, and records); whenever there is no inscription there is no history but only "the failure to mark the difference between nature and its others, between present and past, between presence and absence" (Spurr 1996: 99).

So it is writing, more than visuality or visibility or the phenomenology of consciousness, which allows Barth to be not only the narrator of his tale but also the authorial "I": in effect the writer, discourser and observer, indeed the agent actively engaged by the other (or other-being), and "constituting itself in the discourse [of discovery], *in effect creating itself in the act of expression*" (Lang 1990:17).

While travelling in search of the Shari river in the Lake Chad area, Barth says that he has now "obtained a clear knowledge of the *nature* of the Shari" and its relation to other tributaries of the Benue; that he has "obtained a great deal of information" about the surrounding towns; and that he has "learned that last year the river had overflowed its banks" (TDI: 473). Certainly, knowledge, information, and learning are supposedly harmless processes. Yet it is this activity or work of learning, acquisition, information, and knowledge about the surrounding world which *confirms* Barth as the hero of his tale, out to transport the surrounding rivers and towns to Post-Enlightenment Modernity, symbolized by European technology. But note that it is Barth who self-consciously writes or inscribes himself as building up knowledge about the Shari River.

Yet Barth's presence in his own text, that is his own self-inscription as the Self of writing, has the effect of suppressing his own imbrication in the instrumentalist ideology and practice of exploration. For example, Barth repeatedly narrates himself, as in Adamawa, "taking angles [and sitting] down on this

magnificent rocky throne" and writing down the natives' language (TD 2:139). In all this, the natives are shown happy to have their language written down by the stranger. Invariably, too, the natives are for the most part illiterate. In such situations, it is Barth who is the bearer of Literacy, Writing and Textuality. In volume three of the Narrative, the hero is shown teaching the Greek and the German alphabet to a group of Berbers, and who are said to like it very much (TD3: 490). While travelling in Adamawa, the hero narrates the story of his making a gift of ten sheets of paper to his host, the governor of the Koma people. The reader is told that the present "caused him a great deal of delight" because the governor has never before seen "so much writing material together" (TD 2:133).

There is a passage in which a "native" is represented asking the hero, who happens to be sketching the surrounding landscape, what he was doing. The hero responds by drawing the attention of the native "to the wonderful powers of the pencil". The passage ends with the affirmation of the power of writing and also by the hero presenting the "illiterate" native with the gift of two pencils, so that, to quote the passage, "they might suffice for his lifetime" (TD1: 342). But since we know that two pencils cannot suffice for a lifetime of writing, we must assume that it is writing that the native badly needs, for it is that which can suffice for his lifetime. So writing is, by implication, the ultimate supplement to life itself, especially to the lives of those who are said to be incapable of writing. This does throw light on the propensity of the hero to include the pencil among his gifts to the Sudanese royalty. As he says, all this is to give his gifts "*a more unpremeditated, honorary, and professional appearance*" (TD1: 469; my italics).

Barth's writing practice is, in this sense, a self-tracing, a form of self-affection. In this process, he is the writing ego which subordinates the world to itself and "gains in its power and mastery over the other to the extent that its power of repetition *idealizes itself*" (Derrida 1976:165-66; original italics). In this way, Barth the writer validates his presence in the form of Barth the narrator-writing-speaking subject. This is how he symbolizes his power as a hero, rescuer and restorer, all at once, of the Sudan. In this sense, then, *Travels and Discoveries* has created not only "knowledge" of, and about, the Sudan, but also the very reality it appears to describe.

Surely, this does suggest a plausible reason why Barth has inevitably to regard himself as a researcher, a historian, an ethnologist, and linguist whose task it is to rediscover lost Sudanese history and languages. But in such writing, the real, intransitive Sudan is both made "literal" by an over-rich prose and dissolved in the heat of a conjunction of images:

> The presence of the writer as part of the [writing] scene... conceals the most obvious effects of ideology and suppresses the historical dimension of the interpretive categories that are brought into play. The writer implicitly claims a 'subjective and independent status' from larger patterns of interpretation and deriving authority from direct encounter with real events (Spurr 1996:9).

4.5 **The Writing/Civilizing Mission**

Contrary to Spurr's suggestion, the presence of Barth in the narrative scene is precisely the moment at which ideology is brought into play: he is travelling to Sudan, Barth says, in order to restore it to History and the Recognition of the European reader, in his words, "the scientific public". Yet this enterprise is not

inseparable from the inscription, by the writing subject, of the Sudan and the Sahara as chaotic worlds needing European rectification.

As he makes his way across the Sahara and the Sudan, from Tripoli to Katsina, Kano and Kukawa; Bagirmi to Timbuktu; Yola to Gwandu, Barth encodes himself as traversing desert wilderness, and suffering innumerable trials. These negative conditions are inscribed as endemic and systematic, that is, inherent to the land. In fact the value of discovery-as-self-tracing in writing depends largely on the "constant supply of images of chaos and disintegration, against which the principles of unity and order may be continually evoked" (Spurr 1996:121). The writing of discovery requires more than just disclosing the signs lodged in the Sudan, but involves producing them. As Bacon once wrote, "discovery" should, and must, produce itself. This is why Barth affirms, or rather designates, the Sudan by a set of signs, namely Order and Chaos, Civilization and Savagery, Freedom and Slavery, Happiness and Suffering. Barth sees the Sudan as supplying the negative end of this system of values. These signs inhere in hierarchical oppositions civilization/savagery, order/chaos, freedom/slavery, happiness/suffering, and so on. For example, in one passage there is the story of a town, Taganama, whose "interior left us an impression of good order and comfort...and a certain air of well-being was spread over the whole place" and yet situated in a "country without cultivation, and covered only with brushwood, and with the dreadfully monotonous kawo [*gawo*] or Asclepias" (TD1: 547). And within the hierarchical opposition, the Sudan falls within the second segment of the opposition, it is the inferior form; it is the mark of a fall. Hence Barth regards the history, even the beingness of the Sudan

as a tragic *story* of chaos, disorder, anarchy, instability, war, suffering and slavery. Even before he sets out for the journey, the *Draft Instructions* presented to him by the Foreign Office speaks, as we have seen above, of the *raison d'etre* of his travel as not only the opening up of the Sudan to European commerce, but also the abolition of the slave trade, including the extension of European forms of life, such as personal freedom, industry and technology to an allegedly inert Sudan.

The writing or signification of discovery thus involves the production of sets of signs by which the Sudan could be semiotically affirmed for what it is said to be in the discourse of "discovery". For example, *Travels and Discoveries* encodes the provinces of Kano as gripped by violence on account of the activities of an anti-hero called Bokhari (TD1: 550-554); the Sokoto Empire as racked by chaos, slave raiding and political decay. (TD3: 544-50); and Bornu and Adamawa as gripped by fearful suffering, misery and anarchy. In village after village, town after town, empire after empire, there is desolation, chaos, suffering and misery. While accompanying the Bornu army on what the narrator says is a slave hunt, it is said that:

> The whole village [Ngaljam], which only a few moments before had been the abode of comfort and happiness, was destroyed by fire and made desolate. Slaughtered men, with their limbs severed from their bodies, were lying about in all directions, and made the passer-by shudder in horror. Such is the course of human affairs in these regions (TD2: 380).

In Kano, Bornu, Adamawa, Sokoto and Timbuktu, there is universal disorder: Muslim horsemen raiding pagan villages for slaves; invading armies pillaging, looting and conquering; pagans running for their life in "wild despair" (TD2: 367). Every where scenes of apocalyptic disorder present themselves:

> Single horsemen were roving about to and fro between the fences of the villages; here a poor native, pursued by sanguinary

> foes, running for his life in wild despair; there another dragged from his place of refuge; while a third was observed in the thick covert of a ficus, and soon became a mark for numerous arrows and balls" (TD2: 367).

In addition to the human-centered chaos and suffering, the hero scans the landscape for a set of powerful signs, or rather reads signs into the landscape. There is, for example, a constant reference to, or the encoding of, the surrounding wilderness, the allegedly primal world of Sudanese nature, the unclaimed and timeless spaces, the nature of the plants, the level of human organization, and so on. *In the same vein, farms are presented as "signs of industry"* (TDI: 552,333,477), cotton-fields as signs of both industry and slavery. These signs are accompanied by other sets of signs, such as those of poverty which imply indolence and laziness. In the village of Kostari, Barth finds the inhabitants very poor, which, he says, can however, be "attributed to their laziness" (TD2: 428). Thus they are poor because they lack industry for there are, in the village, water-fowl in "countless numbers; and indeed the whole village [is] full of wild geese and ducts" (428). In one particular village, Jemage, the hero finds the village destitute of water. Astonishingly, even this supposedly "natural" lack is attributed to the *nature* of the inhabitants:

> This scarcity of water...seemed to arise only from the laziness of the inhabitants; for the wells are not more than three fathoms deep, and the floods of the lake themselves approach so near that it has been found necessary to protect the village on its north side by a dike. Here we passed that head of the day in the shade of Korna-tree, the fruit of which, being just ripe... we did not despise (TD2: 431)

This is why Barth is both the writing and the civilizing subject: he encodes himself disclosing the signs lodged in things; and yet this disclosure is a

productivity by which the writing subject supplies, for himself, a set of powerful signs by which he must be read. He is, in other words, the response to a series of callings: that of Sudanese nature which calls for productive use of its resources which are, at the moment, lying waste (as the passage above shows); that of Sudanese humanity (the pagans and "lazy" natives who are suffering depredation and poverty) which requires improvement and progress; and that of the enslaved, who require and beseech Barth's or Europe's abolitionist humanitarianism. He writes, for example, of the village of Gawo that it *improves* to the extent that it "exhibit[s] an appearance of industry, consisting of "cornfields" (TD3: 542).

Yet there is order, textual, narrative and epistemic order, wherever Barth appears. The Sudan's chaos calls for the restoration of order; the absence of order calls for its affirmation in writing, and in the inscribing activities of the hero; the untapped abundance of the Sudan calls for, or awaits, in Spurr's words, "the creative hand of [European] technology" (1996:28). For Barth is a business emissary who must open up the Sudan to European Philanthropy, Industry, and consumer goods. His humanism is, to this extent, imbricated with the *production* of sign-systems: science and technology, commerce and markets, abolitionism and European hegemony. But the path to these is worn deep by textuality: the signs Barth claims to decode, and whose disclosure constitutes his writing practice, are themselves the mark of what Said would call "a battery of desires, repressions, investments and projections (1978:8). For the "corrective" civilizational-missionary-business enterprise advocated by Barth, and for which he says he is travelling *to* the Sudan, is

a *writing over* the Sudan, a form of superscription which both *erases* and *traces* the Sudan.

To write the Sudan, for example, Barth must, as indicated above, constitute himself into the opposite of the Sudan as a whole. He alone rather than everything and everyone else changes. He it is who says or registers what the Sudanese landscape is, or could be. He alone says, for example, whether it is monotonous and beautiful or otherwise. He alone notices what is or ought to be. He is Order that the Sudan is not, or cannot afford. He alone is the abolitionist. In the whole of the Sudan, only Barth (if we exclude Richardson, Overweg and Vogel, his travelling companions) is opposed to slavery and can espouse abolitionist values. There is not a single indigenous abolitionist, or agency for change. He tells the reader about his encounter with one treacherous and thieving native after another, one indolent and lazy chieftain (such as the Governor of Kano) after another. And while Barth inscribes others killing, maiming, pillaging and looting, he does no such thing. He is, to this extent, the perfect moral agent. He stands apart from the surrounding *maelstrom* of chaos, laziness and suffering (he does suffer trails of discovery though). It is clear that it is this alone that enables Barth's journey, sighting and subjectivity to be written (all over the Sudan), narrated, and textualized.

This is one reason why the writing subject must proceed by disclosing, and reading into things, the signs. Barth looks out for what he calls "signs of cultivation" (TD2: 430), namely cotton, tobacco, corn, indigo and rice. He also has a particular feel for markets. He devotes substantial space to the description of the articles of trade on sale in such markets. But he also looks out for the signs of natural

resources, namely cattle, fowls, ducks, sheep, and goats. But it is here that a fundamental contradiction reveals itself: while Barth writes the Sudan by means of signs which point to his epic mission to rectify the Sudan, he is compelled, by the logic of writing, to make, or render, the Sudan completely legible, open, and self-evident. This leads him into murky waters of self-contradiction, as the passage below illustrates:

> The walls of the town [of Birnin Kebbi] are almost a mile distant from those of the old one... and [are] at this part almost three miles in breath, affording the richest ground for cultivation, but at present plunged in a state of the most utmost insecurity. Even then it was full of cattle, at least its southerly part... We then entered the town which is rather thickly inhabited... I myself was quartered in an excellent hut... and possessing all the comforts of which these simple dwellings are capable -- the floor and walls of the hut being neatly polished. (TD3: 154).

The reader is told that although the "country [is] in such a turbulent state" (155), the "place was enlivened by cattle, and occasionally by a sheet of water at times fringed with a rich border of vegetation, among which also isolated specimens of the deleb palm, besides dorowa, were not wanting" (155). These passages are a commingling of scenes of chaos and insecurity and of well-cultivated fields, numerous cattle and very comfortable and polished huts, and natural beauty. This is typical of Barth's text: desolation, chaos, slavery, decay and misery exist side by side with stupendous wealth, breathtaking natural beauty, cattle, rich, extensive fields of cultivation, exuberant and beautiful landscape, and persons of "European expression of countenance" (TD3: 155). For example:

> [The Creek] afforded a beautiful field for the cultivation of rice, and even in the present decayed state of the country was not left wholly unprofitable (TD3: 4740.)

> It was a most interesting and cheerful sight to behold a large expanse of fields of native corn take the place of the desert. The whole country became one open cultivable level... even in the present decayed state of the country, there were some remains of industry, and the stubble-fields of Saba, or sorghum, were succeeded by tobacco plantations, and after a slight interruption, by rice -- grounds under water (TD3: 479. Also: 561,570).

Now these precisely are what the narrator himself encounters in the very country which he has just a moment ago said was immersed in a universal chaos, insecurity and decay (TD3: 626-8). Note also that despite the so-called universal chaos of the place, the narrator has actually survived the chaos as to produce a monumental narrative about it. An important problem is thus raised for Barth: if the Sudan is the sure place for the realization of the European rhetoric of Abolitionism and Humanitarianism, then the point should be raised about the legitimacy of his essentialist view of the Sudan) as a Patient who requires European, that is his, medicine (the civilizing mission) (See, on this, the following passages: TD3: 455, 520, 525, 545, 549, 551, 569, 584, and 590).

There are two possible reasons for this apparent contradiction in Barth's writing practice. First, there is the ideology of discovery, for which it is the European explorer-writer who has the capacity to conceptualize what is already obvious to the local inhabitants. On this view, the Sudan is, on the whole, incapable of self-development. It thus needs European re-generation and rectification. In spite of such passages in which he represents "positive" images of indigenous industry, organization and hegemony, Barth still insists on the subordination of the Sudan by Europe in the name of civilization and philanthropy (abolitionism). For him the Sudanese are still a primitive and barbaric people. In this conception of the relationship between the Sudan and Europe, it is the Sudan, rather than Europe,

which is said to *need* European trade, and not the other way round. This is why Barth sees himself as facilitating "the progressive civilization of the neglected races of Central Africa [the Sudan]" (DT1: xxiv). Hence his master narrative of this supposedly open possibility, the *Travels and Discoveries.*

The other reason is the ideology of writing. In writing the Sudan as the object of European civilizing mission, Barth, as mentioned above, has to proceed by signs alone. For only then could the narrative seem, look, or be, "true", that is, the chaos and disorder of the Sudan be seen to be *discovered* by Barth, rather than put there by his writing or narrative strategies. For discovery, and its object and *raison d'etre,* have to be *true,* that is, paradigmatically, causally and transcendentally obvious. Thus when danger or negativity threatens, writing is the agency for order. But when there is tranquility, when there is order writing is superfluous, it is excess. For Barth has written that when there is liberty (which the Sudan lacks), or when there is "a fine morning", or when there is quiet and "serenity and content", then "I do not", he says, "think about writing, but [idle] away the whole day" (TD2: 245).

This is the clue to the whole enterprise: the Sudan has to be portrayed as requiring a European presence, because it must first be subdued and subjugated in the symbolic space of writing before it could be reduced to a sign of suffering and degradation. That is, it must first be reinvented and re-inscribed and written over as a sign in the name of a transcendental signifier *before* it could be "raised," so to speak, as "open and inviting ".

It is the contradictions of this enterprise which writing, Barth's writing of it, cannot remove. To be intelligible, discovery must be true, and to be both intelligible

and true discovery must pretend that it is not mere writing, but a fundamental, law-governed aspect of reality. This is why the Sudan's "misery" and Barth's humanitarian-philanthropic role are, and have to be presented as, two faces of the same condition, or as Spurr says in the case of colonial rhetoric,

> each serving the sign of the other, so that the physical suffering of [Sudanese] peoples can be associated with their moral and intellectual degradation: disease, famine, superstition, and barbarous custom all have their origin in the dark precolonial chaos (1996:78).

But all this is possible only in writing: for it is in writing that the image of the native as both depraved and salvageable is produced. Barth's writing has to show the Sudan as both rich and poor, and an *is* and an *ought*. This is called the recurring nomination of the abject, both a justification for European intervention and a vital iteration of the difference between the writer and the written. It is within this relationship that Barth strives for immortality, for self-presence and authority. He puts the Sudan, with its alleged ignorance of subjective agency and personal autonomy and modern industrial, capitalist, rational economy of industry and efficiency, *over there*. Yet this demarcation of the Sudan is the occasion for Barth's own inscription onto the Sudan, so that she is, as the unknown, becomes the known. She is illuminated with the *light* of Barth's writing in the Baconian sense, that is, as a *naming*, or rather graphic penetration. And this penetration must expel all doubt as to who is in charge, for the Euro-reader must behold a masterly explorer-writer lighting the dark, chaotic world with his own countenance. For this, however, Barth must both strive towards, and, at the same time, avoid, inscribing his self wholly into, and within, the textual fabric all at once. He must, to render the Sudan as "true" and "indubitable", avoid fictionalizing himself. The great paradox is that, to write at

all (about the Sudan as a lack, or an incompleteness), Barth must inscribe himself into the textual fabric of the story he tells. But to do this, he risks dislocating himself, for he must render the Sudan, rather than his techniques of writing, as a veritable department of (European or his) learning.

This is the truth of Derrida's proposition that writing both constitutes and dislocates the subject because it is other than the subject, for "writing can never be brought under the category of the subject [because it refers], by the entire thread of its history, to the substantiality of a presence unperturbed by accidents... to the identity of the selfsame... in the presence of self-relationship" (1976:68-9). That is, because Barth cannot "safely" carry signification from himself to the reader without the danger of unintended consequences, without slippage and spillage, he has both to write his presence and at the same time conceal the presence itself as writing.

4.6 The Rhetoric of Presence

This section is devoted to an examination of Barth's strategies of presence, or the ways by which he legitimizes his presence as an alien presence in the Sudan. For example, Barth asks rhetorically: "with what authority could I expatiate on the horrors and the destruction [of African slavery] if I were not speaking as an eyewitness?" (TD1: xxix). He also says that the journey he undertook to the Sudan was/is the drama of his writer's self: "Hence it was necessary that I should become acquainted with the real state of... African slavery in order to speak clearly" (TD1: xxix). Thus in a disorienting and bewildering, chaos-racked Sudan, Barth must preserve himself, and keep the chaos at bay. But he must thus strive for a self-restitution and a reinvesting. Hence the narrative ego of *Travels and Discoveries*

strives to legitimate not only its story of the Sudan, via, for example, the appropriation of local idioms, but also its *presence* as the representative of a world-historical power and a Collective Subject.

In town after town Barth is asked why he is traveling or devoting so much energy simply to *see*. Barth's answer is always rhetorical and "poetic": that he is out to "see" God's creation. He never says to his questioners, for example, that he is collecting information that could lead to their political and economic subjugation by the Empire for which he was traveling or labouring.[2] But this is what the reader in and outside the text does really know. So as a narrative ego, Barth has, as Macherey would say, to "unfold in more than one plane" (1978:161). Barth the traveller must strive for a self-presence that would show him as speaking "outside" the text, that is directly to the reader. Hence the need on his part to anchor his self, at least in the eyes of the "native" interlocutor, to sets of definite referents.

This is why Barth the traveller presents Barth the speaking/writing subject as the bearer of disinterested scientific inquiry. In a conversation with Haj Beshir,[3] the vizier of Bornu, Barth says that the vizier takes great "delight in conversing with me about matters of science, such as the motion of the earth, or the planetary system" (TD2: 60). In these scenes, both alien and native, visitor and host are united in a common fraternity or community of knowledge. This implies that the writing subject is *the* scientific labourer, as Barth himself says he is (TD3: 74). Little surprise that his text is sprinkled with Linnaean terminology (of natural history). As scientist, Barth encodes himself as an innocent pursuer of information. He is innocent to the extent he is a disinterested observer.

But it is precisely in such moments that Barth becomes the sentimental protagonist, who suffers, in the name of disinterested science, trials of thirst, personal danger and ill-health. He is, or becomes, the hero-hero of the heroic deeds of the civilizing mission. In his dangerous and melodramatic journey to Timbuktu, Barth dramatizes his plight. Here, it is the subjective and bodily experience that dominates the telling, and the emotional weight attached to the telling. As Pratt says of Barth's predecessor, Mungo Park, things "happen to him and he endures and survives. As a textual construct, his innocence lies less in self-effacement than in submissiveness and vulnerability, or the *display* of self-effacement" (1992:78; original italics). This contradictory coupling of labourer and sentimentalist is Barth's rhetorical assertion of legitimacy: his accumulative, differentiating project of writing the indigenous life ways easily passes into a universal mode of Science, Humanism and Progress. The aggressive Enlightenment-Romantic project of writing is concealed under a sentimentalized innocence which equally hides its true appropriating, seeing, totalizing, classifying and objectifying impulse. Little wonder Barth sees Africa as a blank which his disinterested science should fill in; and his companions, Overweg and Richardson, as martyrs for the Sudan. (For more on this, see TD3: 144,601; TD2: 262,264,331,333). Thus legitimacy of presence, sentiment and value-free science are complimentary and correlative perspectives in *Travels and Discoveries* because as Hulme (1987:229) remarks, European sentimentality really found renewed vigour only when abolitionist and sentimentalist sympathy for "savage" natives "began to flow along the arteries of European commerce in search of its victims".

The text repeatedly portrays the indigenous subjects challenging the alien explorer's presence in their communities. He is, for example, asked about his "mission" in the Sudan by chiefs and ordinary people alike. As mentioned above, not once does the protagonist reply that he is travelling to "write" them and their rivers, mountains, bodies and farmlands into a fat book. By this, however, Barth resorts to a religious epiphany rather than to the Post-Enlightenment imaginary. It is as if the indigenous interlocutors cannot accept any other reason. Yet Barth turns their curiosity and suspicion against them by allegorizing the encounter, by portraying his interlocutors as confirming the legitimacy of his presence, and by naturalizing the innocence and normativity of his "disinterested "contemplation of Being. Barth and his reader know, of course, that the "natives" have been fooled!

An illustration of this is Barth's explanation, when challenged by Mohammed Lowel, the governor of Adamawa, as to the reason for his visit, that he is visiting to establish friendly relations, and wandering "about to admire the works of the Almighty Creator, and on the account cherish[ing] and ardent desire to visit also Adamawa, of the wonders of which I "had heard so much" (TD2: 183). Barth's *raison d'etre* comes in the form of a letter to which the governor reads a different motive contrary to Barth's. Here Mohammed Lowel is right: Barth is travelling for more than mere disinterested contemplation of divine Nature. Barth has hidden his true motives, though Lowel has correctly deconstructed them. For Lowel, Barth's looking is not passive or innocent contemplation of Being; that it is not true looking for it hides a *desire*. Clearly, then, Barth has sought to legitimate his presence in the

eyes of Lowel by a recourse to a metaphysical subterfuge. But just before reaching Adamawa, Barth had spoken of his

> well-founded conviction that along this natural high road [the Benue River] European influence and commerce will penetrate into the very heart of the Continent, and abolish slavery, or, rather, the infamous slave-hunts and religious wars, destroying the natural germs of human happiness which are spontaneously developed in the simple life of the paganland spreading devastation and desolation all around (TD2: 168).

Yet this is what Barth cannot speak, or say, or mention to Lowel's face. Thus Barth's rhetoric of presence, namely that he is out to see God's creation is an allegory of colonization itself. For it portrays a large part of the Sudanese population -- the so-called pagans,[4] for example -- as ultimately beseeching the civilizing mission. And this would then allow Barth to encode his presence as an allegory of a future Commonwealth---- the bringing together of Sudanese and Europeans under a fraternal union, or of a common humanity. Yet this *trope* is precisely a figure of *silence,* for it is a theme that Barth must keep concealed, hidden, untraced and out of utterance. Yet this *silence* establishes his *presence* as legitimate and justified, perhaps even transcendent, for Barth is even cheered on by a squirrel, which, he says, *is indicative of success (seems "to offer a good omen) for his epic mission* (TD2: 469). Barth would repeat this in Sokoto. He tells the Sultan, Aliyu (Babba) that he is travelling to establish trading and fraternal relations with the rulers. In an aside, *the narrator tells the reader* that Aliyu "entertained not the slightest mistrust of my future proceedings, but on the contrary took considerable interest in me, as he found that it was my earnest desire to become well acquainted with the country and the people, and that I was anxious to establish friendly relations with the most distinguished and learned among them " (TD3:105,139).

There are, in addition, other legitimizing rhetorics of presence in Barth, namely treaty-signing. Barth says he is travelling on behalf of the Queen of England, "with the friendly design of paying my respects" to the princes and also presenting them with "a few specimens of our products and manufactures", in addition to the "avowed purpose [of becoming] acquainted and [opening] intercourse with all parts of God's creation" (TD2: 185). So Barth presents himself to the rulers of Bornu, Gwandu, Sokoto, Kano and Timbuktu. Only the emirs of Kano and Adamawa refuse to the sign treaties[5] In all this, Barth does not lose sight of the fact that, as he says, the government he represents ("the British Sovereign") is "the very first and most powerful in the world -- which had sent me" (TD2: 185).

Barth's signing of commercial or trade or bilateral treaties with Sudanese rulers is a powerful strategy of legitimation, for it implies a non-violent ideal of cultural harmony through cultural and ideational exchange. Symbolically, the signing of treaties with local rulers is Europe's freedom to trade, and its emissaries and businessmen to move freely and at will. Their presence would be regulative and normative. In such scenes of friendly exchange, Barth inscribes his own presence as an affirming spiritual and familiar presence. Yet this affirmation requires a symbolic and textual consolidation. This is supplied by what this study proposes to call, following in the footsteps of distinguished researchers in the field, arrival and departure scenes.

Arrival and departure scenes are an important structural component of exploration writing. As a rhetorical strategy, these serve, according to Pratt (1992:79-80), as "particularly potent sites for framing relations of contact and

setting the terms of its representation". What Pratt does not stress, however, is that they are one moment at which the writer manages the transition from the performative and the expository to the reflexive point of view. Arrival and departure scenes allow Barth the traveller to be presented, by Barth the writer, as the gazed self; and Barth and narrator presented as a narratable, rhetorical and (presential) affirming self by Barth the writer. In effect, then, arrival-departure scenes enable the explorer to split into more than one constituent part. In a study of the rhetorical strategies used by Victorian women writers, Kroller (1990) shows how these writers deployed the dyadic structure of arrival/departure to legitimize their presence in hitherto forbidden spaces, the male-dominated space of public life. In Barth, it is used to legitimize his presence in alien worlds, and to signal to the reader his affirming presence. In fact, scenes of arrival, for example, are crucial to the plot, and the development of the storyline. This is because the explorer's speaking or narratorial consciousness must be structurally united with the subjectivity of the hero. Indeed the scenes of (his) arrival on the stage of narratorial and historical-cum-textual presence must be *heightened enough* as to distinguish the hero, at the level of perception, significance, and "race", *from* the host-natives *at the point of contact*.

Arrival and departure scenes abound in great numbers in the text. Such scenes are "supplied" by women, musicians, naked boys," between seven and twelve years" (TD2: 439), mounted horsemen, fishermen, and the traveler's troop of guides, informants and bodyguards. (See, on this, TD2 438; TD3: 156,449,497,585,624). Indeed *presence* in *Travels and Discoveries* is achieved largely by the *arrival* on the

scene of the writing-speaking subject. Barth *arrives* as the cold, rational, and calculating son of the North, and *departs* as the accumulating, discovering, inventing and scientific heir to the Enlightenment. In these scenes, the speaking subject encodes himself arriving at a village, with troops of musicians playing in his honour, or for a fee; women and children lining up, as if in a guard of honour, happily gazing at his gazing at them, in a sort of drama of exchange. Here is a scene in which Barth tells of his arriving at a Sahelian village:

> ...music, dancing, and merriment were going on in the village, a solitary "maimolo" [Hausa word for violinist] found his way to us [Barth, Richardson and Overweg], to console the three forsaken travelers from a foreign land by extolling them to the skies, and *representing them as special ministers of the Almighty* (TD1:420; my italics). (See, on such arrival scenes, TD1:455; TD2:439;TD3:585,624).

Predictably, the hero cannot do without an arrival scene. It is as if his life depends on it. For example, whenever there is not any one to put up the "arrival scene", the narrator says he is faced with an imminent danger of self-dissolution:

> It was an unfavourable circumstance that we arrived on Friday, just during the heat of the day. The streets were almost deserted, and no person met us in order to impart to us, by a friendly welcome, a feeling of cheerfulness and confidence (TD2: 179).

It thus seems as if it is the gaze of the indigenous subjects, the Other, which must *confirm* Barth's presence as the Same: he wants, in other words, recognition, so to speak, from the welcoming and dancing and gazing locals; to be, in a sense, *confirmed* in his station, that is, as the discoverer. Thus the arrival scene symbolizes, for the writing subject, a moment of presence, recognition and, by analogy, legitimacy. This is the case because no sooner had Barth turned the corner of the deserted street (of Yola) in the passage above than he met "a great number of people, amounting to several hundreds, gradually collected, *all eager to salute me*

and shake hands with me" (TD2: 180; my italics). Kano is the only place in the whole of the Sudan where Barth is not "given" an arrival scene by the natives, just like Clapperton twenty-eight years earlier.

As an allegory of transcendental presence, arrival scenes project Barth as a transcendental figure. He is almost always "received" with music accompanied by a song, as happens when Northern Nigerian emirs come, or stage their presence, on public or state ceremonies such as the Sallah. On such occasions, Barth is the dignitary who is led immediately to his quarters and "treated with a large calabash full of rice" (TD3: 156), and entertained with "music and dancing", his arrival "celebrated... with a song [and] sent me several dishes of native food" (Ibid: 585). A good example of this is a passage in which Barth is greeted, on arrival, as King:

> ...When we approached the southern gate of the town, three horsemen, who were stationed there, came galloping up to me, and having saluted me with their spears raised, placed themselves in front, and in *stately procession* led me through the town to my house, where I was soon regaled with a plentiful supper sent by the vizier (TD2: 227; my italics).

Here is a scene in Katsina in which Barth is welcomed on arrival at the town:

> A troop of eight mounted royal musicians... who had been playing the whole day before the several divisions of the [caravan] came likewise to my tent in the course of the afternoon, and gratified my ears with a performance on their various instruments (TD1:455).

The above passages indicate, in their verbal density and allusive presentation of the narrator as an imperial subject, the universal function of allegory in *Travels and Discoveries:* a projection of a universal declaration, that the European presence

in the Sudan is an affirmation of a future Commonwealth in which native and expatriate would cohabit in harmony, and in which there would be a "mutual appropriation". Here "discovery" is nativized, or naturalized. Here the alien presence is *not* an interruption, for the narrator is, or allows his presence, to be domesticated, or indeed appropriated, just as he appropriates the native presence. The explorer-narrator satisfies the curiosity of the natives just as they satisfy his -- a sort of *theatrical* role-play unfolds, or is enacted, by both parties. In the passages cited above, allegory shows up Barth as *seeming* to passively gaze and yet it is not a passive gaze, that is, it is *his* agency-presence, not the natives', which is, and becomes, the *textual raison d'etre* of *his* gaze.

The process in which the narrator's otherwise passive gaze foregrounds his essential presence can be seen in the use, by the narrator, of the rhetorical device of *litotes*. This device affirms his presence by the negation of its opposite, the native's gaze. In the first passage quoted above, it is the narrator who is the subject of the native's action: everything leads to the narrator, as indicated by the narrative voice which is firmly anchored to the narrator's presence. In the second passage, the governing verb is "gratified", that is, the narrator's soul is tickled, as it were, by the natives' music and play--- a play that negates itself by affirming the presence for whom it is itself deployed. It may in fact be said that in all the passages depicting Barth's arrival at a scene, the narrator implicitly and explicitly erects a transpositional discursive barrier between him, the observer, and the observed, the gazing natives. In such scenes, the figure of *litotes* not only draws the reader's attention to the subject of speech and proposition, the hero-narrator, but also *shields*,

as it were, his high Baconian logic, the logic of naming, from being contaminated or compromised by the savage people, custom, or environment. It should be kept in mind that the hero must, while interacting with the natives, continue to *discover* them as well.

This last point can be illustrated by analyzing the departure scenes in the text. Just as he arrives (presentially imbricated with the landscape), so Barth has to depart, essentially because he is on a journey of discovery and because the exploration text is built largely around the "quest" structure. The transcendental subject cannot afford to "tarry at any harbour", but must go on in search of his quest object. Yet the explorer must leave behind a trace of himself in the form of presents and impression on the natives. For example, the reader is informed that having "taken a *hearty* leave of the villagers, who had all collected round me, listening with *astonishment* and *delight* to the performance of my musical box" (TD1: 583), the mobile hero departs in search of the object of discovery -- the Benue River, which he is resolved he must discover, and has, it may be said, metaphorically already discovered (TD2: 179), even before beholding it. In one particular incident the departure scene is a drama of "loving and leaving", of "exchange and harmony":

> A numerous crowd of Ruma, Songay, and Imoshagh having assembled to witness my departure, I distributed a good many presents among them, reserving the few articles of value which I still posed for mightier chiefs (TD3: 449)

In such scenes, the explorer's legitimating rhetoric of presence is an active self-construction: Barth presents the indigenous interlocutors and onlookers as being happy at his intrusion or presence, and taking up (or encoded as taking up) the "roles" (speaking, looking, gazing, contemplating, welcoming, dancing, playing) as

he wants, or wishes, them to. In some versions of the arrival or departure scene, the hero is prevented from leaving by a chieftain, either because he desires his novel medicine, articles, or because he thinks the hero is a divine who should live permanently in the community. In all this, his presence is rendered innocent, harmless and desired, as in the village of Tejerri, in the Fezzan, where "the whole population of the little town came out to salute and congratulate me on having traversed this infested desert tract without any accident" (TD3: 624). This must be a powerful image for the European reader: the natives of a chaotic, anarchic world congratulating the alien explorer, that is, the one who has successfully braved it. But nowhere is this more symbolic than Barth's appropriation of local languages.

4.7 **Symbolic Appropriations**

One finds, in Barth's text, syntactic fusion, neologism, code switching, and untranslated words from a host of Sudanese languages. Many historians have read this as evidence of Barth's empathy with local culture (Kirk-Greene 1970:26-31), his philanthropic humanitarianism (Ayandele 1979:41-55), and his universalism (Davidson 1970). In particular, Kirk-Greene contends that Barth really wanted to learn the local languages because "he never employed an interpreter as such, but determined to be as self-reliant as he could" (1970:30). Hair (1964) has construed this as evidence of Barth's analytical interest in Sudanese languages. Barth himself published, upon his return to England, a collection of vocabularies of Sudanese languages. Others such as Low (1996) have read such appropriation of indigenous speech by the alien writer as a (his) dialogic moment, or part of an interactive perspective in which a dialectic or network of "desire and repulsion" is enacted.

Bhabha (1994), for example, would read this as "ambivalence". Pratt (1992:44) has actually interpreted this as the explorer's (Peter Kolbe's) exhibition of "a particular fascination for the complexities of interaction in the contact zone".

What such accounts invariably leave out is the clear "function" of such appropriation of local idioms as both a strategy for legitimating the presence of the alien explorer and a subtle form of abrogation, by which the native point of view is allegorized, that is, symbolized as an index of exploitable/appropriatable resources. However, appropriation is also a form of penetration and co-optation. In appropriating the local idiom, Barth is implicitly taking cover, that is, to borrow a phrase from Spurr, "revealing and concealing the appropriating impulse in the same rhetorical gesture" (1996:31). This is the case because by appropriating her tongues, Barth has appropriated the very means by which her appropriation is, and can be, understood, namely language. Consider, for example, a passage in which Barth speaks of his taking a scientific, non-violent or innocent, interest in what he calls "poor creatures" in the Marghi country. Barth says that he has just "finished taking angles [and sat] down on this magnificent rocky *throne*" (TD2: 139; my italics) when he is followed by "these poor creatures", and he begins to write "from their dictation a short vocabulary of their language". The passage continues:

> These poor creatures, seeing probably for the first time, that a stranger took real interest in them, were extremely delighted in hearing their words pronounced by one whom they thought was much above them as their god 'fete'... (Ibid: 139).

In such scenes, the natives' sheer presence is metonymically encoded as their language itself, and their "cosmogony" as Barth the narrator himself. They are scripted as responding to their "narrator-god," that is, capable of the gaze (they

gazing at Barth gazing at them in a sort of reciprocity of vision). Yet here it is their gaze, and their capacity for the gift of their language to their narrator that is encoded. Thus his gaze becomes "naturalized", and rendered unproblematic, and to this extent an equal exchange between two very different entities. However, in deconstructive terms, things are not that straightforward. Note, for example, the symmetry of the narrator and the local "god", *Fete*. In this context, then, the narrator is also a "god" who enforces his consumption of the poor "creatures'" language as if it were his own possession or property. Note also that the narrator is sitting on what is described as a "magnificent rocky throne" while he "takes down" the words of *his* "poor creatures". And as the "poor creatures" are an *oral people*, he it is whose destiny it is to *write them down*, that is, give them a voice, a text, and, by implication, a history, or to put it in a Hegelian terminology, inscribe them into Recognition. Once again, the classic binaries of exploration rhetoric, god/creature, written/oral, stranger/native, superiority/inferiority are unfurled before the reader. On the first term of the opposition, there is *logos*, written language, imperial power, cultural superiority; on the second term, there is orality, illiteracy, iconicity, servility, dumb generality.

The text is also sprinkled with Latinisms and Linnaean terminology. To the European reader this is a powerful symbol of Barth's scientific learning and lineage within Enlightenment forms of knowledge. Yet these forms of knowledge--- scientific measurement, Linnaean terminology, Baconian inductivism, geographic-naturalist discourse--- both telescope and blanket native forms of knowledge symbolized by native diction. As *writing*, exploration discourse is a semantic fusion

of horizons, with one exception--- the recalcitrant presence of the indigenous guide or informant. This cannot *wholly* be silenced. However, the informant is partially silenced, via allegorization, by a rhetoric of universal proportions, namely the allegedly disinterested discourse of scientific measurement *and* the text (or textual production) itself. Here is the paradox: the so-called native's presence or voice cannot be silenced; and yet it is the silencing, or the attempt to symbolically blanket it, to turn it into a palimpsest, that Barth's textualizations are possible in the first place. But as described above, Barth's strategy of writing is a desire for plenitude, for ontological fullness. And while the indigenous informant shows the way, leads Barth to his object of discovery, possesses a prior knowledge of the object-for-discovery, it is Barth the narrative agent alone who can conceptualize it. By having to speak for the informant or guide, Barth symbolically circumvents this aporia. And he speaks for the native by speaking/appropriating his native language.

By using and adopting and quoting, and displaying his proficiency in, the local languages, Barth is assuring the Euro-reader of his unique authority over and about the Other. Yet it is also, in the same vein, a device for the "naturalization" and "domestication" of the alien discourse of discovery, in addition to its appropriation of local knowledges. For example, the hero-speaker quotes a Fulbe saying, *Negge ngomburi deya fo nafa,* which he translates as "the cow [is] the most useful animal in creation" (TD3: 187). This is a subtle juxtaposition of two very different discourses, but with the latter (note the transcendental signs, in the English text, of "cow", "useful", "creation") blanketing (coming *after*) the former; and the former being the latter's palimpsest. Again consider the passage below:

> A troop of eight mounted [Katsina] royal musicians ('Masukidda-n-Sarki), who had been playing the whole day before the several divisions of the 'airi', came likewise to my tent in the course of the afternoon, and gratified my ears with a performance on their various instruments. There was the drum, or 'ganga', very much like our own [European] instrument of that kind, and of about the same size as the common regimented drum; the long wind instrument or 'pampamme'; a shorter one, a sort of flute, or 'elgaita'; a sort of double tambourine, or 'kalango'; a simple tympanum, or 'koso'; a sort of double Egyptian durabuka, called 'jojo', and a small horn, or 'kofo'. The most common among them is the 'jojo' which in Hausa is the chief instrument... (TD1: 455). (See also TD1: 339-40; TD2:138,174).

It should be noted that the Hausa names of the instruments are not rendered in italics, as opposed to Linnaean terms such as *Adansonia digitata, tamarindus indica, megalotis famelicus, orychteropus AEthiopicus,* for example. The absence of italicization of the native words "normalizes" them and draws attention to their "difference" all at once (for they are rendered in scare quotes). Barth's text is full of native expressions. There is hardly a page without them. Yet there are moments when such syntactic fusions and vernaculars encode scenes of *parody*, as when Barth represents the Caliph, Aliyu (Babba), responding to the former's gifts with sentiment:

> [Aliyu] surveyed the presents, and expressed his satisfaction repeatedly; but when he beheld the pistols, which I had purposely kept till the last, he gave vent to his feelings in the most undisguised manner, and pressing my hands repeatedly, he said, *'nagode, nagode, barka, Abd el Karim, barka'* -- 'I thank you, God bless you, Abd el Karim, God bless you (TD3; 108; my italics).

We find the same use of vernacular in Barth's inscription of a slave and plantation owner showing Barth, with a feeling of pride his slave-holding plantation, "gashi gonakina" (TD2: 174). In another passage, Gajere, his informant, is quoted in complete Hausa sentence: "Kaso mutum dondadi uyataso, Kadda ka kishi da

kummia" (TD1: 464) No translation is supplied by the narrator, however. Not only is this Barth's attempt to mediate the contradiction between post-Enlightenment forms of knowledge which the ideal (European) reader expects and the aporias inherent in the shock of discovery, but also a "metonymic gap", a subtle form of abrogation. Here abrogation should be seen as a form of appropriation, for in both there is an attempt to *co-opt* and *penetrate* native forms of knowledge, and so usurp various aspects of native life forms. One example of this is the way the alien explorer inserts unglossed Hausa words, phrases and passages from many Sudanese languages and other allusions that may be unintelligible to the metropolitan reader. This, in an important sense, is synecdochic, since the part (local idiom) stands for the whole (the culture).

However, it is the case that Barth's glosses on, and reproductions of, local languages are rarely grammatically accurate. It is tempting to see this as evidence of failed or imperfect appropriation or even outright error. This, however, is not likely for a superb linguist such as Barth. Cheyfitz (1985) suggests that the European writer's glosses on indigenous languages are not a "translation" but "an act of possession", for the motive is not "to understand the other... but [to make him] a usable fiction" (cited in Low 1989: 102, *n.5*). This is not to suggest, however, that Barth has succeeded in making such languages at the beck and call of his textual practice. This is because it is impossible that Barth's "world" be, to quote Pratt (1987: 62), "linguistically or subjectively homogeneous... When seen as a site of social reproduction and struggle, language cannot be imagined as unified". Yet, one

way or another, Barth must seek to affirm, stabilize and legitimize his alien presence in the Sudan.

4.8 Signifiers of Authority

In *Travels and Discoveries*, Presence and Authority are related and yet are not synonymous. There is no authority in mere presence. The explorer therefore must inscribe authority- as- legitimacy into his presence within the alien landscape. One way of doing this is through the highly symbolic crossing of boundaries implied by a change in dress etiquette. This is why cultural cross-dressing functions as a universal signifier of authority in Barth's text.

Before crossing into the Sudan, Barth changes into half-Arab, half-Sudanic dress, consisting of "a black Sudan *tobe*, which, worn over another very large white tobe or shirt, and covered with a white bernus, gave me an appearance more suited to the country" (TD1: 316). Barth also stains himself with indigo to make "my complexion a few shades darker" (Ibid: 316). He also wears a richly ornamented pair of Ghadamsi shoes, very popular with Sudanese royalty to this day. This, he says, forms "my greatest finery" (Ibid: 319). While in the Sahara, Barth used to wear the set of tobe and trousers called *"tailet"* by the Berbers, and very popular in the Southern Sahel up to Agadez and Zinder (Ibid: 345). Finally, Barth is forced to disguise himself as a Muslim dignitary, an Arab, a Sharif, on his journey to Timbuktu. It is Hamma, Barth's guide in Agadez, who had told Barth that his cross-dressing is "essential for securing the success of my undertaking" (Ibid: 316).

This is the imperative behind the narrator's dressing up in native costume, *before* entering a world he would variously describe as theatrical, a stage, a theatre,

a dark, alien, diseased and chaotic world (TD2: 381). Paradoxically, it is via this cross-dressing that Barth strives for an *authoritative* presence and legitimacy, that is, native costumes would be his disguise, and this disguise his badge and advertisement of his normativity, which is the natives' normativity. He would, through the magical power of native clothes, and dressing, attempt to close the cultural gap between alien (Self) and native (Other). In effect, to become "one of them", a desire for *something* "that is almost the same, but not quite" (Bhabha 1994: 86).

Yet Barth should also be seen as on the verge of "transgression" -- of the Other, including its spaces, norms, clothes and beings. For the Sudan is not, on this account, a forbidden territory: It is the object-for-discovery, and Barth the subject-of-discovery (the discovering subject who must linguistically, optically, metaphorically and textually penetrate her). On one condition, however: he must name, demarcate and symbolize the Sudan not with his true identify but with a disguised, concealed one, with, in other words, the Sudan's own costumes. This is precisely the paradox that gives Barth his metaphoric productivity,[6] or rather his new *form*, the native dress, his cross-dressing *into* the Sudan, as *the* signifier of his authority and legitimacy in the Sudan.

Signifiers of authority are also, in *Travels and Discoveries* at least, signifiers of stability. For Barth faces formidable risks in his endeavor to penetrate the Sudan, with her formidable and unpredictable complexity, lines, orders, and configurations of cultural, economic, political, and psychological demarcation. For his cross-cultural dress promises, even if tenuously, a transgression, a chance to legitimate his

presence, and thus avoid the possible penalty of illegitimate presence -- imprisonment or death (as nearly happens in Bagirmi and Timbuktu). It is in this sense that Barth's decision,[7] or rather necessity-imposed desire, to dress up in native dress foregrounds an instability, or a potential one, but which the "ideology of discovery", the writing of the significations of the Self, conceals: that the exploration of Sudanese boundaries as a whole requires, so to speak, a deconstructed Self (a Self racked and crossed by the *play* of identity and difference).

This is precisely what a "signifier" is: it points to presence and the *essence* of the *arbitrariness* of presence. For the signifier of authority must be floating and yet not be floating. To illustrate: the Sudanese and Berber clothes, which Barth has to don, point to a subjectively *transformed* Barth *and* the essence of the Sudan -- an objectified Sudan, that is, a parodied Sudan, a Sudan mimicked and adjusted symbolically to correspond to a culturally fictionalized identity called Barth. He consumes the Sudan: it consumes him (by forcing him to wear its "masks").

The dye-stuff with which Barth stains himself so as to look much darker is another example: it signals a symbolic and racial transformation from "white" (another signifier) to "black" (another signifier still). Yet this "Black Barth" is no more than an *emblematic* totem of the Sudan itself which, interestingly means, in Arabic, "black" or "dark". As an emblematic totem, the dye-stuff is a symbol of Barth's striving for "invisibility" which should then give him an *omnipresence*, an active display, in a word, of power/presence/authority. In this context at least, the three are not incompatible. In the same vein, Barth's richly decorated shoes and dress, which he says are his "greatest finery", and which he wears when presenting

himself to Sudanese rulers, are themselves signifiers of authority and potential profit all at once: they confirm him variously as a theatre enthusiast, a dignitary, a business and diplomatic emissary, and a potential harvester of the wealth and luxury that could be got out of his exploration of the Sudan.[8]

This is where *signifier* and *allegory* merge: Barth himself registers the change in his appearance, subjectivity, and identity linguistically, symbolically and textually. This transformation, and the telling of the transformation, register, or "give" Barth, the allegory of power itself -- freedom. For he is now totally familiar, totally at ease in an alien world. And it is in such moments that Barth calls upon, evokes and deploys, great metaphoric energy: to produce, construct and create the Other, the Sudan, in its, allegedly, full being, so as to bestow upon himself a full being and a symbolic and metonymic fullness:

> In this enterprise *I succeeded to my utmost expectation*, and not only made known the whole of that vast region, which even to the Arab merchants in general had remained more unknown than any other part of Africa, but *I succeeded also in establishing* friendly relations with all the most powerful chiefs along the river up to that mysterious city [Timbuktu] itself (TD3: 631; my italics).

The passage above should support our reading that as a signifier of authority, the native costume is also a moment of identity. Not once does Barth forget his "position" and identity as a *European* in the Sudan: he never rises to an honest, full and unmediated sense of affinity *with* the Sudan. The logic and rhetoric of his textual practice impels, or indeed propels, him to radiate a sense of symbolic, metaphoric and metonymic *power* and *authority* and *assertion* over all the complexities of the Sudan.

The repetition of the first-person pronoun informs the narrator's speech, the real author's text, with a sense of the speaker-explorer's symbolic power. The reader of the passage would behold the explorer prominently: an "I" that has succeeded in a double sense, namely as Science (knowledge) and as Sentiment (friendship). For in the passage above, the Sudan is not known even to its own northwestern dwellers; it is the unknown known. It is Barth who has, despite his being clothed in and by the Sudan itself, that is as his *body,* who has decloaked is, removed its "mantle of night", as Hegel once said of the Sudan. This is the sum of his (non-corporeal) power over it. There is no better illustration of this than Barth's dangerous journey to Timbuktu while disguised as a Syrian Sharif. The narrative of this journey scripts a profusion of signifiers in excess of signified; active constructions in excess of passives ones. Substantives abound with incredible frequency.

In his narrative of the journey to the "forbidden and mysterious" city of Timbuktu, the narrator says that cultural cross-dressing is the key to success. Barth is forced to disguise himself as a Muslim and an Arab. Otherwise, he says, the journey would have been impossible (TDI:xxx). Here again Barth deploys a set of signifiers: dress and faith, all indigenous to the land. As in Agadez, it is a "native", El-Walati, who strikes a deal with Barth to present him to the inhabitants as a Muslim dignitary. This is the first time that a "native" presents Barth as a "symbolic subject", with the collusion of Barth himself.

But unlike in Agadez, Barth's disguise is, here, the signifier, *par excellence,* of romance and danger. For a brief moment, Barth becomes an Other (a Muslim and an Arab). He leaves behind, again for a brief period, his own true

identity. So here signifiers are really floating, and shifting, with increasing regularity, back and forth. For example, on the way to the Mysterious City, Barth is greeted as the expected Mahdi who should come at the end of the world. In some versions of the Mahdist tradition, the Mahdi is an eschatological figure, a sign of Cosmic Closure. Read allegorically and retrospectively, Barth was truly a Mahdi in that he was, as he says in the preface, the "humble means" of extending British/European Civilization across the world (TD1: xxiv). Read as a Chiastic figure, Barth is self-consciously superior to the Mahdi, since, as he writes, "all the Mohammedan [Muslim] states... had since... declined in power, the Christians, and the English in particular, had made immense steps in advance" (TD1: 461). Read metonymically, Barth is the erasing, blanketing, and detotalizing of the actual figure of the Mahdi, and by extension the expected Islamic/Muslim renewal/resurgence. [9] And just as the Mahdi is expected to arrive from the East, so Barth has come (to Timbuktu) from the East (from Gwandu). As just as the Mahdi is the expected Reformer who would cleanse the faith, so El-Walati presents Barth as a harbinger of Renewal (TD3: 248). The image of a Christian, a European explorer and agent of the greatest imperialist power being presented as the Mahdi, is one of the most powerful and memorable, symbolisms of *Travels and Discoveries*. It will strike many a reader.

In village after village, Barth, now called "Abd el Karim Sharif Mahdi", "is given" a rousing arrival scene, with all the local dignitaries lining up and asking for his blessings, and for the rain. Barth is asked to intercede on their behalf with God to bring the rains. The rains do come a short while afterwards!

> I was assured by the inhabitants that only one plentiful shower had as yet fallen. This was the reason that, instigated by the absurd rumor which had preceded me that my favor with the Almighty was so great that it had some influence upon the fall of the rain, all the inhabitants, although Mohammedans [Muslims] assembled on the second day of El Walati's absence, and, headed by the emir, came to see me in procession, and solicited my interference in their behalf for a good shower of rain... But I was so favored, that there was really a moderate shower in the evening, which did a great deal of good to the ground (TD3: 250).

In the next village, Barth conducts a Muslim prayer in Fulfulde, when the whole village comes out to welcome the figure from Beyond. He is again asked to send the rains. He recites the opening verses of the Koran, and concludes it with a Fulfulde phrase, "Allah hokki ndiam", which he translates as "God may give water" (TD3:257). Thereafter a "heavy thunder-storm gathered from the east, bringing a considerable quantity of rain, which even found its way into my badly thatched hut":

> This apparent efficacy of my prayer induced the inhabitants to return the following day, to solicit from me a repetition of my performance; but I succeeded in evading their request by exhorting them to patience (Ibid: 257).

In these scenes, Barth in disguise is the mythical Player of the Game: his clothes magic for him an instance transformation *and* unimaginable authority over the indigenous people. These are also scenes of parody: Islam, and its Sudanese followers, are inscribed as "superstitious", and Islam in particular as a patriarchal religion, not far from a Great Man Worship, a new form of Paganism. For like Jesus who was said to have walked on water, Barth, too, has his "spirits great cheered when," says he, "I found myself floating on [the] river, or backwater" (TD3:259); and like the Prophet of Islam at the Last Sermon, Barth, too, in a profusion of poetic metaphors and rhetorical reinventions, sends down blessings to the Muslim

multitude kneeling at his feet (TD3:256-7,278), and, finally, makes a present of a copy of the Koran to the ruler of Bornu, Sheikh Omar. In one particular episode, when his local collaborator, El-Walati, passes off Richard Lander's *Narrative* as the Koran in order to scare two Muslims into returning his tobacco-pouch, Barth projects the scene prominently, and says that he is much amused by the sight of Lander's book being represented as the Koran. This surely suggests debasement of the Holy Book, and, by extension, Islam itself.

The great paradox is this: it is in his moments of disguise as a "native" that Barth conveys his sense of authority and mastery over his narratees. He is, in other words, "sacred" and "divine" only, and only, while in disguise. So we should say, figuratively, that "disguise" has become a metaphoric energy, a symbolic productivity. Barth's "violation" of the indigenous culture by, paradoxically, imitating it should be read as a *metaphorized* activity in that it is his disguise which allows him to symbolize, with hitherto unusual power and intimacy, forms of indigenous life. It is, equally, his writing /textualizing of his disguise which enables him to *order* and *display* the Sudan as the-text-for-parody. However, parody is also a form of debasement and of naming by means of the control of/over the word.

Gail Ching-Lian Low (1989:95-96) suggests, in a study of Kipling's representations of native Indian spaces, that the "myth of the white man in Native Dress... is based on the fetishization of clothes which enable the wearer to fantasize about mastery ...clothes, as fetishes also render unto the White Man a wholeness which reinforces the difference on which his power is based". Yet we should note that Barth himself lacks a "core identity", for he is Barth, Abd el Karim, El-Inglisi,

and a Kanuri-Hausa-Fulfule-Tamashek-Arabic-English-speaking German, living on Sudanese food and medicine, local support and goodwill, housed in indigenous abodes, and "instructed" by "natives" such as Gajere, Gatroni, Hamman, El-Walati and Bel-Ghet. Yet this does not, by itself, de-emphasize his alien, European, presence. Native clothes and a feigned or mimicked "Islamic" faith, have not liberated Barth from his own subjectivity. For beneath the native clothes lies a *European* identity. For example, on the return journey from Timbuktu, Barth, on the request of his guides, returns, briefly, to his original "costumal identity", and, by implication, cultural being, when he appears in a black European suit with a tie. And because the guides had never before seen "fine black cloth" (TD3:493), they were greatly astonished, for they "had been accustomed to see only red cloth" (Ibid). Here a chiasmus[10] binds and repels alien and native both at once. Behind the chiasmus lies the signifier of civilization: the signifier of authority, or rather Barth's symbolic capital.[11]

We may conclude this section with the observation that because Barth does not want to lose himself in, or become an integral part of the foreign place he claims to describe with such scientific accuracy, the place turns out in reality, as Ţerdiman says of Flaubert's mimicry of Arab and Islamic culture, "a series of detached, reified elements... defined by their fragmentary quality, precisely by the possibility of their being *extracted* from the whole" (1985a: 32). However, this may not be immediately apparent to the unperceptive reader, who may in fact mistake Barth's insertion in the description bits of native languages, names, traditions, etymologies, and exteriorities in general as a sign of his empathy with the local culture, or even of

his use of the method of participant observation. This is in fact the conclusion reached by Ayandele and Davidson, as seen in the previous chapters.

4.9 **Rhetoric of Exchange**

It is as symbolic capital that Barth gives gifts to the Sudanese. Much of his text takes the form of the narrative of his gift-giving episodes. He himself says that it is by "alms-giving [gift-giving that I] won the esteem of the natives, who took such a lively interest in my well-being that, even when I was extremely ill, they used to say, 'Abd el Karim shall not die' " (TD1: xxx). Few scenes in *Travels and Discoveries* have elicited humanist sentiment and liberal rhetoric than those in which Barth appears as the philanthropic subject, giving, and hardly taking, from Sudanese rulers and ordinary folks alike. Ayandele (1979) and Kirk-Greene (1962; 1970) conceptualize Barth as the innocent, even empathetic, philanthropic figure, an example of reciprocity *par excellence.* For example, Ayandele writes;

> Perhaps more than other explorers in Africa Barth used material goods for diplomatic purposes. Carefully selected goods could evoke the goodwill of African rulers and people... It was the duty of the diplomatic explorer to know the tastes of various African hosts and thereby obtain maximum co-operation, goodwill, and succour from them. In this respect Barth was shrewd in the selections he made for the rulers of the Central and Western Sudan (1979: 45).

However, leaving aside the possible point that Barth's idea of what constituted the right gift may have originally come from his guides and informers, a careful analysis of the text's sites or scenes of exchange reveals a more complicated picture than the one presented by Ayandele. It may even be argued that *Travels and Discoveries* is as much a story of geographical and ethnographic exploration as the

narrative of the dramas of exchange between the hero of the narrative and his indigenous interlocutors. For example, there is hardly a page without the drama of Barth attempting to achieve, reject, modify or endure reciprocity or its absence. Indeed the *logic* and *rhetoric* of the gift that Barth gives are predicated on commercial exchange for which, the reader should note, he is travelling and narrating.

In negotiating his way across the Sudan, Barth has an enormous quantity of gifts or presents: needless, umbrellas, turbans, bernuses (favourite with the emirs and chiefs), caps, shoes, ornamented pistols, clothes, cloths, mirrors, knives, razors, calicos, watches, and other assorted items. As he tells the governor of Adamawa, Mohammed Lowel, he is visiting both to "see" and to "advertise" specimens of English manufactures. But this is what the so-called historical accounts hardly ever mention: that Barth is a business emissary. Barth himself rejects a description of himself as a trader by a chief in Timbuktu. Trade he does, he says, but not for profit. It is through his European commodities that Barth sets up, or produces, symbolic exchange. Barth's commodities should thus be understood as both use-values (means of subsistence) and exchange-values (sites or means of exchange), and as signifiers of the civilizing mission, of humanitarianism and philanthropy. But as signifiers, they point to a signified, a signified which Barth attempts to *produce*.

As a representation of the figure of the entrepreneur, it is Barth's "role" to "write" reciprocity or its absence in the Sudan. He gives, for example, gifts, not for the pure sake of giving, but in *exchange*, or *return*, for information, protection, safety, friendship, loyalty, and, above all, the Other's gaze. The gift, in other words,

functions as the space where Barth's humanitarianism and symbolic capital can be affirmed. In page after page, Barth's narrative plots rulers, guides, and ordinary folks waiting to receive presents from the traveller-protagonist. Sometimes these scenes simply encode their "presence" in the text almost spontaneously, as in TD1: 445. At other times, the drama of exchange itself sets up textual drama or moves the plot or both, as in Katsina, where the hero inscribes the governor as "acting" in such a way as to detain him, or "possess" him out of greed for his European goods. Yet this is the same governor who had previously sent the hero presents far in excess of the ones he had received from the latter:

> We had scarcely taken possession of our quarters when the governor sent me a ram and two ox-loads of corn... But, instead of feeling satisfied with this abundant provision, we were quite horrified at it, as I, with my three people, might have subsisted a whole year on the corn sent us, and we began to have uneasy forebodings of a long detention (TD1:459).

The above passage is typical of Barth's response to greater reciprocity from Sudanese subjects. Note that all this corn sent by the governor is reciprocation for two ornamented pistols given to him as gift from the narrator! We see the same drama between the hero and the Saharan chief Amankay, and another, Elaiji, whose gift of a ram and two calabashes of honey the hero reads as "plac[ing] me under the necessity of making the governor [Elaiji] a considerable present in return" (TD1: 452). In fact in most cases when the hero finds the gift, or present, or the reciprocation (of the donee) far in excess of his own earlier or expected presents, he says he has or feels "some unpleasant foreboding of future difficulties", such as, for example, a conspiracy to extort him. In Katsina, for example, the hero presents the

drama of reciprocity between himself and the governor as a *play*, with the governor as the actor and he the spectator: "The governor soon began to display his talents as an actor" (TD1: 460). This is largely because the governor is, the reader is informed, a poor literary critic or reader of texts:

> [The Governor] had the unfortunate letter from the Sultan of Agadez read, interpreted, and commented upon. According to the sagacious interpretation [of the governor], the purport of the letter was to recommend me expressly to this governor as a fit person to be detained in his company (TD1:460).

Thereafter the hero says that seeing "that reply was useless, and that it was much better to let this *lively humorist* go through his *performance*, and to wait patiently for the end of the *comedy*, I took leave of him and returned to my quarters" (Ibid:460). What sets up drama and tension, even pathos in *Travels and Discoveries* is the failure of the local rulers to achieve true reciprocity, or establish just and proper relationship or fairness through exchange and reciprocation. The hero wants to *use* his goods in *exchange* for safe passage or protection or information. The rulers, except in Kano, are driven by greed, and do not understand the need to establish *equilibrium* through reciprocity. Much of the drama between Mohammed Bello the Governor of Katsina and Barth subserves as a *comedy*, a farce, because the former has no means of exchange-value, while the latter has it in abundance. That is, Bello has no commodities to exchange, only a use-value (protection, safe-passage), While Barth has commodities, and, by implication, exchange-values. One is, interpreted via the exchange structure of the capitalist economy, *not* a subject; the other is a subject because he is capable of equal exchange.

This can be illustrated by a passage in which the head man of Mele in the Bagirmi country is represented as wanting to "possess" the hero-traveller for the

latter's economic advantage. But when the hero insists that the headman must supply his needs if he should detain him, the headman quickly allows the hero to proceed on his journey because he would not be capable of true exchange, namely give the hero subsistence (fowls, milk, quarters) in exchange for mere needless, knives and mirrors! The implication is that Barth and the chief cannot co-habit because they cannot set up an interacting sphere *within* exchange (of commodities or exchange values). The same drama of exchange unfolds between Barth and the Emir of Adamawa, and Sheik Omar of Bornu.

This reading is supported by the fact that Bello consents to Barth's leaving Katsina only after he has received the present of two pistols from Barth, which the former has insisted that that was what Bello had along wanted from him. Yet it is the gift that also heals the rift between Barth and the Governor, on the one hand, and Barth and his agent Bel-Ghet on the other. Thereafter both the Governor and Bel-Ghet respond with submission (to Barth).[12]

Yet we also see Barth initiating the exchange or recompensating his guides or informants for services rendered. Invariably, however, Barth sees himself as the subject of the gift; which is why he expects reciprocation from the donee. In Kano, he sends the Emir presents of bernus (black *kaba*), silk, gold lace, garment, red cap, a white shawl, a piece of white muslin, rose oil, a pound of cloves, benzoin, razor, scissors, an English clasp-knife and a large silver-framed mirror. In return the Emir sends Barth 60,000 cowrie shells, with which he buys a sumpter ox and pays the salaries of all his staff. Barth himself admits that his presents to the Emir are worth less than 6,000 shells. Thus it is at Kano, more than any other place, that Barth's

"ideology of exchange" is turned upside down, or rather the right side up. The Emir does not speak to Barth, does not receive his presents directly, but are passed on to the Galadima. Barth admits that the Emir is the only chief who fails to properly honour him, that is, by implication, is the only chief on whom Barth's presents have had no impact at all, largely because the presents are not novel since they are can easily be bought at the city's central market (TD1: 517-8).[13]

Clearly, then, Barth's presents are not gifts because the gift is, by nature, "disinterested", that is, need not be returned (reciprocated). The true gift is, if Schrift is right, "the destroyer of the value of presence/presents par excellence" (1997:18). That is to say, the true gift should obliterate the very presence it is intended to consolidate; it should, in other words, remove the debt of gratitude and the symbology of alterity. Yet Barth deploys presents both to register his presence and to legitimate it, and even to signal the signified: mastery by means of the word (the text). This is precisely why he selects, or sorts out, his presents *carefully*, and gives, as he says, in commensurate with the donee's status, importance and use-value (to his project of exploration). For he says, "I myself also found it necessary to make [a] dignitary a respectable present" (TD3: 375).

Nevertheless, there are scenes where Barth himself is the donee, the receiver, and the object of a truly "disinterested" gift, as in Issege where he is "received with the utmost kindness and hospitality into the family of a wealthy man" (TD2:215); receives a camel in return for a bernus (TD3:544); dishes of food and a young heifer for a needle; two sheep slaughtered in his honour even *before* he sends his presents, and which are never asked for afterwards (TD3:244); a "fat sheep" from some

villagers in return for some medicines (TD2:494). Barth even begs the Sheik of Bornu for a present of a horse (TD2:241). In one village around Timbuktu, our hero is "treated most hospitably, and even sumptuously, and besides two enormous bowls full of rice and meat, swimming in an immense quantity of butter, a whole ox was slaughtered for us" (TD3:253). Every*where, then, it is Barth who has received more than he has given*. There are many scenes in which traditional hospitality prevails. And yet Barth continues to believe, and encode, the allegedly magical effect of his presents (especially on the local rulers). Even where he gives, he always expects *something* in return, even an exchange-value in recompense (TD3:484-5). In one important passage, Barth says, in making a present to the vizier of Bornu, Haj Beshir, that gifts or presents should please by their novelty, and "awake a feeling of gratitude in the receivers" (TD2:81).

It is in these gift-giving scenes that Barth represents himself as the subject of charity, despite the textual evidence that he is a business emissary of British manufacturing and commercial aspirations in the Sudan. His text inscribes an exchangist ideology in which it is the indigenous subject that is the object of what Bourdieu (1997:239) calls "durable relations of dependence". In fact any reader will be struck by Barth's "posture of generosity": his presents seem literally infinite. He never runs out of presents; and his hosts never run out of, as it were, their "greed". He is, in other words, the *subject* in "whose viability and authenticity his readers may have longed to believe", as Pratt says of Mungo Park. For the Sudan's *debt* to Barth is equivalent to his *claim* upon her.

The drama of reciprocity that the reader encounters in *Travels and Discoveries* is also a signifier of authority, presence and semiotic mastery, or in Bacon's ominous phrase, mastery by means of the word. It is thus all about *representation.* Barth gives the rulers exchange-values, things bought with *money,* not with other goods. But the rulers do not have an exchange-regulated reciprocity, for they have no exchangist economy, but a tributary economy in which the "state" builds up its revenue by extracting surplus and by taxing trade and peasant households.[14] This is a culture where guests are not allowed to depart without the host giving them presents. This is why the rulers reciprocate Barth's presents with even larger ones --- a horse for a pair of scissors; a goat or a cow for a razor blade. Strictly, therefore, the exchange is no exchange at all, but reciprocal relations of intercourse, and an element of tributary reciprocity. This in sum is why they think Barth is entitled to their protection, and enduring hospitality. (See TD2:571). For Sudanese rulers have no idea of a *cash* payment for a service such as military protection for foreign travellers. Interestingly, Sheik Ghet, the Keghamma or chief of the Fugabu people, would not accept Barth's gifts until the donor persistently implored him to accept it. Clearly, the chief simply has no conception of a gift as constituting an exchange-value as understood in capitalist societies.

This is why the present or the gift in *Travels and Discoveries* is a potent signifier for imperial representation:

> He [Abdu Sarkin Chiko] was richly decked out with a green bernus, and mounted on a sprightly charger, although his whole military force numbered only three horsemen and six archers; and his retinue had by no means a princely appearance, consisting of a motley assemblage of slaves, cattle, sheep, and all sorts of encumbrances. When he paid me a visit in my hut, *I*

> *at once presented him with a fine black rawani, thus confirming on my part the whole of his titles* (TD3:543; my italics).

Fifty years hence, British and French colonial administrators would indeed be "confirming" Sudanese rulers' titles. The rawani Barth confers on Abdu Sarkin Chiko is "black". Metonymically, this is a poignant sign: it is the *name* (inferiority) for the *thing* (authority). Elsewhere Barth calls Abdu's rawani his title, and the title itself "hollow" (TD3: 542). Here it is the gift that confers power and authority on Chiko; and the gift is Barth's, which, in its symbolic and literal dimension, confirms Abdu as a "captioned" or rather titled (author-ized) subject. In a word, Barth has *named* and *demarcated* and *segregated* (blackened) Abdu in the very process of making him a present.

Yet again, the present has other "functions" as well within the economy of the signifier (or symbol). It actually *constitutes* the authority and legitimacy of the local ruler:

> [Koso, the Governor of Muniyo] did me the honour of putting on the white helali bernus which had constituted the chief attraction of my present [to him], and which he esteemed very highly, as most noble people do in this country, while the common chief values more highly a dress of showy colors (TD3:54)

In this passage, Koso's office is actually established rhetorically as the "effect" of the white gown presented to him by the narrator. The only thing missing is the staff of office traditional to Sudanese emirs. The rhetorical debasement is also the semiotic constitution of the narrator as the panoptical eye under whose gaze Koso is "disciplined" as a lesser figure of authority. Nowhere is the "function" of the

present as a signifier of Barth's imperial authority and "disciplinary" powers than in the following scene involving Aliyu, the Sultan of Sokoto:

> Meanwhile I was pondering over the present which I was to give this mighty potentate... and thinking that what I had selected might not prove sufficient to answer fully his expectation... my presents consisted of the following articles: a pair of pistols, richly ornamented with silver, in velvet holsters; a rich bernus (Arab cloak with hood) of red satin, lined with yellow satin; a bernus of yellow cloth; a bernus of brown cloth; a white helali bernus of the finest quality; a red cloth kaftan embroidered with gold; a pair of red cloth trousers; a Stambuli carpet; three loaves of sugar; three turbans and a red cap; two Paris of razors; half a dozen large looking-glasses; cloves and benzoin... [Aliyu] then surveyed the presents, and expressed his satisfaction repeatedly; but when he beheld the pistols, which I had purposely kept till the last, he gave vent to his feelings in the most undisguised manner, and, pressing my hands repeatedly, he said 'nagode, nagode, Abd el Karim, barka' -- I thank you, God bless you, Abd el Karim, God bless you'. He had evidently never before seen any thing like these richly mounted pistols... It was to these very pistols that I was in great measure indebted for the friendly disposition of that princes (TD3: 106-108).

For a brief while, Caliph Aliyu ceases to be the sovereign subject: Barth takes his place, and he Barth's. Barth frames himself as the *one* who has provoked his interlocutor's sentimental response, and the recipient or donee or "object-being" responds profusely with sentiment. Here Barth installs an objectivist trope of knowing based on a *fixed* relation of Knowing (Barth) and Known (Aliyu), Seer (Barth) and Seen (Aliyu). In this scene, the present, in the form of the supposedly "disinterested" gift, that is an equal unequal exchange, has projected Barth's metaphoric power: his own telling of how he has told a story telling itself about himself. Thus transfactual reciprocity, even the fetishized one, has disappeared to be replaced by a non-reciprocal non-exchange of all time: Representation.

As a structure of imaginary-fictive relations, representation is a one-way transaction in which the representer attempts narcissistically to add his or her own

name to the re-presented, to conceal his own need for a supplement. For example, Barth represents himself bestowing gifts on the Sudan's most powerful men, such as the Caliph Aliyu. However, it is in such instances that vertical inequality enters into the relationship: the giver, Barth, is effectively displayed, by textuality and the transpositional discourse that drives the text, as the non-contingent *fact*, as the superior form, the *determining* subject, which not only determines how the transaction is to be reported or represented, but also its own system of *needs*. However, because representation rests on the dubious, and ultimately untenable, promise of life without supplementarity, or pure being (ontological fullness), it has inevitable to betray its constructed nature. For while the narrative seeks to show the hierarchical ordering in all the relations between giver and receiver (in the gift-reciprocity relations), the text, or indeed the *content* of the signified, shows the opposite: Barth accepting, and being given, greater reciprocation for his gifts.

4.10 The Logic of Writing

It is, as seen above, in writing-as-representation that Barth becomes the writing subject, the subject of his assertion and the controlling, presenting model of Authority. Yet it is also in writing, that is, in syntax and lexicon, in punctuation and spacing, lacunae and margin that he has *constructed* a Sudan, a Sudan that he subordinates semantically, rhetorically, and linguistically. To this extent, Barth is both a literary pilgrim on a holy pilgrimage of literary juxta-positioning, and a colonialist for he would like to Sudan to permanently remain both the sign of his "textual embodiment of authority" and a signifier for a global European hegemony.

This is why "discovery", or rather Barth's symbolic displacement of the intransitive Sudan, is a "violence of the letter", an argument for "conquest", a conquest inscribed under the banner of freedom for the symbolic colonizer, and regeneration for an allegedly stagnant Sudan. It is, in other words, "the anthropological war, the essential confrontation that opens up communication between peoples and cultures, even when that communication is not practiced under the banner of colonial or missionary oppression" (Derrida 1976:107).

But years before Derrida could write those lines, some indigenous Sudanic scholars were well aware of the corrosive workings of not writing as such, but writing practiced, as Barth's, under the banner of colonial and missionary designs. An example is the story of Azori, whom Barth reports to the reader as being "suspicious of our writing down his country", and "anxious to correct any erroneous idea we might entertain respecting it" (TD1: 384). Azori is a native of Agadez who, although blind, is remarkably acutely conscious of the possible implications of Barth's *writing down* of his country. Azori is right: it is within the representation of the signified content, *writing*, that Barth inaugurates *his* civilizing mission, and thus his open declaration that," it would be necessary, in order to achieve the desired end, to colonize the most favourable tract of the country inclosed by the Kwara, the Benue, and the River Kaduna, and thus spread commerce and civilization in all directions into the heart of the continent" (TD2: 501) and what amounts to a stern warning to Sheik Omar, the ruler of Bornu, that "a friendly intercourse between themselves [Bornuans] and the English could only exist if they acted in a conscientious manner" (TD1:592).

Barth concludes his re-voicing of the history of Songhai with the suggestion that Timbuktu and the rest of the surrounding countryside cannot ever rise out of their misery until the arrival of "a strong and intelligent power", namely European power. (TD3:299). To this extent then, the writing of discovery is typical of imperial representation: a desperate, now open, now hidden, desire to exile or remove *absence*, and at the same time to banish native presence to the symbolic (not ontological) space of absence. This is why *Travels and Discoveries* seeks to efface the presence of the native form by, paradoxically, seeking to illuminate it, to keep it *legible* through writing, which, in truth, is nothing but a system of demarcations, appellations and displacements.

This is indeed why Barth's *seeing* and *textualizing* are a writing strategy, which, however, never touches the soil, as it were: for Barth has only made a (writing) Sudan not out of the real, matter-of-fact Sudan, but out of his own visual, imaginative and semantic practice. To put it yet another way: Barth's book portrays or reflects not the real, *historical* Sudan, but necessarily and inescapably a metaphorical Sudan, a Sudan which has been *reduced* to Barth's semiotic and linguistic *play*, to, in the words of Hawkes, "the shape and structures of the activity of writing " (1983:144). In a word: the Sudan as a text. In this sense, *Travels and Discoveries* is not factual, corrigible and transfactual knowledge, or a source of that kind of knowledge, about a transcendentally real Sudan and her peoples, languages, cultures, and landscape but a *text*, an impossible dream of plenitude, in which the Sudan is no more than a system of distinctions and hierarchical oppositions.

This is the sense in which writing, and the inscription, of the spatiotemporally distant objects of visibility, by the author of a text designed to capture the plenitude of his presence at the scene of these objects, is a representation, an imaginative mapping of Other by Self. This is the subject of the next chapter.

NOTES

1. The *sign* brings together *signifier* (form) and *signified* (meaning). The sign is, in Pierce's words, "something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity" (cited in Hawkes 1983: 126). This means that the sign is, by nature, incomplete, and that "meaning" or signified can be grasped or interpreted only by the use of another sign (the latter being the interpretant of the former). It is this which lies behind Macherey's contention that *writing* is a productive mechanism, a process in which it is the gaps, silences, and absences of signification that, paradoxically, constitute the text. All this is crucial to the analysis of how Barth, for example, comes to "know" that which he claims is indubitable knowledge of the Sudan; and his illusion, shared by, especially, the historians that he is, or was, able to come face to face with the real world of objects in the *writing* of his text.

2. It is instructive that in many places Barth is regarded as a trader, a commercial traveller, or as someone searching for gold. See, on this, TD2: 452.

3. I have preserved Barth's spelling of local names, for methodological reasons given in chapter one.

4. In his discourse of the so-called Pagans, Barth represents them as heavily oppressed by Muslim slave raiders, and as a reservoir for the latter's allegedly blood-thirsty appetite for slaves. Yet most of the so-called Pagans turn out to worship deities such as "Tumbi", "Fete", and such. See on this, TD2: 105.

5. Note the apprehension of the Bornu leadership that they risk, by signing the treaty, losing their political sovereignty to the British (TD2: 235).

6. I am indebted to Low (1989) for this term.

7. In the preface, Barth writes that he had to "assume the character of a [Muslim] to conform to the innocent prejudices of the [local people] adopting a dress... more decorous in the eyes of the natives" (xxx). However, the events of the narrative flatly contradict this assertion. This gives credence to Macherey's view that a writer's knowledge of his work is not "the same thing as a knowledge of what [it is] made from"; and that "the text is not directly rooted in historical reality, but only through a complex sequence of mediations" (1978: 120,118).

8. Upon his return from the Sudan, Barth wrote:

[An] enterprising man, who undertakes difficult and dangerous things, does it as well for his honour and reputation as well as for ameliorating or improving his position in society (cited in Prothero 1958: 335).

9. For an excellent study of the Mahdist tradition in Islam, see Sa'eed (1992).

10. In *Travels and Discoveries*, chiasmus also "functions" as a form of parataxis in which the narrator sets up "difference" vis-à-vis its other, namely Identity itself. Moreover, chiasmus is the "manifold" through which the demiurgic subject apprehends itself as a tissue of repetitions.

11. Eventually, the protagonist is revealed as a Christian. And once disclosed as such, Barth's troubles begin, with the determination of his enemies in Timbuktu to annihilate him. After this disclosure, Barth barely escapes with his "symbolic capital" intact.

12. Towards the closing pages of the Narrative, Barth says of Bello, in a memorable moment of reflexive reinvention, that he is like a child, or what he calls my "eccentric friend" who plays "with the small arms I had made him a present of all the day long, to the great charm of everybody" (TD3: 94). Here is the classic form of the rhetoric of debasement at work.

13. In addition, there is the interesting episode at Bagirmi, where the protagonist is prevented from gazing at the Sultan. He is forced to instead speak to the "screen" which veils the Sultan. The seeing-man is thus forced to discourse about "non-seeing", which has neither use nor exchange value (TD3: 538-39). There is also the case of the paramount ruler of Timbuktu, Sheik Sidi Ahmad El-Bakay who would not take Barth's gifts, but rather wants him to send firearms and Arabic books on his return to Britain. On the contrary, the Emir of Kano wants *nothing* from Barth, as symbolized by the Emir's *silence*, or rather "contrapuntal" silence, towards the former. Even when he is allowed to come before the Emir, Barth is instructed to bow down before him without, however, the Emir reciprocating in word or gesture.

14.According to S. Amin (1976: 15, 18-19, 55, 58), the "tribute-paying mode of production" exists where society is divided into "two main classes: a peasantry, organized in communities, and the ruling class, which monopolizes the function of the given society's political organization, and extracts a tribute (not in commodity form". This formulation does shed light on the situation in 19th century Sudan because the absence of what might be called commodity-regulated exchange-values meant that the Sudanese rulers did not see Barth's gifts as commodities or payment as such for their services such as protection and safe passage. Thus for them gift giving was simply part the traditional tribute-paying culture.

CHAPTER FIVE:
SPACES FOR REPRESENTATION

> It is perfectly possible to argue that some distinctive objects are made by mind, and that these objects, while appearing to exist objectively, have only a fictional reality -- Edward Said (1978:54).

5.1 The Enchanted Space

Time and again, Barth finds that, to represent the Sudanic space as a veritable extra-textual space in its own right, he has, paradoxically, to configure it within the signifying content of his own self-presence. This chapter undertakes to illustrate more concretely the literary modes and conventions by which Barth has re-worked, re-imaged, and re-presented the Sudanic landscape (interiors, rivers, and farmlands), bodies, and even his own *relational* self-presence. It is argued that Barth introjects affective properties such as enjoyment, delight, enchantment, beauty, and so on onto the objective space of the Sudanic landscape, and that these affective properties indicate the quality of an imaginative and figurative consciousness which drains the objective landscape of its concrete particularity, and then bestows upon it emotional, sentimental and poetic quality, a quality which seeks to convert the concrete into (poetic, aesthetic) meaning. Barth's text provides the image of a rhetorical, aestheticizing form or imaginary which is always constructed before it is presented within the process of the writing of the Other, namely Sudanese space, body, character, and normativity. This is what Said (1978:55) calls "imaginative geography", the process by which the mind of the explorer intensifies "its own

sense of itself by dramatizing the distance and difference between what is close to it and what is far away''. This is indeed the case, for exploration writing as we know it is the attempt to bridge this distance, to merge it, to re-present the far-away as the familiar, the non-threatening.

In the secondary historical literature devoted to Barth's representation of Sudanese societies, the text's convention of visual and textual construction of the concrete has not been adequately probed. For example, there is hardly a paragraph or sentence in *Travels and Discoveries* without an affective verb or adjective, namely "imagine", "enjoy", "fine", "picturesque", "romantic", "unspoiled", "imaginative", "delight", "magnificent", "astonishing", "mighty", "delightful", "pleasant", "beautiful", as the following passage indicates:

> The whole plain appeared to be one continuous corn-field, interrupted only by the numerous villages, and *shaded* here and there by single monkey-bread-trees, or Adansonias, and various species of fig-trees ...with their *succulent, dark-green* foliage... with *large, fleshy leaves* of a *bright green color.* Since I left Kano *I had not seen so fine a country.* I had a *pleasant* excursion on horseback...through the plain to a neighbouring village, and then toward the Komadugu, which forms a *beautiful* sweep, being lined on the north side by a steep, grassy bank *adorned with fine trees...* In the bottom of the fiumara we found most *delicious water...* These pools are *enlivened* by a great number of water-fowl, chiefly heron and flamingoes (TD2: 94-95; my italics).

In this passage, it is the trope of the picturesque, anchored in the writer's visual perception, which organizes and tracks the scene. The concrete particularity of the landscape is invested with visual and imaginary abstractness. The materiality of the space is recuperated within an aesthetic of delight, the seer's delight, or rather

domesticated as an abstract, vision-sanctioned field of colour. This indicates the preponderance of nominal adjectives of colour, and affective adjectives. Note also that even the water is said to be delicious, that is, a pleasurable object for bodily consumption.

In this way, Barth presses on the landscape a Post-Enlightenment imaginary: he constructs an emotional-aesthetic field of the concrete and the imaginary, the beautiful and the sublime. This is why he finds a promontory either "unspoiled" and "rich" or "picturesque" (TD1: 34, 36), and Wadis, or ravines or cliffs presenting to view "beautiful layers of red [colours]" (44), and beautiful scenery "arresting our attention" (70), and whole landscapes becoming "very pleasant [and becoming] more agreeable in appearance by the fineness of the morning" (85). As the narrator says, it is the beauty or otherwise of the landscape, that is whether it is pleasant, beautiful or monotonous, that necessarily "impresses itself on the narrative of the traveller" (69).

Barth translates, or transfers, the concrete particular, the ravine, the valley, the foliage, from the domain of intransitivity (the matter-of-fact), to the domain of his vision or perception, to one of aesthetic and imaginary-poetic possibility. While leaving a Sudanese town, he reports the country as becoming, by degrees, "more beautiful and cheerful, and exhibiting the character of repose and ease" (TD1: 481). Moments later, as the sun breaks through the dense clouds, suddenly the day becomes "a most beautiful morning, and I indulged in the feeling of unbounded liberty, and in the tranquil enjoyment of the beautiful aspect of God's creation" (482). The surrounding landscape is here transferred from a concrete particularity to

the narrator's subjective space, his loving and pleasing embrace, his personal aesthetic project.

It is clear, then, that for Barth, freedom or liberty is a function of the picturesque and the lofty magnificence of the sublime. Even Barth himself is ravished and transported by the exalted Nature, or by the force of Nature which is, however, not a force at all, since it supplies unbounded possibilities. As the narrator says soon after the above passage, the landscape is "one of the finest landscapes I ever saw in my life'' (482). The sublime, that is Nature in its awesome presence, has moved the protagonist (to an emotional wonder) and has, accordingly, or to the same precise degree, charmed him (by its impressive quality), as he says of a "delightful park-like appearance which had so charmed me the previous day'' (484).

In *Travels and Discoveries*, the landscape, indeed the whole material presence of the surrounding countryside, is an aesthetic object that exists, or is made to exist, in conformity to his senses (his perception and sentiment) and capacities (his exploration and discovery of it). In fact the landscape is inseparable from, and inheres virtually in, his sensuous manifold: he keeps reaping enjoyment from the sheer presence and existence of the landscape. In a word, the landscape is both his home, and his food, so to speak:

> I chose my camping ground on an eminence...shaded by a majestic tamarind-tree, and affording an open prospect over the characteristic landscape (TD3: 46).

Here, the landscape is not only a source of pleasure, but also affords a panorama which functions as a symbolic food or drink that is enjoyed ("affording an open prospect over the characteristic [beautiful, picturesque, fine, etc] landscape'').

The same impression is conveyed by a passage in which a Sudanese spot evokes the "same impression [in the hero] which the finest spots of Italy would produce on a traveller visiting them from the north of Europe''(TD1: 227). Or consider the representation of a charming grove, appropriated as the "African Netherlands'', that is, transported back and forth between the African picturesque and the European one. It is called "magnificent'', lighted by a "magnificent morning sky... a most picturesque view'' (TD2: 408). Barth's encounter with the landscape is thus full of desire and anticipation. It is even hedonistic since only the beauty, charm and the excitement of the landscape pleases him. So here beauty is goodness (enjoyable). For example, while en route to Kano, he comes to Bichi town, on the outskirts of the city. The town appears to the traveller-protagonist as metonymically a large, delicious papaya fruit on account of the profusion of the *gonda*-bush which he synecdochically represents as the custard-apple of Europe. As he says, the fruit is so delicious to the extent that "I must call the attention of every African traveller to this fruit, which affords the greatest relief after a long day's journey'' (TD1: 486). In the last analysis, then, the landscape emerges as an object for the (its) spectator. Barth is the spectator-owner. And to this extent, it is aesthetically and rhetorically his. Here, the hero has transformed the landscape into an object of possession. His eye has colonized it, mastered it, and portioned it into fixed zones, parameters and values.

This implies, therefore, that the Sudanese landscape is (of) an imagined value: it is, on this view, an artifact, defined, as Peckham (1999:172) says in a different context, "in terms of legibility, while the traveller [is] cast in the role of reader who activate[s] the meanings of the [manuscript-landscape]'' It is little

surprise that the narrator inscribes the landscape as an art object, a theatre, and a metaphor for the theatre, even as a performance [2]. Yet in this rendering of the landscape as in tune with the hero's sentiment or imaginary possibilities, the landscape is encoded as *the* transparent space, exhibited like oil painting on the wall or in the art gallery, or "made to become readable, like a book" (Mitchel 1988:33). In this transparent space, the whole cultural and natural presence of the Sudan becomes the duplicate of the Book, the special lisible structure of the narrator's personal aesthetic. It is within this personal aesthetic that the Sudan is grasped, appropriated, or as Said (1978:181) might put it, "reduced, or codified as lived in, exploited aesthetically and imaginatively as a roomy place full of possibility''.

For example, the hero repeatedly represents the landscape as responding to his gaze and active perception of it. He is, in other words, "greeted by the cheerful sight'' (TD1: 96). Charming scenes present themselves to his eyes or sight (TD2: 202), while the horizon, the "finest embroidery from the hand of nature'' (TD2: 342) presents itself to his majestic vision. In these episodes, the narrator reduces the objects of his perception to a picture, that is a stilled and synchronized field of vision, now apprehended, now inscribed, within the metaphorical discourse of the verbal painter, one who is by nature a reader of nature.[3]

But to read the landscape, Barth must, whether as its writer, narrator, or seer, name it. That is, he must semantically demarcate it, set it off from something else, say, Europe. Barth must also, as described in the previous chapter, identify the landscape by a set of signs or signifieds. Consequently, Barth inscribes the Sudanese space as chaotic, violent, insecure, wild, savage and barbarous, in short as a

dystopian region. Yet all naming involves a more or less systematic projection, displacement and classification. This is why there is no such thing, in the words of Peacock (1985:88), as a "truly idiomatic, unique, and 'proper' " naming. Barth calls the Sudan by a variety of *proper* names, such as Sudan, Negroland, Central Africa, and so on. Yet all proper names are, in the last analysis, metaphors. For example, Barth represents, as seen in the preceding pages, the Sudan through, and by, reference *to something else other than* the Sudan itself (that is, as a proper name), namely Europe (Italy), his own self, and his emotional, sentimental and affective valences. As Peacock (1985:88) says:

> All words -- proper or common, spoken or written -- have meaning in relation to classificatory systems of words and objects never only as each or any word is 'proper' to one object in reality.

Take the example of Barth's naming of the land.[4] It is not only a personification but also the racialization of geographic space. Yet this very naming is, necessarily and fundamentally, a *derivative* and *figural* inscription. Although Barth's text *appears* to be concerned with, or is fastened on, the thing, the referent, that is the Sudan as signifier, it is *signification,* rather than the material or logical connection of word and referent, which sustains the discourse, or the apparently *objective description* of the Sudanese space or landscape. To put it yet another way: In Barth's textualization of the landscape one discovers a hitherto little-noticed, or virtually unnoticed, presence: distinct from an ontology of forms (a phenomenology).[5] This statement can be illustrated with the passage below.

> ...Several cavalcades were seen coming from various quarters... in the most *gorgeous* attire...and wearing over it several [shirts] of all sorts of *colors* and *designs,* and having their heads covered

> with... *casque*, made very nearly like those of *our* Knights in the middle age, but of *lighter* metal, and *ornamented* with most gaudy feathers. Their horses were *covered* ...with the most coloured stripes ...and adorned by a metal plate... The lighter cavalry was only dressed in two or three showy [shirts], and small *white* or *colored* caps; but the officers and more favored attendants wore bernuses of *finer* or *coarser* quality, and generally of *red* or *yellow* color, slung in a most *picturesque* manner... so that the inner wedding of *richly-colored* silk was most exposed to view... The *sight* of this troop, *at least from a little distance, as is the case in theatrical scenery,* was really *magnificent* (TD2: 238-39; my italics).

Here the entire description consists in a tracing of embroidered "natural" reality. Adjectives of colour abound: things are ornamented by colours, and appear in delicate or *coarse* qualities; dimensions are either *richly* ornamented or not. The narrator hints at the spatial demarcation, the *distance*[6], which both enchants and signifies the view, as in a theatre, where the distance, or enchanted chasm, between perceiver and object both *grounds* and *circumscribes* the scene. The physical integrities of the horse riders and the footmen are not mentioned at all. What occupies the narrator's attention is the profusion of signs and *signifiers*; and even these are cast within the nominalized, insubstantialized, nonreferentialized discourse of Form.

It then follows that Barth's apprehension of the Sudanese landscape issues in, exists within, a form of *sensate discourse,* or as Baumgarten (1734) would say, *sensitive knowing,* which not only affects but also effects, a mediation between the subject and the object of perception. As the passage cited shows, but contrary to the arguments of historians such as Davidson (1970) and Bivins (1997), it is Barth's *sentiment,* rather than his use of historical *Reason,* which serves as the *manifold* that *shapes* and *organizes* the form which the landscape should take, or actually does

take. For Barth, the content, the landscape, issues within, and *is*, the sensate form, the indwelling process of the content. The following passage illustrates Barth's philosophy of form, and the aesthetic ontology that shapes his figurative consciousness. The passage is a celebrated description of Katsina cavalry.

> The governor... about noon held a sort of review of several horsemen, whose horses, in general, were in *excellent* condition. They were armed with a *straight* sword *hanging* on the left, a *long heavy* spear for *thrusting,* and a shield, either of the *same description as that of the Tawarek,* of *oblong* shape, made of the *large* antelope ...or else bullock's or elephant's hide, and *forming* an *immense circular disk* of about five feet in diameter; some of them wore also the dagger at the left arm, while I counted not more than four or five muskets. Their dress was *picturesque,* and not too flowing for warlike purposes, the large shirt, or shirts (for they generally wear two), being fastened round the breast with an *Egyptian shawl* with a *red* border; and even those who were dressed in a bernus [Arab cloak] had it *wound round* their breast. Most of them wore *black* 'rawani' or shawls, *round their faces,* a custom which the Fellani of Hausa have adopted from the Tawarek merely on account of its looking warlike... (TD1: 454; my italics).

The passage is a good example of Barth's aesthetic ontology, or aestheticizing manifold. First, the passage overflows with metonymies and synecdoches: parts are reduced to wholes, namely the army is *reduced* to its appearance (clothes, spears, etc); wholes are *reduced* to their constituent parts, namely the colors, shawls, shields, and spears that instance the army's *material presence.* As in any idealist-aesthetic ontology, the concrete particular is subordinated to the abstract universal; the spear is transitively merged with "thrusting"; the sword with "the left". Metaphors ("black", "warlike") effect the translation of the shield and the *rawani* from the Fellani to the Tawarek and, arguably, vice versa. As in the previous passage, nominal adjectives of colour (red, black) add to the passage's density of meaning. Here, as in the previous passage,

Barth filters the visible, material referent for the *sign* (meaning). The whole passage is anchored to the transcendental imaginary of the seer, the eye/I which sets up the gaze ("I counted...'') within an aesthetic-symbolic manifold which *displaces* the human element, and then appropriates it as an aesthetic delight ("Their dress was picturesque''). It follows, then, that it is the aesthetic, rather than the biological-human-material, form of the mounted men that is mentioned, or found worthy of representing. Indeed the men are "spears for thrusting'', "oblong shape'', "immense circular disk'', and so on. This is conveyed by the *stative* verbs ("wound'', "round'').

It is significant that the narrator describes the scene as "picturesque'' and a "spectacle'', meaning that it is both strange and interesting, dramatic and exotic. On the basis of the on-going analysis, it is clear that those passages indicate not an objective, empirical, matter of-fact description beloved of the historians but rather a rhetorical-semiotic one because they present a *synchronic* picture, a semantic graphing of real, biological and social entities, in a word, a *displacement* of the referent by the sensuous[7]. But if this is indeed the case, then the landscape that we encounter in *Travels and Discoveries* is not a real, intransitive landscape, the material proof of the Sudan, but an *fictional-imaginary* one, one that is absorbed, or apprehended, within a sensuous and poetic discourse of the real. Thus the allegedly objective description that we encounter in Barth's text is rather a fictional and imaginary creation, a product of *sentiment,* of what is established in the process of its being presupposed.

This is not to claim that such a fictional and fictionalizing act is worthless or inauthentic or transitively unreal. It is rather to demonstrate that that is all Barth and his text can ever manage. For theirs is a "productive imagination'' which creates its own objects of perception as its own perceptual field. To this extent, *Travels and Discoveries* signals its own fictionality by its own eminently semiotic re-invention of the Sudanese landscape, by its own post-Enlightenment Romantic idealist-aesthetic ontology which seeks to give *form* to the concrete particular, the external object of perception. On this score, the landscape, the Sudan's real material presence, remains real yet imaginary precisely because it is given to, and intended for, the contemplating subject, the explorer, the "I'' of sensitive knowing called "discovery''. As the narrator says of his exploration of the Sudan, the Sudan is *his*, that is the "*first* object of *my* desires... and dreaming'' (TD1: 317; my italics). Yet the historians and all those who have approached Barth as a realistic describer, have, to this extent, missed the opportunity to retrace Barth's *self*-production in the aesthetic or what Kant has called, in memorable phrase, "fictitious creations that are neither fish nor flesh, neither poetry nor philosophy'' (cited in Eagleton 1990:136).

Bivins (1997:4,5) has argued, in a critical account of Barth's association of history with geography (physical boundaries), that Barth tries, for example, to model a geography of Hausaland from the latter's myth of origin. Bivins censors Barth for failing to imagine what she calls "the master metaphor'' behind the myth of "sibling relationships'' in the Hausa myth of origin. The irony of this position is entirely missed by Bivins. That is, while Bivins, as a historian, credits Barth with the ability to "carefully [report] the evidence'' (5), she does not appreciate that the

"evidence'', or the "empirical proof'' which Barth presumably carefully reports is a metaphorical one. Read literally, metaphor means "transfer'', in the manner of analogy, simile (similarity to) and even metonymy (different from). It carries, in other words, one thing, or a group of things, from one place to another, or from one symbolization to another. It is used to *characterize* objects of any kind, including, perceptual "objects''. According to White (1973:34) metaphor is a trope which is essentially "useful for understanding the operations by which the contents of experience can be prefiguratively grasped and prepared for conscious apprehension''.

On this premise, it is incoherent to assume a disjunction of metaphorical (indirect, figurative) discourse and factual, empirical description, as Bivins does. It is, in a sense, Bivins' lack of a tropological sense of Barth's discourse that led her to conceptualize Barth as the bearer of an empirical, factual discourse. True enough, *Travels and Discoveries* is an intensely referential text, containing a variety of objects, places, peoples, and "resources''. Yet even this formidably referentializing discourse can be characterized, following Brown (1993:22), as a "rhetoric of acquisition'' which seeks to convey the authority and presence (at the foreign referent) of the writer-narrator, and provide, as Lidchi would say, a compelling and convincing reading "that will 'quicken' and solidify the meaning of the objects". All this is to convey, through the reference to concrete objects, the "richness of the embodied experience'' of being there in the Sudan (Sharp 1999:206).

Now the "rhetoric of acquisition" which pervades *Travels and Discoveries* is precisely that -- a rhetoric, a metaphoric ontology of forms. The text abounds in magisterial descriptions of markets, cornfields, local industry, and cattle. The appendix contains an extensive list of the available commodities and natural resources of the land, a tendency, says Brown (1993: 43) of imperialist literature. In this rhetoric, the land is *more or less* a "calculable commodity", a proliferating listing meant for the domestic and public consumption of the European reader. This is at base the ontological ground of Barth's "vision of improvement", in which the land will be made either beautiful or *more* beautiful.

In many passages such as those involving the description of markets, for example, Barth does not depart from the commonplace view that the Sudan, to adopt an expression of Wheeler's, "would be even more beautiful and lucrative, and the inhabitants even more civilized, through the active intervention, even insertion, of European into Africa" (Wheeler 1999: 19). For example, he identifies the highlands of Adamawa, or Fombina, as the most ideal for European settlement: "[The highlands] of Adamawa [include] some very considerable centres of industry and commerce... cotton is cultivated here to some extent. Adamawa is a promising country of colonies" (TD2: 149). Note, in this quotation, the coupling of trade, commerce and industry on the one hand, and *colonization* on the other. Kano is inscribed in the same manner, as the most favourable for European residence on account of the commercial dexterity of her people, and potential for European trade. Pratt has found in a study of Barth's precursors that such visions of improvement, of

promoting trade and commerce between the Sudan and Europe (as Barth says in the preface), are expressed by, and through the aesthetic:

> It is hardly surprising to find an emissary of a European imperial power concerning himself above all with parameters... the eye scanning prospects in the spatial sense knows itself to be looking at prospects in the temporal sense -- possibilities of a Eurocolonial future coded as resources to be developed, surpluses to be traded, towns to be build. Such prospects are what make information relevant in a description (Pratt 1992:60-61.)

This spatial scanning of prospects within a descriptive discourse is what Bhabha (1994:31) has referred to as the "shot/reverse-shot strategy of a serial enlightenment'' in which the Other is the "good object of knowledge... the docile body of difference'', the articulable inarticulable, in a word, the exegetical horizon of inscription, articulation and difference. It is this mode of articulation of the land that is the constant point of reference in Barth's discourse of the landscape. However, this point of reference is also a point of presence because even as a supplement (or supplementary) to Barth's rational-empirical discourse, it is not a mere addition-substitution but one which is, in truth, the *foundation* and *precondition* of the activities of Barth's mind. In the passage that follows, Barth explicitly invokes the aesthetic manifold itself:

> Then came the... people of the town, a few on horseback, but most of them on foot. *The people were all dressed in their finest finery, and it would have formed a good subject for an artist* (TD1: 338; my italics).

So the picturesque calls, metaphorically, for its representation in graphic and pictorial form. As Said (1978:54) says of the Orientalists, it is the metaphorical presence of the established artist and the art form which "provide a context for the understanding of foreign reality''. In the passage just cited, the narrator openly

acknowledges the mediating power of the aesthetic, or the imaginative role of the artist in the representation, indeed even the knowledge, of a foreign or alien or exotic culture and landscape. Once again, it is aesthetic judgment that acts as the manifold within which the exotic is apprehended. But it is this which underscores Barth's essentially aesthetic and metaphorical method. Even in Barth's meta-critical discourse, this metaphorization of the landscape is deployed as an objectification of the real, hence the semantic appearance of *Travels and Discoveries* as a text. It "captures", or articulates, the lands, rivers, trees and farmlands in images, and surveys them in sketches, engravings, pictorial and archeological note-book inscriptions. This is precisely what Barth himself says the very presence of the Sudan calls for: the *presence* and imaginative play or act of the artist ("a good subject for an artist"), namely his own self-presence.

But this precisely is why Barth *has* to represent the Sudan, that is, set up something else other than herself to *stand-for* her as a material presence. What does *stands-for* the Sudan in *Travels and Discoveries* is a network of words, inscriptions, perceptions, sensations and imaginaries. Within this network, the Sudan is, or becomes, the artists' canvass: it is, or portrayed as, mute and synchronized and said to be lacking any consciousness of itself, or the desire to represent itself, "measure its own monuments, write its own history, derive its own meaning" (Terdiman 1985a: 36). It is Barth the artist who speaks on its behalf. It has, in effect, become ***his*** text, his signification, and his code. He cites, quotes, frames and illuminates it. Or so he attempts to.

The logocentrist traditional conception of exploration writing as more or less uncomplicated representations of empirical reality cannot account for the important truth that this reality, the Other, is a phonic and existential absence, for if the lands, rivers, trees, farmlands, mountains and societies of the Sudan were not absent in Barth's text, there would be no point in *Travels and Discoveries* representing them, standing for them and to speaking for them.

This is at the heart of the *aporia* of textual representation. The material presence of the Sudan becomes an *absence,* that is, a "presencing" beginning, or being made to begin, its "absencing". As is seen above in the example of the perceived charm of the Sudan evoking the (desired) presence of the artist, a relation of standing-for *replaces* a relation of intransitive presence. The present, the picturesque Sudanese spectacle, or the sublime awe of the River Niger, is turned into an abstract, visual image, that is, transformed, fashioned, and created. Yet this blanketing and displacing is effectively obscured or displaced by the illusion, fostered by Barth's mobile profiling, by the actual travelling and writing, that the Other was, or is, actually and indubitably encountered *there* at the far away place, the Sudan, the *foreign* country). A good illustration of this point is found in TD3: 62, where the narrator distinguishes between a stubble-field and a grove "by the *appearance* of a certain degree of industry'' in the former (my italics). The same volume also contains scenes in which nature is portrayed as being "awake and full of bustle, and the trees swarming with white pigeons'', just as the narrator arrives on the scene. On page 461, the narrator can be seen walking about in a beautiful valley,

and suddenly being overcome with emotion so strong as to let slip out the words: "The evenings [are] beautiful" (316).

Now it is the affective properties by which the landscape is appropriated or absorbed ("appearance", "awake and full of bustle", "beautiful") that have *performatively* re-created or re-presented the land as a network of signs. This is the *magic* performed by representation: the real object has *disappeared,* vanished, absented, turned into, or over to, a vacant space. What appears and takes over the field, the real space of the concrete, is "communication, rhetoric and persuasion" (Fabian 1990:757). It follows, then, that the question of logical proofs or systemic fits between word and referent, signifier and signified, which is likely to occupy the historian, does not arise, or is, at best, a secondary issue. Here lies the truth of McCannel and McCannel's thesis that representation is a form of semiosis in which meaning is produced through codes or conventions (1982:9; Fabian 1990:756 n.5); and Hegel's claim that aesthetic thinking suppresses "the particularity of the object with the universality of the concept, and vice versa" (cited in Eagleton 1990: 141).

5.2 The Disenchanted Space

The central argument in this section is that because *Travels and Discoveries* has displaced the intransitive Sudanese landscape, that is, turned it into a legible, transparent space of desire, the landscape has necessarily to appear, here and there, as an index of chaos, dystopia and anomie. This argument may seem, on the surface, to undermine our earlier proposition that Barth conceives in the landscape, as his teacher Schelling had taught, as the "original, as yet unconscious poetry of the spirit" (cited in Eagleton 1990:133). On the contrary: it is because Barth seeks to

give *form* to all that is outside of him that he inevitably has to judge, admonish, and demarcate the Sudan, and also to find her wanting. For if the entire Sudan is anchored in his sensory experience, judgment, desire or agency, then authority as such lies in him or rather in the authenticity or "objectivity'' of his felt experience. Thus the Sudanese landscape is *his* in virtue of its existing as his sensory object. This is also the sense in which he must externalize all that is within him, that is dramatize the aporias of Enlightenment utilitarian-technicist Reason (objectivism) and Romantic subjectivism. This is why the Sudanese environment is the image of *deficiency* par excellence. Indeed the narrator says of the Sudan that he is inclined not to forget its weaker points (TD1: 392). This is also why the Sudan generates "a litany of complaints'' such as delays, brackish water, lazy, deceitful and dishonest guides, superstitious but wily and arrogant chief men, inadequate accommodations, the merciless sun, the biting night cold, the vicious horses, the dangerously seductive or ugly girls who make the offer of marriage.

However, the Sudan is also plenitude: milk is plenty, the markets are well supplied, the beef is delicious, etc. Thus it is Barth's paradigms of the Romantic picturesque and Enlightenment imaginary, and their clash and co-existence, which partly explain why *Travels and Discoveries* is both classical travel writing, exploration account, landscape description, anecdotal speculation, the conventional "customs and manners'' description, and "historical" writing. The point is not only to highlight the contradictions at the core of Barth's textual practice but also to demonstrate the fundamental insight of Derrida and Macherey that a text is always organized/ordered around its own blind spot and that text-writing is an

absence/silence so radical that it cannot be located. As Paul de Man adds, a text "simultaneously asserts and denies the authority of its own rhetorical mode" (1979:77).

Barth scans the Sudanese landscape in order to establish its industrial potential (prospects). The potential or otherwise of the land is then converted into meaning. Said has argued that the very determination or demarcation of space as "appropriate" or "inappropriate" is a "poetic process, whereby the vacant or anonymous reaches of distance are converted into meaning" (1978:55). This process is evident in Barth's text: the landscape is ugly or monotonous or beautiful (varied) to the extent it possesses a representational plenitude:

> But *picturesque* as the state of the trees was, it did not argue much in favor of the *industry* of the inhabitants; for it is well-known... that the palm-tree is most picturesque in its wildest state (TD1: 147; my italics).

Here the beauty of the land is measured in *industrial* terms: order and beauty must issue forth in the industrial-utilitarian form. For the land must yield its prospect for exploitation by technological reason. Barth's utilitarian and romantic imaginative-figurative economy is seen in the mixture of romanticism and objectivism which structures his observation: Sometimes the landscape is picturesque, pleasurable, at other times rich, a "charming *prospect*" (TD1: 306; my italics). In this instance, pleasure is the motive for the gaze, in the other profit. For example, on seeing one of the most "fertile regions of [the Sudan]", where the population, the cultivators, are able to "export to foreign countries", his heart, says the narrator, "gladdened at this sight" (TD1: 413).

The narrator gets the same feeling upon sighting fields full of grazing livestock, or well cultivated fields, such as when he is "greeted by the cheerful sight of the first corn-crop'' (TD2: 92) or elevated by the sight of vast herds (TD1: 304) In a word, the beautiful land is the good land. For the land is not only valorized for its beauty but also for its medicinal potential and productive utility, for example the *Adansonia* for its spice, the *tamarind* for its anti-dysentery properties. Barth has special affinity with the trees of the Sudan, such as the Tamarind (from which he takes his anti-dysentery medicine), the deleb-Palm which he sees as the sign of Arabs, Islam and Mediterranean civilizations, the monkey-bread tree (*Adansonia digitata)* which is the sign of the Hausa ethnicity. The bore [baure] and Korna [kurna] trees he says are his special friends. Note that in all this, the relationship between the sign-trees and the referents is one of a *standing-for* between the referent and its doubles. In the end, however, it is the potential of the object for producing a marketable surplus that engages the narrator's attention.

In other situations, the beauty of the land is interrupted, admittedly for the better, by the realities of trade and commerce. Barth's aesthetic may also be regarded as that of commerce and trade. His stated purpose, or mission statement, is to enable trade and commerce between Europe and the Sudan, and the ways by which to provide the information that may enable it. This commercial concern certainly infiltrates, and in many ways dominates, his representation of the Sudan. According to Barker (1978:4), European travellers have historically seen Africa's "potential largely in terms of trade''. This can still be observed in Barth's descriptions in that the narrator almost always juxtaposes his discourse of the

picturesque with that of utility. For example, a picturesque discourse of the Damerghu landscape is repeatedly interrupted by the description of the "milky juice" used by "the pagans ...to ferment their *giya* [wine]" (TD1: 417). There are many such passages on virtually every page of the Narrative. Sometimes, however, it is the lack of the picturesque which interrupts the search for the "charming prospects" (the potential source of profit):

> Cheered by the spectacle of life and industry around us, we continued our pleasant march... we reached the castle of Mesellata...but I found it so desolate and comfortless that I left it immediately (TD1: 84).

In the same vein, the narrator spots the famous Mount Baghzen in the distance, an object which had once "filled my imagination with lofty crests and other features of *romantic scenery*. But how disappointed I was... I soon turned my eyes from it to Mount Eghallal" (TD1: 304; my italics). In other instances, the barren landscape registers its anti-aesthetic appeal, as in the case of the "monotonous country of Bornu" (TD3: 54), and of the Wadi Ran, whose "monotonous character... impresses itself on the narrative of the traveler" (TD1: 69). Yet even this example of the anti-aesthetic is made to stand, to all intents and purposes, in a unique, original and creative relationship to the narrator. For in these situations, the seemingly barren, monotonous, and ugly landscape stands forth like an illuminated canvass which presents itself to the inspection of a transcendent ego. Time and again, the picturesque and the sublime-utilitarian frames exist side by side:

> The morning had been rather dull, but before noon the sun shone forth, and our situation on the sloping ground of the high country, overlooking a great extent of land in the rich dress of vegetable life, was very pleasant. There was scarcely a bare

> spot; all the green, except the ears of the millet and sorghum were almost ripe (TD2: 246).

On the one hand, the reader is shown "some remains of industry... tobacco plantations'' interrupted by desolate country (TD3: 479); there a miserable "state of great poverty'' which, however, and in spite of itself, makes "a cheerful impression on me, on account of the number of dum palms and Korna-trees by which it is adorned'' (TD3: 128). On the other, is the story of the desert town of Beni Ulid, where the narrator records, in a justly seductive prose-style, the charming spectacle of decayed castles and ruins of buildings *and* a profusion of "beautiful olive-trees, which are at the same time enlivened by many small villages consisting of stone dwellings half in decay'' (TD3: 629). The reader should note the subtle use of chiasmus here: a *charming* spectacle followed by *decayed* castles yet again followed by *beautiful* trees enlivened by *decayed* dwellings. In this description, it is not the objects themselves that occupy the semantic dimension of the description, but the metaphors which carry through the dizzying transfer of meaning between word and referent. The concrete objects, the buildings and the trees, have *vanished*, and are *re*-placed by words, metaphors, and signs.

However, this should not be taken to imply that Barth's technique of representation is an innocent example of the clash and co-existence of conflicting paradigms in his *oeuvre*, or the mere impact of an aporetic textual system. Even within its figurative economy, Barth's eye/I is an "improving eye/I,'' an integral part of capitalist rationality which dreams of *improving* the landscape. In a study of post-19th century representations of the British countryside, Williams (1973:60) finds that a generation of English explorers dreamed of *improving* the rural

landscape by "building roads, bridges, canals and other infrastructure to permit rapid transportation of people and commerce". In the case of Barth, this dream also scripts an imperialist industrial desire or reverie, as seen in the preceding chapter. For Barth's vision is *over-determined* by the desire to transform the landscape into a modern industrial landscape which should make it immediately available for European exploitation. As he says while surveying the rich cornfields of Damerghu, "for here a more promising field for our labours was opened, *which might become of the utmost importance in the future of mankind*" (TD1: 413; my italics). This scripts a dream of a future Commonwealth in which the Sudan's natural resources will be transformed with the European entrepreneur-colonialist as their master. The rights of mankind can only be served with Barth's Enlightenment heritage firmly in place. Thus the visual descriptions of the land's utility and resources naturalize a transformative project embodied in the European explorer.

This is indeed the "dark side", as it were, of the picturesque and the utilitarian paradigms. For both logically lead to a discursive space in which the landscape is savage, wild, barbarous and odd. This is sometimes called *exoticism*. The exotic is, despite its anti-aesthetic quality or connotation, really an aesthetic ideal. But it is also a source of pleasure and anxiety. The narrator, for example, repeatedly scripts dark shapes, darkness, dark quarters, dark people dressed in dark clothes, and dark horizons, presumably where all cows, his cows, are black. (TD1:467, 559). He registers the exoticism of the landscape in the very process of emptying it of its concrete particularity. An example is the inscription of the town of Borzari, which, the reader is told, is "not remarkable in any way for the beauty of its

scenery''. The town's "bleak soil'' reflects back to the surface the intense heat of the sun. It has a "scanty vegetation'' and is "oppressive in the extreme''. Around the outskirts of the town, "there is no great industry to be seen, nor is there a good market.'' Worse, its wells "measure ten fathoms in depth'' (TD3: 37-38). And yet the governor of the town is presented as generous enough to send the narrator-traveller a sheep, a large bowl of rice, several dishes of prepared food, and two large bowls of milk. He is said to be an "excellent man''. Both the contrasting images of the unusually generous governor, and the intense misery of the town convey the "shot/reverse-shot'' picture of a remote, primitive, ruined though humble land. Many a European reader might be struck by the apparent disjunction between the town's misery and its ruler's opulence.

In this example, the discursive frame of the picturesque is embedded in an anti-aesthetic of exotic difference. For it is this frame which differentiates and classifies both Borzari and its ruler on the one hand, and the misery and bountiful existence of the town and its ruler on the other. This may surely be regarded, following Duncan (1999:156) as "a double erasure and inscription''. First, the town is literally erased (as a negative presence), and replaced with the narrator's symbolization of the negative presence of the town. Second, the governor is, by implication, aesthetically privileged over *his* town's unpleasant, unappealing presence. This is the typical discourse of exoticism: the Sudan, or much of it, lives in Nature (without technology); and yet some chunks of the Sudan, for example its rulers, over-reach themselves in generous measure. Perhaps this is how, Barth seems to suggest to the reader, savage life really is: it defies rational understanding. It is

denied the "shock of the familiar", hence its contradictory appeal as aesthetic delight and a deficit aesthetic, but an aesthetic nonetheless. This is one reason why Barth encodes the Sudan as a *dystopian* region, an Other whose other is the European Self.

5.3 The Exotic Bodyscape

Barth's exoticism is most evident in his representation of the native body; for his disciplining and voyeuristic gaze circulates within a semiotic of exoticism in which the native body is the bodyscape, a site of racial difference, and a source of anxiety. The native body is used to codify and fix difference. But it is also an extension of the landscape; and like the landscape, it is inscribed, written over, within an aesthetic ontology of grace and symmetry on the one hand, and of ugliness and unpleasantness on the other. Spurr (1996:22) has suggested that Western writers have historically represented "the body [as] that which is most proper to the primitive, the sign by which the primitive is represented. The body, rather than speech, law or history is the essential defining characteristic of primitive peoples".[8]

The body is without doubt the *semiosis* by which *Travels and Discoveries* defines, catalogues, classifies, and encodes the native-Other. The body, in other words, is what the primitive lives *within*. The narrator not only pays great attention to the sight of naked boys, but also to the physiognomy of the native subject, which is described variously as tall, well made and well-built, handsome, ugly, a horrible sight (TD1: 550; TD2: 418; TD3: 515). For Barth, the aesthetic significance of the body is that it is a racial body, which is defined within the *visible* economy of race

and colour. For example, while gazing at a group of half-naked boys, the narrator notes the boys' "tall, well-formed figures and their light color -- the finest proof that this little clan does not intermarry with the black race" (TD1: 265). This visual economy of race and colour valorizes very highly "very regular and agreeable features'', and "fine, lively black eyes, and an olive complexion only a few shades darker than that of the Italian peasant''. It also sees charm in the "light complexion'' (TD1: 330-31), large benevolent eyes, well-marked features, and slender frame. These, says the narrator, are also indicators of a physiognomy which bespeaks of its possessor's "notable birth'' (TD1: 418).

The reader can thus see that the protagonist is strongly attracted to handsomeness as a universal aesthetic quality, and to handsome individuals, as found in the portrayal/display of Kungu, a young Tawarek lad. One morning Kungu comes to bid the narrator farewell, having previously become good friends. He is romantically described as intelligent and chivalrous, with "long black hair... large expressive eyes and [a] melancholy turn of mind, *I liked him much*'' (TD3: 425 my italics). Moments later, Kungu takes leave of his interlocutor by "swinging himself upon his horse by means of his spear [and riding] off with a martial air'' (426). The same romantic inscription is deployed by the narrator in his description of a young Sudanese, who is said to be "a fine, and slender young man, with a very pleasant expression of countenance'':

> he was quite naked, but loaded with coquettish ornaments. Round his neck he wore a double string of red beads, a little lower again a set of two strings of iron beads; on his shoulder he wore four broad iron rings; on his elbow two other narrow iron rings... very neatly worked like beads; on his wrist six narrow and one broad iron ring... and above them an ivory ring... The

> right arm was not so richly endowed with ornaments... (TD2: 215).

This is the classic discourse of the exotic body. There is, on the one hand, an intense awareness of the *physicality* of the lad's presence, and on the other a hypnotic effect but which is interrupted by the qualifying clause at the end of the passage. The lad is, in other words, *fascinating*, as conveyed by the almost surreal description. The parts and surfaces of the lad's body are highlighted, that is, the parts and surfaces which depict the body as a sign of non-Europeanness, its essential difference *from* the civilized. Barth the narrator-writer contains the threat and terror of the exotic black body by acknowledging its essential difference by, for instance, turning Kungu into a speechless, aestheticized body, and by disqualifying or disapproving it with the qualifying clause "the right arm was not so richly endowed with ornaments, having only..''

Thus the gazed body is disciplined: its surface is highlighted as difference. As Low (1990:108) suggests, the "appeal to surfaces is strategic to a discourse of racism'', for the racial fetish of skin colour must be "spread on'' the black body. This descriptive "fetish" is deployed against a very dark-complexioned lad, Hammadi, who is displayed as "a stout figure, with broad coarse features, strongly marked with the small-pox, and of a very dark complexion, his descent from a female slave being his chief disadvantage'' (TD3: 467; my italics). Or consider the description of the chief of the Arab Welad Sliman, who is said to be clad in a "picturesque attire'', and "exhibit[ing] an interesting and animated specimen of horsemanship'', and presenting a "remarkable contrast to the unwieldy movements of the clumsy and sluggish figures of the negroes'' (TD2: 424; my italics). Another

example is the supposedly objective description of Aliyu, the Sultan of Sokoto. He is inscribed in a profusion of active constructions, and of a creative mixture of finite and concrete vocabulary:

> I obtained a distinct view of this chief... I found him a stout, middle-sized man, with a round fat face, *exhibiting evidently* rather the features of his mother, a Hausa slave, than those of his father Mohammed Bello, a free and noble Pullo, but full of cheerfulness and good humor (*TD3: 107*; my italics).

In all those displays, the black body is metonymically associated with an anti-aesthetic, namely the black racial type, as conveyed by a physiognomic specimen of "stout-figure" trope. Note that the narrator focuses only on a specific *part* or *surface* of the body -- the face. It is the corporeal imagery of the black face (round, fat, small-poxed) which unproblematically *fixes* the racial tag on the black body itself. For the black face is wild (anti-art), and suggests a metaphorical association of face and character, and in the case of the alleged sluggish and clumsy movements of the negroes, of muscle and soul. For example, physiognomy is, for Barth, the key to character. Blacks are said to have "the cheerful and playful character" (*TD1: 279*) and therefore unwarlike and cowardly; while the Berbers, whom the narrator considers as almost "white" are sober and grave, brave and noble (*TD1: 279,281,287,289,320*). For Barth, then, the body, as Shortland (1990:28) would argue, speaks, and speaks of a form *signifying content*. The *form* is the desirable racial aesthetic or the undesirable racial anti-aesthetic, as the case may be; and the *content* "difference", namely character (valor, cowardice, industry, indolence, etc). This is why *Travels and Discoveries* repeatedly deploys the nouns (which sometimes function as adjectives) "countenance" and "expression". And it

is largely from the countenance or expression of the subject that the text encodes its racial difference and social character such as loyalty, treachery, good cheer, etc.

In the case of the description of Sultan Aliyu, note the non-finite clause, "exhibiting evidently", which, it may be argued, is an oxymoron because to *exhibit* is to display, that is, according to Hall (1997:259), to mark, assign and classify [to deploy] symbolic power [and thus] ritualized expulsion". To exhibit, according to Lidchi (1997:153ff) is to display within a museum of the exotic, to, in effect, create representations of the other (as an artifact). Yet the expression "exhibiting evidently" is a deceptively referentializing clause, which seeks to signal its verisimilitude. But this is an illusion, given the realization that Aliyu has, in being fetishized into a body-part, and made to be encountered as a "round, fat face", turned into an aestheticized mirror-metaphor. This is what is seen and gestured towards, rather than the real, blood and flesh Aliyu. It may thus be justified to regard Barth as a racist, and a racial aestheticist. For he sees only the "*severed parts* of the black body", to borrow a phrase from Low (1990:107). He sees only a *black*, coloured and *stained* body, a *black* body, rather than a whole human being.

In a revealing passage, the narrator says he turns down an offer of a black trooper as escort chiefly because if "Phrenologists [those who determine people's characters and abilities by measuring their skulls] had taken his features as the general type of the Negro race, they would have felt themselves authorized in assigning to them a more intimate connection with monkeys than with men". The narrator qualifies this with the expression: "his cheerless but conceited disposition

was in perfect harmony with his exterior'' (TD2: 426), that is, black skin. Cheerless but self-conceited disposition!

Homi Bhabha cannot be more right when he writes that the "Black skin splits under the racist gaze, displaced into signs of bestiality, genitalia, grotesquerie'' (1994:92). All this is in contrast to Barth's own body, which is never mentioned, and which, by implication, is the "undifferentiated *whole* white body'', what Bhabha calls "the phobic myth'' (92). This may explain why Barth hates racial intermarriage, as when he condemns the Berber clan of Amoshagh for allowing themselves to "become degraded by inter-mixture with the black natives" and the Kel-Owi, for being specimens of Berber and Sudan [black] blood''. In one instance, Barth regrets the passing of the racially pure Kel-Owi: "the poor Kel-Owi... have degenerated from their original vigor and warlike spirit by their intermixture with the black population'' (TD1: 202, 212, 339). The same is said of the mixed-race Buzaye, who are said to be, on this account, debased, "having lost almost entirely the noble carriage'' of the pure, non-Negroid Berber blood (TD1: 281). In general, then, half-castes are aesthetically and socially inferior, that is "devoid of the noble and manly appearance'' of the pure specimen (248; 249). A good illustration of this point is the passage where the Fulbe, said to be the charming, ruling race, have become "spoiled by the influence of the softer manners of the subjugated tribe [the Hausa]'' (TD3: 83)

Thus the pure blood, race, or specimen is the aesthetic *par excellence*, as seen in the case of the supposedly racially pure Berber clan of the Ikazkezan, who are encoded as having "beautiful manly figure and fine complexion'' (TD1: 283).

But this is not the case with the archetypal pure Negro (or black) who is displayed as muscular, with a flat nose (dilated nostrils) thick lips, red eyes, frizzy hair, and of deep dirty black colour.[9]

In other instances, Barth displays dark-complexioned individuals as desirably muscular yet "rather ugly" (TD1: 144), of less handsome expression of countenance" (269). The Fulbes are said to have "really Circassian [Caucasian] features [handsome] until they reach the age of about twenty years, when they gradually assume an apish expressions of countenance, which entirely spoils the really Circassian features" (TD2: 157). One day, Barth had two visitors: one, the reader is informed, "was a man of apparently negro origin... nothing very remarkable about him", the other was "one of the finest men I have seen in [Bornu], and more like a European than a native of negroland, tall and broad shouldered, and remarkably amiable and benevolent" (TD2: 152,505). Even in instances where the black body or form is admired, or found appealing, it is treated as a spectacle, and invested with what Mercer (1988:145) would call "isolation-effect", a device by which the black body is made the sole object of discourse. Yet this is not always the case, because in situations where a comparative-chiasmic classificatory technique is deployed against the black body, it is explicitly compared with the positive end of the aesthetic system of values. Thus the discursive objectification of the black body constantly requires a chiasmic trope, as illustrated by the textual requirement of displaying the black body paratactically, that is, side by side with its positive other. For example, when Barth encounters the non-black body, it is aestheticized as a fair, improved specimen, that is, a *character* approximating "very closely to the

European standard'' (TD1: 301). Finally, all the passages under analysis have revealed how Barth has *naturalized* the rhetorical fiction of an unbridgeable racial difference between light-skinned and dark-skinned peoples.

It is aesthetic ontology which has textually provided Barth with a semiosis by which to map the lines of determination, the demarcations and distinctions between the biological and the cultural, the white and the black, body, the natural and the cultural, all in the effort to display and reveal the body, the exotic body, the totemic body-object, for *his* semiotic consumption, or to articulate what Low would call the "atavistic trope of blackness'' (1990:108). This substitution of a part (colour, face) for the whole (a person for an ethnic group) is, argues Hall, the *effect* of "representational practice'' (1997:266), which is designed to fix difference, and "thus secure it forever. It is an attempt to halt the inevitable 'slide' of meaning, to secure discursive or ideological closure'' (245).

But the body is also a source of anxiety because it cannot be fixed once and for all because its "meaning'' slides and spills. The body is also a seductive danger. Nowhere is this the case for Barth than the female body, which is the special object of his gazing. Sometimes, however, it is the hero who is displayed by the textual system as being the object of the female gaze. *Travels and Discoveries* is rich with almost erotic descriptions of women. Even the ugly women are seductively ugly. Nevertheless, Barth encodes his presence within the woman's body-field as a heroic male, the strong white man. He has, as he says, to resist the lure of the savage-woman-body, as happens in Agadez when a group of women demands his attention. These scenes may be called, following Pratt, as "seraglio scenes''. These convey

Barth's fear of, and desire for, the beautiful-ugly wildlife-woman (See TD1: 200,209). It is in such moments that Barth's aesthetic threatens to breakdown, to flee, while at the same time re-asserting itself. For example, Barth repeatedly laments his lack of a female companion, and says that that is one disadvantage the foreign traveller or explorer will face unless he brings along his own wife (TD1: 534,588-9; TD2: 37).

And despite his racist attitude to the black body, Barth finds many a black woman beautiful. He has a special instinct for the Hausa woman, whom he repeatedly favours compared to the supposedly ugly Kanuri woman, who looks, with her dilated nostrils, both very apish and coquettish:

> It is remarkable what a difference there is between the character of the ba-Haushe and the Kanuri -- the former lively, spirited, and cheerful, the latter melancholic, dejected and brutal; the same *difference is visible in their Physiognomies* -- the former having in general very pleasant and *regular features* and more *graceful forms,* while the Kanuri, with his broad face, his wide nostrils, his large bones, makes a far less *agreeable impression,* especially the women, who are very plain, and certainly among *the ugliest* in all Negroland, not withstanding their coquetry, in which they do not yield at all to the Hausa women (TD1:536; my italics).[10]

Here is a discourse of difference concluding with a semiosis of female body-beautiful. In that description, both the Hausa and the Kanuri countries have been gendered or feminized, and displayed, via the governing adjectives, within the visually accessible seductive/anti-seductive binary field. Once again, it is the (female) body which has functioned as the master metaphor-mirror for the landscape and its normative presence. In that passage, there are also unstated connection between sex and ethnicity, the sensual and the cultural, the seductive and the lexical. The seductive and the lexical because the Hausa-body is so aesthetically

and romantically significant that it has yielded a more "succulent'' and "delicious'' scripting of its presence. Now this implies that the pronoun "her'' (which is embedded in the proper names Hausa-woman/Kanuri-woman) designates the Hausa ethnicity and the Hausa woman on the one hand, and Kanuri ethnicity and Kanuri woman on the other. The archetypal difference or binarism of seductive Hausa and ugly Kanuri has disappeared under the great metaphor of the body. Here, Barth's attempt to demarcate the two spaces by a metaphorical mapping has failed largely because each group of women -- the ugly and the beautiful -- has only been confirmed as, or restricted to, a body part. Both are rather only *surfaces,* one pleasant, the other not; one framed within the classical conventions of Romantic painting, the other within the regressive margins of a degraded sublime.

The latter technique of representation is also evident in the scene where the narrator encounters a group of women who want to obtain a small present from him. He says that he left them "without the least acknowledgement'' because he did "not observe one distinguished in any manner by her beauty or becoming manners'' (TD3: 410). Barth refuses to give them the gift of his Phallus because they are not seductive. There is no exchange between the two groups because there is no desire, and so no legible body to effect the *seraglio* act, that is, the non-sexual sexual, the allegorization of the sexual act into a spectacle, or, as the Freudians might say, a textual sublimation. The sublimation consists in converting sexual feelings into "magisterial observation''. For instance, while in Agadez, Barth is introduced, by his informant, to what the former calls the "mistress of the house'': she has "a fine figure'', and a "fair complexion'', and wears "a great quantity of silver ornaments'',

and "dressed in a gown of colored cotton and silk" (TD1: 351). She is the archetypal aesthetic woman. Clearly, the narrator has consumed the mistress not sexually but allegorically, that is, has mapped her by and through her own body.

Barth's allegorization of the female means that he is constantly dogged by sexual anxiety, or indeed torn between anxiety and sentiment, the lure of the savage and the seductive danger of the female body, attraction and interdiction, sheer necessity and excitement. For example, in an encounter with two "pretty and well formed" women, who are graced "with fine black hair hanging down in plaits and tresses, lively eyes, and very fair completion," the protagonist comes very close to losing his will and control because the girls' "demeanor was very free "(TD1: 353). Suddenly, he reminds himself of the need to exercise the caution necessary for a stranger passing through a foreign land. In the face of temptation, the protagonist would rather recommend that the traveller take his wife with him. Or else, he says, he should "maintain the greatest austerity of manners with regard to the other sex" (353). Here the narrator has produced erotic images and passages without appearing to provoke arousal either on his part or on that of the reader. This is what obtains in many scenes of erotic encounter between the hero and local women.

Thus the erotic-aesthetic presence of the beautiful native woman sets in circulation a companion semiotic of seduction-desire, but which is contained by the free play of metaphor. The reader is presented with nearly erotic scenes, such as of women with bare breasts, and of a newly-married lady, a fine figure, with "quite an attractive appearance" (TD3: 495); of ladies who form a great and interesting sight... of rather full proportions [and] plainly dressed" (410). The most famous

scene is the one involving a *seraglio* encounter with a Bagirmi damsel, seductively called by the narrator "a buxom young maiden''. She is described in the most seductive and erotic of prose: graceful, beautiful, alluring, and coquettish, with eyes dark, lovely and beautiful. She asks the protagonist, the voyeuristic eye/I to "look into'' her eyes. He approaches her, he says, "very gravely''. He inspects her "sound and beautiful eyes''. For some few tense moments, seer and seen seem frozen, as if caught in each other's gravitational field. Then suddenly, the seer is released from the spell of the graceful, and he utters, while his heart is pounding furiously, the words "beautiful eyes, beautiful eyes'', which she repeats after him in a "coquettish and flippant manner'' (TD2: 521). As Foucault would say, Barth has thoroughly saturated the female body with sexuality, or at least with a sexualized aesthetic phenomenology. And it is this phenomenology which structures his metaphorical-imaginative-rhetorical communion/communication with the exotic-sensual body.

This precisely is what enables the hero to curb his phallic exuberance, and thus reproduce the heroic male fantasy of the strong white male who has displaced the woman-body as the object of *his* desire. Yet such a displacement, besides being an illusion, is narcissistic, the "serious", not playful, romance of the strong white man. Here lies the truth of Eagleton's remark that "Beauty is necessary for power but does not contain it'' (1990:59). By such metaphorical manoeuvre, Barth attempts to construct a "re-productive'' sign which, in the last analysis, exists within, as Orr would argue, the "negative terms of a structuring opposition with the feminine'' (1994:155). However, the terms of the opposition are *negative* precisely because the exotic body is assessed, mapped and encoded within the economy of an

aesthetic judgment which constructs the body as an object of curiosity, of the *disciplinary* gaze, bound and circumscribed by the rhetoric of white-male-bourgeois discovery. In this rhetoric the body, the exotic-racial body, is, or is read as, a text: it is inscribed, and inscribed upon the text, so as to make it lisible, scriptable, legible all at once.

But this is precisely why the rhetoric or the aesthetic functions sorely to erase the body metaphorically and metonymically by inscribing its symbolic death. However, as Derrida would say, "death by writing inaugurates life." This is not to suggest that Barth's text has given life to the savage body. On the contrary, the body in Barth's text figures as a superscription, as the "docile" body produced by Barth's aesthetic colonization of the native body. It is by such techniques of *reinvention* that Barth erases the real body and replaces it with a palimpsest, and thus, at the same time, asserts his cognitive power over the real. As Shortland (1990:45) suggests, such erasing of the real is the hallmark of colonial narratives:

> The colonizer of the body surface lays down the rules, formulates the law of reading, and sets into play a pretence autonomy of signifiers. Text and image put into circulation body, face, writing, but only the last possesses any freedom of development.

Shortland's postulation sustains the argument, central to this study, that Barth's discourse of the native landscape and body is a *writing*, the production of *substitute* bodies and landscapes, of bodies and landscapes without a content, or rather *forms* whose absence and emptiness are precisely what make their *articulation* possible. This is not to suggest, however, that the substitute body is a purely ethereal object. Barth's phenomenology would not allow the native to get away so easily. For the body of the native must, within the industrial aesthetics

which Barth represents, be a sign of other material signs, namely labour power, antique, mark of innocence or degradation, scientific evidence of racial difference or inferiority, of suffering (humanitarian object), and of desire (erotic spectacle). All these inscriptions/valuations of the exotic body can be found on virtually every page of *Travels and Discoveries*.

5.4 The Metaphysics of Self-Reference

In *Travels and Discoveries* the one referent that refuses to be, and would deny that it is, symbolic is Barth himself. Barth's other self in textual form is the narrator of his writing, namely the fictional Barth. Yet the fictional Barth, the narrator of the text, the one trusted and followed by the historians and ethnologists, risks the "danger" of representation, the very stratagem of mortality or death which he has constructed for his symbolic referents. If representation implies semiotic death, then the narrator, too, stands the risk of falling into its embrace. There is, therefore, a gnawing aporia at the centre of the writer's representation, or symbolization, of the Sudan. For to inscribe the Sudan and its bodily, spiritual and phonic presence, Barth has inevitably to inscribe himself as the narrator of this act of inscription itself. But this carries with it the danger of the loss of immediacy, presence or truth in the form of, as Mitchel (1995:21) would say, "a gap [*aporia*] between intention and realization, original and copy".

It therefore follows that Barth the writer, the real author, must solve the problem or *aporia*, of representation, otherwise he risks the danger of his truth or referentializations being treated as a mere *trace*. For while his writing is designed, by its situation, to signify the Sudan's unreality and oddity, or what Derrida calls "the most formidable difference" (1976:56), the practical and logical consequence

of this writing is to turn the Sudan and its contents into an artifact, a language, a sign, a text and therefore a mere inscription.

Hence Barth the writer must attempt to make his fictional-narrating self *distinct* from, that is, not a fiction or even a mere narrator, but a formidable immediacy, a material-objective presence, and a veritable truth, an *original* self, not a semiotic copy. And this despite his demarcation of the Sudan as an inscription, for, paradoxically, it is Barth's construction of this difference which "makes the opposition of presence and absence possible" (Derrida 1976:143). Barth the narrator must thus remain not a representation, a symbolic referent, or an imagined space, but a full presence. While the native is a fiction, Barth is a fact, even though Barth the writer would still intend his "fictional native" to be taken as a true representation, the original, not a (his) copy. As Derrida says, without "the possibility of difference [i.e. between original and copy, truth and falsehood], the desire of presence as such [truth, the original] would not find its breathing-space" (1976:143).

This "breathing-space" is what this study proposes to designate by the phrase "metaphysics of self-reference". The term is intended to convey the idea that Barth himself attempts to escape from the very space or technique of representation within which he has presented, indicated, defined and identified the Sudan as a whole. It is a metaphysics because Barth the writer has attempted, through writing, to give himself and the reader, an interpretant, Barth the narrator, but one who is shielded from, to borrow a phrase from Derrida, "the simplicity of intuitive evidence" (representation). The point being stressed is this: Barth (both writer and

narrator) must constantly map his presence as a *positivity*, and projected unceasingly against his Other, the negative-fictional presence (absence) which is the native form, namely landscape, body, and speech. For as a self-identity, Barth is the structure of the self-identity of the signified, and as such "conceals itself unceasingly and is always on the move" (Derrida 1976:49). This "move" consists in representing the object of discovery within a semantico-ideological structure which is also a mapping of difference, the erecting and charting of boundaries, and the marking of the signs of the zones of the "here" and the "there", the familiar/alien couplet. *This is why the Sudan, as body and as speech, must evaporate if Barth is to become solid, to appear.*

Time and again, Barth is encoded by the text, that is Barth the writing subject inscribing the textuality of his narrator's encoding of himself, as *experiencing* his European, rationalist, and scientific superiority, a virtual fact of nature. Barth's text or narrative is studded with the enormous details of this attitude. It virtually forms the plot of the narrative, as explored in chapter six below. Barth is, on this account, the discoverer, seer, Promethean internationalist, heir to Enlightenment-Romanticism, philanthropist, abolitionist, scientist, indefatigable traveller, law-giver, ego, even the episteme itself. He is inventive, patient, calculating, thoughtful, Tarzan-like, imperial, gladorial, a Plato in his garden, *overman* (the Superman), conquering (distances, time locates and other exotic objects), fastidious European, in short as he says of himself, "*the inspirer of fresh energy*" (TD3: 488; my italics). The reader can see him dispensing badly needed medicine to the sick natives, and taking special delight in framing the admiration,

curiosity, astonishment or wonder of the indigenous people towards his white body, clothes, articles, music box, telescope, chronometer, gun and journal, even the boat to which he alludes in the preface, which he and Richardson and Overweg took up to the Chad.

This self-inscription of Barth's comes in the form of the discourse of parataxis, the placing of difference or things as in a table. It is a form of chiastic or chiasmic consciousness in which presence and absence, the negative and the positive, are presented simultaneously with the aim of underscoring the truth, immediacy and authenticity of one (Barth), and the falsehood (or unreality), inferiority or inauthenticity of the other (the Native). The technique is especially valuable to travel writers who have to encode difference by juxtaposing it. Barth uses it to great effect: he arranges the objects of nature and of culture side by side within a definite spatial and temporal configuration, while also mapping and fixing the points of his interpretation/investigation of these objects. There is hardly a page of Barth's text without this discourse and verbal mapping of difference. It has been described variously as binary opposition, binarism, Manichean allegory, chiasmus, violent hierarchy and absolutism[11]. In Barth's text, it is composed of the binarism of Barth as Self and the indigenous subject as Other. Below are representative passages from the three volumes of the narrative.

> *A1* Having been thus freshly imbued with the restless impulse of European civilization, and strengthened with the assurance that highly respected persons at such a distance [England] took a deep interest in the results of our proceeding, I resolved not to linger a moment longer in this place, but rather to forego the company of my amiable friend, particularly as I knew he was going to Muniyo, and therefore, after a few days' march, would at all events separate from me. And I did well; for my friend did not reach Kukawa before the middle of May, that is,

six weeks after me. Such are the Arabs, and woe to him who relies upon them! (TD1: 541-42).[12]

A2 Going slowly on through the well-cultivated country, we reached a small water-course. Being anxious to know what direction the torrent had its discharge, and unable to make it out from my own observation, I took the liberty of asking my companion [Gatroni]; but the self-conceited courtier, though born a slave, thought himself insulted by such a question, and by the presumption that he ever paid attention to such trivial things as the direction of a water-course or the name of a village! (TD1: 526).

A3 I will only mention that Boro Serki-n-turawa, sword in hand, led us on with great energy. He called me to keep close to him...only our faithful Musa and the amiable young Sliman adhered to us... although the latter trembled with fear, and was as pale as death...What frightened the latter most were the bayonets on our guns, and they saw that, after having received our fire, they would not yet have done with us, but would still have a weapon to encounter at least as formidable as their own spears (TD1: 254).

A4 I then delivered my little presents, consisting of an English razor and a clasp-knife, a large mirror of German silver, a parcel of English darning-needles, half a pound of cloves, and a piece of scented soap. Having looked at these things with satisfaction, he asked me if I had anything marvellous with me; and I consented to return to my quarters and fetch my musical box with the performance of which the ghaladima was highly pleased, but greatly desired to see some other curious things, such as pocket pistols... (TD1: 556).

B1 He was not a very scrupulous man, as I soon convinced myself... and, as soon as he had introduced himself, began begging for poison. We of course cut his demand short. He then sat quietly down with his companions, and took great delight in the performances of my musical box, which I really found, together with the watch, the most useful instrument for demonstrating to the [local] people the great superiority of European genius and handicraft...The rumor soon spread [about] the mysterious little box (TD2: 284-85; also 310-11).

B2 We had already retired to rest when the tempest burst upon us with a terrible fury, threatening to tear my weak little tent to pieces. Fortunately, the top-ropes were well fastened; and, planting myself against the quarter from whence the wind blew, I succeeded in keeping it upright. The rain came down in torrents, and, though the tent excluded it tolerably well from above, the water rushed in from below and wetted my

luggage... Sitting down upon my camp-stool, I quietly awaited the end of the storm, when I betook myself to the hut, where I found M'allem Katuri and Bu-S'ad comfortably stretched (TD2: 103).

B3 [S]eeing that I was a good natured sort of man who took interest in them [they] sent me a large pot of their intoxicating beverage... made of Guinea-corn which, I however, I could not *enjoy, as it was nothing* better than bad muddy bear. Instead of confusing brains with such a beverage, I sat down and wrote about two hundred words in their own languages (TD2: 108).

C1 I paid my compliments [to Sidi Alawate] with entire confidence... The pistol, however, with which I presented him, soon directed our conversation to the subject of the superiority of Europeans in manufacturing skill, and in the whole scale of human existence; and one of the first questions which my host put to me was, whether it was true... that the capital of the British empire contained twenty times 100,000 people (TD3: 309).

C2 [I took] with me a present for Awab...He was as thankful as these barbarians can be, but wished to see something marvellous, as characteristics of the industry of our country (TD3: 336).

C3 I had a very animated conversation with my friend Mohammed el Khottar over our [English] tea, and I promised him a considerable number of Arabic books in the event of his paying a visit to England... The following morning, when I was lying outside my tent, as was my custom, enjoying the fresh air, all my friends gathered round me, and I had to read to them passages from various European books, including the Greek text of the Evangelists. The German principally attracted the attention of these people, the full heavy words of the language appearing to them somewhat like their own idiom, and they became highly elevated when I recited to them from memory some verses of a favorite German poem (TD3: 490).

C4 ...our varied little caravan, consisting of a very lean black horse, covered with coarse wool-like hair, worth four dollars, or perhaps less; a mare, scarcely worth more in its present condition; a camel, my faithful Bu-Sefi, evidently the most respectable four-footed member of the troop, carrying a very awkward load, representing my whole travelling household, with writing-table and bedding-boards; a sumpter-ox, heavily laden; then the four human bipeds to match, viz., one half-barbarized European, one half-civilized Goberawi Tunisian mulatto, a young lean Tebu lad, and my stout, sturdy, and grave overseer from Tegelel (TD1: 487-88).

> C5 The headman of the village received us very inhospitably, refusing us quarters in such a peremptory manner, that it was by force I could procure an open yard where to pitch my tent. However, he soon changed his behavior entirely. It so happened that a thunder-storm, with the blackest clouds, which in the opinion of every one portended a heavy fall of rain, twice passed over our heads without bringing these famished people a single drop; whereupon all of them assured the inhospitable mayor that it was a divine punishment for his niggardly and unrighteous conduct toward me. Frightened, therefore, by such signals, he carried his hospitality so far as even to make me a present of a young heifer (*TD3*: 200).

In all the passages cited above, Barth is coupled with, and set against/apart from, the indigenous interlocutor. Indeed this is the narrator's Other and his Logos (i.e. that which is only spoken about). Barth is not only the speaker, but opens the discussion, sets its terms and 'concludes' it. There is Barth *here* and the Other *there*. And in this binary structure of Same/Other, here/there, high/low, literate/illiterate, civilized/primitive, the firm term is personalized by Barth, as he says: "freshly imbued with the restless impulse of European civilization". It is also the superior form: "the great superiority of European genius and handicraft". It is also the higher presence: "[they] took great delight in the performances of my musical box". This is why the first term belongs to the logos: "I sat down and *wrote* about two hundred words in their own languages"; "I had to *read* them passages from various European *books*". The passages are deliberately inscribed as a negation, a disruption, and a *threat* to the *content* of the first term. Hence the hierarchization of the opposition in terms of high and low. The second term, the domain of the Alawates, the Arab-natives, the Gatronis, and the Bu-Sa'ds, is the inferior form: "such are the Arabs and woe to him who relies upon them; "he was thankful as these barbarians can be". But it also marks a fall: "self-conceited courtier...born a slave". Finally, the whole

semantic edifice which is displayed to the reader by the narrator is a potentially violent hierarchy: "what frightened [them] most was the bayonet on our guns".

Notice, in passage *A2,* the implicit hierarchization of knowledge. Gatroni, the native guide, is placed, or is in fact *shown* to be self-consciously placing himself, outside the play of professional knowledge, the so-called exploration-discovery meaning-making called scientific knowledge. Note the exclamation mark which terminates the passage. It should be read as an explicative which confirms Gatroni's self-professed inferiority relative to the explorer. On the other side of the divide, of course, is the other of this Other, namely Barth himself, who can now quite appropriately claim the vacant space repudiated by Gatroni. Here the narrator-observer (of Gatroni) marshals the former's reaction so as to confirm his Promethean/European achievement. Gatroni is assigned the task of carrying Barth's emotional baggage, or rather cultural arrogance. One gets the same feeling for *A1,* where the lazy Arab cannot, by nature, "do well". In *A4, B1* and *C1* (perhaps even *C3,*), one can see the natives (this is the term preferred by the narrator) mesmerized by Barth's European articles. Correspondingly, the narrator can be heard speaking about the special pride he takes in seeing the natives marvel at his music box, or gun or compass. These things are the *signs,* the reader is told, of his/Europe's inventive genius. But the natives' fascination or delight (as the case may be) is also a form of fantasy for Europe. There is hardly a European travel text without the archetypal native marvelling or deeply desiring European articles or manufactures. In these scenes, Barth displays the *sign-thing* called Europe, not to the natives' (penetrating) inspection but for their wonder and amazement. By implication, then, they cannot

discover, for discovery is not a wonder (at things) but their active penetration or production.

In *B2* one encounters the workings of the dyadic trope of chiasmus: the ever inventive Barth rises up to the challenge of Nature, "red in tooth and claw". His frail little tent miraculously withstands the furious tempest and the beating rain. But we know that the tent is a European manufacture. This Barth is the anti-thesis of the lazy, indolent Native, who either surrenders to the forces of nature or lives in total ignorance of their secret. This is represented by M'allem Katuri and Bu-S'ad who are comfortably stretched, in total ignorance of their dangerous situation. In this passage, the narrator conveys his Promethean rising to the situation through his use of the simple past tense which organically links the natural world to his industriousness: "I *succeeded* in keeping it upright"; "I quietly *awaited*"; "I *found*". The narrator reserves for himself the grammatical form which sets him firmly in a temporal and spatial point. Bu-Sa'd and Katuri are largely absent from the picture of the great action, until the end when they are found snoring.

Passage *B3* is richly symbolic. The narrator would not confuse his brains with the natives' offering, but would rather turn the offer round, that is, decode, or as Schiffers has said of the historical Barth penetrate, (them and) their thoughts, language and history ("I was a good-natured sort of man who took interest in them"). True enough, this was the historical Barth's self-appointed mission, to lift the veil, as it were, off "the neglected races" of Africa who are, he adds, ignorant and simple-minded (TD1: xxxii). As passages *A1, B1 C1* and *C2* make clear, Barth sees himself not only as a member of superior race but as possessed of a superior

culture. He has, in addition, a heightened consciousness of his religious faith, for he constantly refers to himself as a/the Christian (TD1: 275,254; TD2: 60,76; TD3: 343, 311, 336, 344, 347, 356, 444). He is the White/Englishman writ large on the Sudanese Scene. He is, by implication, a giant surrounded by black servants or powerful chief men who easily fall for his European goods (gifts). He is individuated, they are not: the blacks are everywhere natives, pagans, "Mohammedans,'' servants or barbarians or all five.

Passage *C4* conveys, in a highly figurative language, the paratactic method in Barth's description of his self-presence. As Spivak (1999:198-243) would argue, Barth is *worlding* a supposedly uninscribed native-subjectivity. Spittler (1996:245) cites this passage in an effort to show how Barth actually travelled, that is, as the leader of the troop. Spittler is obsessed with emphasizing Barth's leadership abilities, his capacity for independent decision, and sound observational procedures. There is not a hint at Barth's unusual use of language or, as is clear to any one reading the passage with a modicum of creativity and curiosity, discourse of *chromatism,* a concern with the body, colour and race. This surely is strange in a discourse such as Spittler's that claims to eschew literary speculation for the reasoned, empirical discourse.

Notice, for example, that the narrator of the passage in question *includes* himself in the description: he is the "half-barbarized European'' of the passage. The narrator is alluding to his being forced by circumstances to dress in Sudanic clothes. Despite his "barbarizing'' situation, however, he is still the speaker: it is "they,'' the other-others of the passage, who are (his) "text'', and he the author, actor-speaker

and reader of his text. While the others remain the iconic "they," he attempts to *re*-present himself as the inscribing (impeccable) Self (before his Others). Notice, also, that the description is rendered in a *negative* heuristic modelling, *except* of Bu-Sefi, the narrator's beloved camel. Animal imagery is used to convey the absurdity and *bathos* involved in the exploration of savage, dystopian lands. Note the figuration around the lean *black* horse with *coarse wool-like hair*, and the fact that he/it is devalued as a worthless commodity, or exchange-value. The image has powerful symbolic association with the archetypal Negro.[13]

Read in this way, Barth's inscriptions reveal them as a technique of othering in which as temporal and historical-specific observation is rendered as timeless and indexical. In all the passages quoted above, indeed in his narrative as whole, Barth sets the Other in the *distant* past tense, and *fixes* them in time and space. As described in chapter three, the act of writing has enabled Barth to inscribe his narrative ego speaking in the past tense, about a past country called the Sudan. The words "exotic," "savage", "barbarian" and "primitive" convey this sense of someone or something belonging to a time-bound or frozen past country (space) or period (tense). This *negative* portrayal is paratactic because it is the writer's language or codes or signs that effect the *reduction* of the Other to a *discourse* or *meaning* within Barth's deployment of language, codes, and signs. For example, the narrator's use of the past tense reveals, as Fabian (1983: 81-82) says of European travel writing in general, "a cognitive stance towards [his] object [and] presupposes the givenness of the object of [his writing] as something to be observed". This is also the case in Barth's frequent use of modal verbs when reporting on the Other.

By now, we can underscore Barth's narcissistic, ego-centred self-assertion: on page after page, the reader is *shown* or *displayed* or *unfurled* a "transcendental" subject of discovery and knowledge, the discoverer (TD2:60, 95,140), a gladorial subject, a Knight in shining armour (TD1:262; TD3:429, 431, 588, 594), a general inspecting his "army" (of guides and informants) [TD2:76,103,272; TD3:89, 591, 593, 386], agent of Order (TD2: 297, 299, 300) on an epic mission of regeneration, philanthropy and abolitionism (TD2: 439, 490-91), imbued with a restless (European) Spirit (TD1: 537,541,542,567-9). Barth sits, allegorically enough, on a lion-skin (TD3:23) as Sudanese emperors do, and, consciously re-enacts Plato's contemplative repose in the Garden (of knowledge), where, stretched "out in the shade of a group of majestic tamarind-trees", he is regaled by a native informant with cups, as it were, of Knowledge, or "some valuable information" (TD3:27; TD2:262,489). Yet it is the explorer-narrator, rather than the native informant, who appropriates this Knowledge, this information, by textualizing it, and thus claims for himself the status of an authoritative factual observer. Paradoxically, however, Barth would use the same (local) knowledge to "mark an Other outside the dialogue. He (she or it) is not spoken to but posited (predicated) as that which contrasts with the personness of the participants [Barth the narrator and writer] in the dialogue" (Fabian 1983:85). This last point can be seen in Barth's use of pronouns and verbs in the third person, such as *he, they*, etc.

For example, in passage *A1* the Arab *he* leads to a highly homogenized and collective *they*, denotated by the expression, *"such are the Arabs"*. This is further distilled into an iconic *he*, that is the Arab character-specimen (who is a male, a *he*

rather than a *she)* in whom no one should have any confidence (*"woe to him who relies upon them!'')*. So as noted above, the "he-body'' of the native characterizes, to borrow a phrase from Pratt (cited in Aschroft 1998:173), "anything 'he' is or does not as a particular historical event but as an instance of a pregiven custom or trait''. These are the sort of Barthian "global statements'' on which the positivistically-minded historians such as Ayandele, Spittler and Bivins, have fastened an unthinking universalism and empathy.

In *C5,* there is the implied opposition of the divine (the authorial narrator) and the profane (the mayor). The narrator is not welcome in the village; yet it is, apparently, his divine right to be there, as confirmed by the "divine punishment" inflicted on the village, or rather on the Mayor, who very quickly and accurately reads the signs of the intruder's "divinity", as it were. Here the mayor, and arguably his people, the "famished people", is displayed as afraid of nature, and without the least scientific knowledge of the natural world. The narrator is not interested in the proper instruction of the Mayor or his subjects, but in exploiting their relative ignorance of natural regularities. The Mayor's presentation of a heifer to the "divine visitor" signifies the image of a devotee making an offering to his "god", or some divinely awesome presence. In a similar passage (TD3: 553), the narrator's handwritten letter is used as a charm by the addressee, who upon receiving the letter *from the messenger who incidentally got it wet while crossing a stream,* and "not knowing what to do with this hieroglyphic at length returned it to the bearer, who had since used it as a charm''. In these passages, the jokes are at the expense of the local people, who are represented as lacking Enlightenment-type rationality. The

European reader is expected to find humour in the inferior manners and behaviour of the indigenous people. It is fair to say that Barth is, in these scenes and others like them, contrasting the natives with himself, the allegedly fully realized *modern* subjectivity or its embodiment, which, by contrast, is lacking, or is not obtained, in the Sudan. Note that Barth does not consider his prayer to, and belief in, a three-in-one God, a Trinity, as a form of superstition. Surely, the Muslims of the Sudan would have considered Barth's own religious belief utterly superstitious.

In the final analysis, however, Barth has necessarily to describe the indigenous land and its people in negative terms: as lazy, superstitious, and lacking in Baconian Reason, and ruled by the brute forces of Nature (TD1: 509,510,531-2, 538; TD2: 162, 317; TD3: 68,200, 202, 205-7, 454, 553), and without the heritage of the great Romantic ideal of personal-romantic love (TD2: 217,338-9; TD3: 404). Their land is said to be a chaos and barbarous and full of "all sorts of affliction, distress and sickness" (TD2: 381), not to speak of its horrible immersion in slavery and slave-raiding (TD2: 78, 228, 316ff).

5.5 The Logic of Representation

The contention, with which we began this chapter, that Barth organizes his representations within an aesthetic ontology, is intended to underline the essentially semiotic and literary aspect of his writing practice, and the thesis that the Sudan he has inscribed cannot be neatly and unproblematically *separated* from this aestheticizing, imaginative and rhetorical technique. In Barth's text, the object of the representation, far from being a living present, or a full presence, has evaporated, or is at best a sign, the sign of another sign, and so on *ad infinitum* Like the sign, the concrete other, the land, culture, voice and body scapes of the Sudan are the very

clear example, as Pfeiffer (1997:200) would say, of the "simultaneity of the absent and the fabricated" in *Travels and Discoveries*. This is because the text necessarily and inescapably figures its referents by means of an aestheticizing/metaphorizing breath, imposing on its referents a host of figurative transpositional fabrics of discourse. This, needless to say, leaves little or no room for an intrinsic, namely referential and intransitive, discourse of the Sudan as a material-historical reality in its own right. Surely, there is, on this view, no such thing as factual or irreducibly empirical discovery. This is because of many complicated reasons for which we lack space. For the moment, however, it is stressed that discovery in the context of Barth's writing amounts to is a semantic productiveness sustained, precariously, to borrow a phrase from Spurr (1996:6), by "ideology and representation", an aesthetic-imaginative manifold in which the Othering process of exploration writing is, and can be, read. The idea of discovery as it is understood in the Western tradition of exploration or travel writing is, in the last analysis, "bizarre, confused and ridiculous" to borrow a phrase from Hegel's condemnation of the African's alleged lack of rationality. For nothing really is discovered in itself, since it has been there for ages as part of the natural and social landscape of the indigenous people. What is *new* is the discourse of discovery that the explorer enacts, or more appropriately, constitutes in language and metaphor.

Insofar as Barth has set out consciously to write the negativity of the Other, insofar as the Sudan has largely figured in his writing as a *lack*, an *incompleteness*, insofar as the Other is an anti-aesthetic, or rather the aesthetic end of the anti-aesthetic scale of values, then they are resources for exploitation materially,

politically and graphically (semantically). This indeed casts light on why even the "civilizing mission" is, in the last instance, an aesthetic project, a desire on the part of the European *literati* such as the explorer to give the immeasurable and undefined others a civilizational, industrial, and historical *form*, a beautifying emergence from barbarism and indefiniteness. As Hegel wrote years ago, Europe should liberate Africa "by the free power of the spirit into a *beautiful form*" (Hegel 1956:141; my italics).

And like the snake/serpent which he encounters in the Garden of the Sudan (TD2:270), Barth's *Travels and Discoveries* is a *writing* in which the Sudan and her normativities are recounted in tones of violence, conquest and imperialism. Like the "full heavy words" of his writing-language in passage *C3*, and the glint of the bayonet on his gun, the weight of his text-writing representation is oppressive and heavy, and its weight, to borrow an image from Derrida (1976:107) is "felt in various places and various moments of the *narrative*".

If in Barth's author-narratorial text and consciousness the Sudan, her land, cultures, peoples, and voices, textually figure only as a silent, negated, and aestheticized opposition to the civilized, the normal, and the rational, then that is largely because Barth has sought, as a true heir to Baconian optimism and the Post-Enlightenment imaginary, to be the *narrator* for whom the Sudan is destined, by its temporal, racial, geographical, and normative location, to be the *plot-structure* of his phenomenological self-constitution. But then this very verbal behaviour of Barth's is not without its problems. For to deploy the plot-structure is to run into an aporia, the "non-passage" called narrativity.

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It is to the demonstration of how Barth's use of narrativity and the textual system has configured the Sudan into a plot-structure, and how the aporias, the deep and inescapable conflicts, associated with narrativity also impose disjunctive limits on Barth's own textual strategies, that we now turn in the next chapter.

NOTES

1.The explorer contains the threat, or lure, of the savage or the strange by recourse to metaphorical discourse. Barth, for example, "contains" the threat of Islam by assimilating it *to* himself, that is by adopting its metaphorical trappings, and by rendering it as a devious version of Christianity (the familiar). Contrary to Said (1978), this is not just an attempt by the Western explorer to impose familiar values on threatening realities, or to demarcate the "original" from the "repetitious", or even a way of "handling" the different, but rather a fundamental rhetorical procedure whereby the real is metaphorized. This is the significance of Barth's deployment of the image of the Sudan as a theatre, or a theatrical space.

2. If there is "performance" surely there is a judgmental impulse, the desire to demarcate into authentic and inauthentic, true and false, and so on. On this, see Clifford (1988:223-225).

3. Barth's "reading" of Nature includes his dream of transforming the Nature-Sudan in *industrial* and *aesthetic* terms. (The two are not necessarily opposed). On the one hand, he says that the Sudanese people live in nature, and on the other hand are condemned for failing to transform it into modern technology, hence his use of the word "industry" or "industrious" to describe Europeans such as himself who have tamed nature, and thus able to live apart from untamed Nature. Untamed nature here is the antithesis of permanent marks on the landscape such as bridges, railways, stone buildings, monuments, and so on, which are, for Barth, a sign or measure of civilization, and what Spurr calls "the ability to "mark the difference between nature

and its others, between present and past... presence and absence'' (1996:99). The implication is that the land, as Spurr says of many European explorers, "shall belong by natural right to that power which understands its value and is willing to turn it to account'' (1996:156).

4. According to Curtin (1964:9), the image of 'darkest Africa', either as an expression of geographical ignorance, or as one of cultural arrogance, was a nineteenth-century invention''. See also insightful analyses in Terdiman (1985a) and Duncan (1993:47-54).

5. It should be admitted, however, that every ontology (as a theoretical construct) implies an epistemology, a phenomenology, if you like. Barth's aesthetic ontology also implies an aesthetic phenomenology (circularly, an ontology of forms) which sets up for itself an *aesthetic* as a measure of its rigour and seriousness: an enjoyment of peculiarity, unusualness and newness. Yet it hates, to the same degree, the unfamiliar since it threatens to disrupt its *enjoyment* of the unusual-cum-familiar. It is the latter which must be kept in a frozen frame, and classified for curiosity.

6. Barth himself recognizes this for he quotes a poem (in pentameter) on the relation of *distance* and *enchantment:*

"Tis distance lends enchantment to the view'' (TD2: 71).

[I have not been able to identify the poet quoted above].

7. According to Eagleton (1990:16):

"The aesthetic... is simply the name given to that hybrid form of cognition which can classify the raw stuff of perception and historical practice, disclosing the inner structure of the concrete''.

On this definition, aesthetic contemplation, of the sort we see in Barth, is a form of reason, even its *idiom.* It is, thereafter, the case that Barth's sensualizing, so to

speak, of the landscape is not only a displacement of it but also its organic penetration, the apprehension of the landscape as both desire and a *locus amoenus* (the setting for exotic adventure).

8. Barth hides his body. Only twice in that massive narrative, is it directly mentioned, i.e. being stained with indigo to make his skin dark and on page TD2 150, when it is compared with the unusually and surprisingly white body of a Shuwa native.

9. Low (1990:108) and Dyer (1987) have contended that the discourses of sexuality, race, nationality and the body naturally intersect in the nineteenth century text, such as Barth's. According to Dyer in particular, it is the discourse of nature and racialist ideology which "invited these narratives; race is an idea in the discourse of biology, a way of grouping people according to perceptions of [skin colour and] bodily difference" (cited in Low 1990:108). For Hall (1997:244) it was the display of the racial body as difference, as visible for all to see, as the naturalization of racial difference, and as the representation of difference through the body that "much of this 'racialized knowledge' was produced and circulated".

10. Here is another passage in which he allegedly unsightly Kanuri women are compared to the charming and seductive Bagirmi women:

"The Bagirmi females in general are very well made, taller and less square than the ugly Bornu women, but with beautifully-proportioned limbs, while their features have a great deal of regularity and a pleasing expression... with their large, dark, beautiful eyes. The broad nostrils of the Bornu females, which are still more disfigured by the ugly coral on the left side of the nose, are entirely foreign to them"
(TD2: 486).

11. For the literature on this, see Fanon (1967), Derrida (1978) and JanMohammed (1985).

12. Barth has just received a letter and two Spanish dollars from Mr. Gagliuff, the British consul in Tripoli, in which he also received the assurances of Lord Palmerston, the Secretary of Foreign Affairs (Lord Palmerston would later become a Prime Minister). Barth quickly composes a reply in which he writes to the British establishment, and to his friend in Berlin, Mr. Richard Lepsius, and inform them about his steady progress in opening the Sudan to Europe's humanitarian and civilizing influence.

13. This is remarkably very close to Carl Linnaeus' classification of the African (black):
"African. Black, phlegmatic, relaxed. Hair black, frizzled; skin silky; nose flat, lips tumid; crafty, indolent, negligent. Anoints himself with grease. Governed by caprice'' (cited in Pratt 1992:32). One is tempted to conclude that *Travels and Discoveries* is a textual elaboration of Linnaeus' classification of the African.

CHAPTER SIX

THE PLAY OF NARRATIVITY

> Narrative typically is a recounting of things spatiotemporally distant: here's the present teller, there's the distant topic -- hence the sense of gap [aporia] -- M. Toolan (1988:2).

6.1 Narrativity and Narrativization

It is significant that Barth describes his journeys in the Sahara and the Sudan as full of "*events, partly of real, partly of fictitious importance*" (TD2: 234 my italics). In spite of this, however, he still subscribes to the referential and truth-conditional *value*, or dimension, of his narrative. But as Greg Myers (1990:102) suggests, any form of cognitive "discovery", that is of the sort encoded in *Travels and Discoveries,* is a "textual process... a way of telling the story". This means, in effect, that the deployment of the narrative form by Barth need not imply the adoption of any epistemological distance from truth-telling or assertive commitments on his part because the propositional content of *Travels and Discoveries,* which Barth takes seriously or as self-evident, is designed to deny and repress the existence of his text as a structure of narrativity, the meaning-making form in which plot, narrative voice, and story come together to create the very signified content transported by the text.

This should explain why in *Travels and Discoveries* the Sudan is not only a "setting", a metaphor, an icon, or a "sight/site", but also a plot-structure, that is, a product of narrativity. Now this is because the story of the Sudan is told *within* a representational structure complete with a central subject, a well-marked beginning,

a middle and an end, and an identifiable narrative voice. As the title of the text implies, there is a story of travel and observation organized around a central subject, and the text as a whole is this subject's story of the story of (his travels in) the Sudan. Yet the text is a *retrospective* account, written after the event had happened although this "retrospective'' account is presented within a recurrent yet configured structure, the plot. This is why the Sudan is presented as a *past* event that is nevertheless a *continuous* present. This is equally why the narrative takes a linear form, that is, the events (of the Sudan), which the narrator insists are of "fictitious and real importance'', must issue, in true Enlightenment discourse, in sequential order.

However, this order itself is expressed through, and is itself a consequence of, *action.* It is thus the union of *event* and *action* that gives *Travels and Discoveries* a plot-structure. For example: the hero leaves home. He begins his travel through unfamiliar lands (deserts and exotic lands). His travelling companions die, and he becomes a lone traveller. He journeys (the hero-hero) further into the Unknown, meeting setbacks and surmounting them. He presents himself at native courts and before powerful and not-so-powerful chiefs. He is led by guides and informed by locals (helpers). He witnesses ghastly scenes (slave-hunts and sights of fearful oppression). He is held captive (in Bagirmi and Timbuktu). He survives the ordeal and the machinations of enemies (villains). Gets a good fortune (the birth of Bakay's baby son which makes his host to agree to let him go home). Returns home, and is rewarded, that is "married'' to fame (as it were), and ascends the throne of knowledge. As Scholes and Kellog (1966:228) have argued, the mobile profiling of

the objects of experience in narrative form involves a form of plotting which takes the form of a "journey to a distant goal... voyage out, achievement, and return''. To this extent, *Travels and Discoveries* is composed of a series of what Todorov (1977:233) calls *transformations*, namely events being recognized, in Toolan's words, as "state or set of conditions, [something happening and] causing a change to that state'' (Toolan 1988:7). Thus the episodes of *Travels and Discoveries* are plot events in which Barth ranks or orders things, or happenings, or what may be called things that "can be summed up by a verb or a name of action'' (Rimmon-Kenan 1983:2), as in the following passage:

> The gloomy halls were buried in a mournful silence, interrupted only by the voice of a solitary man, seated on a dirty mat at the western wall of the tower, and reading diligently the torn leaves of a manuscript. Seeing that it was the Kadhi, we *went* up to him and *saluted* him most respectfully, but it was not in the most cheerful and amiable way that he *received* our compliments -- mine in particular -- continuing to read, and scarcely raising his eyes from the sheets before him (TD1: 357; my italics).

Note that the finite verbs (in italics) which mark progressivization, are, as Toolan (1988:35) says, an "exceptional vehicle for expression of plot events''. The non-finite verbs ("buried'', "interrupted'', "seated'', "continuing'' and "raising'') mark synchronicity, or what is normally called synchronic essentialism, the desire and pressure to view the objects of visual imagination panoptically, as in a promontory description. The passage also contains *deictic* elements which convey the spatiotemporal location of the narrator-speaker: "gloomy walls'', "western wall of the tower'', and so on. The speaker's narrativist manner of speaking is further conveyed by the retrospective comment on the event and the parenthetical phrase, *"mine in particular''*, which, paradoxically, implies a noun clause which indicates a

state of stasis that sits uneasily with the *syntagmatic* axis of the passage (which extends its syntactic range). This in general is one reason why there is not a strict chronological succession, but rather a multilinear, "retrospective'' chronology of, events in *Travels and Discoveries*. Linguistically, then, the process of discovery and of narrating the objects of writing inevitably translate into the continuous, never-ending plotting of the egotistical self-assertion of the central subject, the authorial narrator. Here narrativity functions not only as a meaning-making, or meaning-investing format, but also as a semiosis which frames, or constructs, real events within the signified contents of imaginative inflections, and the imaginative varnishing of constellationally significant events.

It is then to be expected that Barth would convey on every page the pleasure, excitement, hardship, and danger of his adventure within the landscape of difficulty and of desire. The narrative of this adventure blends, textually and narratively, into the story of the Sudan that the framed narrative constructs. And as Barth says above, this narrative construction of the Sudan includes not just real or factual events but factitious happenings. For example, there is hardly an episode in Barth's narrative without images of wild, decaying and exotic landscape, a "real jungle [and] a ferocious lion, who [does] not fail to levy his tribute on the various species of animal property'' (TD2: 310). Here and there, the narrator-hero meets "elephant dung on the ground'' and "the congregation of wild pigeons'' and a "storm gathering and threatening to burst upon us'', of "rank and wild vegetation'' (TD2: 289), and wild beasts on the prowl, noises in the dead of night, a lion's roar;' and in the morning, a woman's remains (TD2: 290). Even the stories told by the natives are

"so full of incidents of a wild restless life'' (TD2: 290); and the horses in a small corner of the Sudan "very wild and vicious'' (TD2: 351).

In the same vein, there is hardly a passage without images of trading parties, merchants on the march, luxuriant though neglected landscapes, decayed town walls, the highway robber, the slave trader, the faint sound of the savage drum, or the well-meaning but savage chief man. Another constant presence is the Sun which is at one "intensely hot, the heat... very great (TD2: 320), and "very powerful'' (TD3: 61) and at another breaking "though the clouds, spreading life over, and enhancing the cheerful aspect of, the landscape'' (TD3: 193). Darkness, or the dark, is also a constant negative presence: it is the great enemy of optical clarity and rational observation, for it prevents the adventurer-narrator-hero from the "scientific as in a material point of view [from being] able to lay down the road with correctness'' (TD3: 559). Finally, there are the ferocious ants of the Sudan, the so-called "ferocious insects'' (TD3: 27), who "not only destroyed every thing that [is] suspended on pegs from the walls, but while sitting one day for an hour or so on a clay bank in my room, I found, when I got up, a large hole in my [shirt], these, clever and industrious miners... and voraciously attacked my shirt, all in an hour's time'' (TD3: 83-4).

In a sense, *Travels and Discoveries* is a narrativization of these difficulties, that is a making of these "speaking themselves'', hence the character of the text as a narrative. For the text is the story of the narrator-hero's survival, that is, a report, a *retrospective* narrative of adventure: the hero is the hero because he has clearly distinguished or proved himself, for although the hero does not always have it his

own way, he faces these difficulties, surmounts them, hence the narrative itself, that is the proof that he has survived to tell or re-tell the story of his "conquest". As Appiah (1997:20) says in a different context, the "imperial travellers -- the explorers and naturalists -- announced the difficulties of their journeys in order to record their triumphs over them". To this extent, the narrator's, or Barth-author's seeming insistence on the factual/historical veracity of his account is a common fictional device, as Lang (1990:184) has noted, in the case of the genre of autobiography. It may, in fact, be argued that it is the narrator's presence in the alien environment that is responsible for the very adversities he records and his inscription of the overcoming of them. Textually, it is this which is crucial to his eventual realization of his "true" nature or destiny as an author-narrator.

The narration of difficulty and Promethean overcoming which *Travels and Discoveries* encodes is thus a syncategorematic necessity: it is central to the very paradigmatic identity of the exploration narrative, for it is a textual requirement if the traveller-explorer-hero is to present his exploration as a true crusade of discovery, and his labour as such as a labour of, and for, rational representation, or what Barth the narrator calls "my schemes of discovery," (TD2: 144). The narrativization of these difficulties is a textual necessity because the telling of those difficulties is an important part of the exploration enterprise itself. As Granqvist (1990: 61) writes, it is the explorer would always find it "necessary to communicate to a reader the excitement, the horror, and the wisdom that the trip entailed. The reader is to be a fellow-traveller, a participant". Thus the outcome is predictable because the narration of discovery is at one and the same time a self-portrait by the

author-narrator of adventure. As he says: "But a European [explorer] will achieve what the natives of the country themselves deem impossible "(TD3: 124).

This is precisely why narrativity itself must translate into narrativization because to plot a concatenation of events is to constitute a meaningful structure within the very signified elements that the text contains. And this is what happens in Barth's Narrative: any dynamic element in the text is, or becomes, part of the plot. This is why Barth really has no option but to "process'' his text's narrative subject-matter within the structure of beginning (revelation), middle (development) and end (resolution). Indeed the whole of the Sudan functions in the text as a plot-structure, for the Sudan, or its metaphorical translation, is no more than a series of stories (a syntagmatically dispersed series of events) within a *framed* master story,[1] with each series having "its own plot, its own little system of tension and resolution [contributing] its bit to the general system "(Scholes and Kellog 1966:239). Thus in *Travels and Discoveries* the Sudan is a composite narrative, with every episode, paragraph, sentence, event, action and chapter having its beginning, middle, and end.

In fact, exploration as such is a form of narrativity, that is, a process of ordering, re-ordering, ranking, recounting, patterning and re-shaping of narrative and plot events. Yet this re-shaping unfolds as a series of gaps, aporias and absences at both the level of story and text on the one hand and of narration on the other. This is conveyed by the concept of "story-within-story'', gaps in sequencing and of textual aporias.

For example, while narrating the anthropological "history" of Agadez, its customs and manners, the narrator suddenly pauses, and launches into a story of his narrow escape in the hands of a band of fanatical Muslim warriors, whom the narrator calls his "pursuers", while witnessing a traditional dance in which the dancers go about "stamping the ground violently with the left foot" (TD1: 333). The story is highly melodramatic, with the fellow accusing his "barbarous companions" of treachery for not coming to his rescue. Suddenly, the narrator jumps, as it were, into a discussion of the local dialects, Mungo Park, the ethnographic data of Agadez, and the nature of the information he had received from a Tawati in the name of Abdallahi. Suddenly again, the narrator says: "But to return to my dairy: the visits paid me by..." (TD1335). This goes on for a page and a half, until p.336 where the next diary entry for Wednesday, October 16th [1850] begins the next episode.

The significance of this is that the narrative is a series of *fractured* discourses mediated by gaps and spatialization, or what Porter (1991) and Duncan and Gregory (1999:3) have called plots of the play of "complex subject positions". Here narrativity reveals indecision, ambivalence, doubt, the spilling and spillage of intention, meaning and structure.

Also, although *Travels and Discoveries* is a chronologically sequential account or story, the diary entry or journal date is not a strict, linear account. There are large gaps in the ordering. For example, nothing is recorded for the period (days, months) between May 6th 1850 and June 13th 1850, although there is a reference to an event of May 8th (See TD1: 149-157). Again the events of the whole of 1855, the

last year of the narrator's travels, is rendered in barely a hundred pages, which, Kirk-Greene has remarked, is "vastly disproportionate to the ratio of the preceding years" (1962:53). The same thing can be said of the journal entry on TD3: 347. Here the narrator inadvertently reveals the artifice at work in his textual and narrative practice. Rather artificially, it is the journal entry for December 27th, 1853 which concludes the year. That is, there is no entry for December 31st. Also, the new year (1854) opens with chapter LXX (70) which is later on page 369 announced as the interrupted first half of chapter LXXI (71). The first half is devoted to a geographical and commercial narrative of the Niger Bend area, while the other half is fragmented into a series of journal entries beginning with February 16th, 1854, rather than January 1st.

The point is that there is no match, neither is it possible to achieve a match, between story time and text time in *Travels and Discoveries.* What obtains instead is what Toolan (1998:13) aptly calls the linear "verbal *representation* of temporality" (my italics). Two consequences follow from this: first, there is no "real world" in *Travels and Discoveries* precisely because the real world intervals which the text *apparently* conveys is an *artifice,* in a word, a *narrativist representation.*

Second, Barth's text is only a record of a *displaced* sequence, since the events and the writing of the events do not match, nor will they ever match. For example, as seen in the case of TDI: 156 and TD2: 347, Barth's text, or journal, or narrative, has remained, so to speak, behind while Barth is "on the move" and vice versa. As Clayton (1998) would say "truth and objectivity" have become decentred. Thus there can be no question, to borrow a phrase from Duncan and Gregory

(1999:3), of Barth's text capturing, as the historians such as Prothero (1958) and Usman (1982/85) would argue "any presumptive immediacy and transparency of the event''.[2] While on his way to Kukawa from Timbuktu, the narrator comes to Gando [Gwandu], and finds the town, he says, much worse than it was the year before. He surveys the recesses of the town, and makes this astonishing observation:

> On the whole there was nothing of interest to record, except the remarkable quantity of rain which fell during my stay and which was said to have fallen before my arrival, confirming the impression already previously received in my mind that Gando was one of those places most abundantly supplied with the watery element, and it was highly interesting for me to learn from the people on this occasion that, as a general rule, they reckon upon ninety-two rainy days annually (TD3: 554).

Here is a passage about "nothing'' discoursing about plenitude, sufficiency, excess, abundance and an overflow of signifieds. In this passage about "nothing'', there is, miraculously, a mind full of "received ideas'', of discourses about places, watery elements and other supposedly "extra-*nothing*'' substances! After the narrator's commanding, dominant clause *"there was nothing of interest to record''*, the patterning and re-ordering of Gando goes on for another eighteen pages, or approximately fifteen thousand words! It is thus clear that plot always reasserts itself, and that exploration is a play of narrativity, that is, always, to borrow a phrase from Enzensburger (quoted in Duncan and Gregory [1999:6]), "outrun by its refutation''. Thus Barth's narrative is a metaphorical configuration of "voids'', or rather a translation of absences into "a series of visible signs'' (Gilbert 1994:105.This is perhaps why Barthes (1977:124) regards the referential dimension of narrative as, referentially, *nothing*. That is, "what takes place'' is nothing and

"what happens'' is *language*, or what he calls "the unceasing celebration of its coming''.

Yet in *Travels and Discoveries* narrativity does not fail: it redoubles its efforts after each defeat essentially because narrativity is the narrativization of plot-structure itself, and therefore a form of writing. And as writing, it is a form of travelling which never begins, and never comes to an *end*. Nowhere is this the case than in the episodic structure of the presentation of narrative, which, paradoxically, also exists as a marker of (the presence) narrativity.

One strong marker of narrativity is the episodic structure. The latter is a narrative space in which the narrator displays his own narrative consciousness as a narrative agent, a hero who then proceeds to encode his own "concrete" manifestation as a narrativizing consciousness. As to be expected, this process of bringing together the real and the imaginary is essentially a narrativist process in which the objects of sight and writing are recounted in spatiotemporal dimension or rather their *distance* and *absence* turned into a comprehensive yet composite form---narrativity. This is the episodic structure, and it marks the textual, graphic, and narratorial form that *Travels and Discoveries* takes. Within his larger embedding structure, one can also see another structure: of the relationship between the teller and the hero, typical of the first-person narrative, or the form in which the author is also the narrator, hence our expression "the author-narrator". This structural relationship is in turn sustained by what may simply be called the "story''. And because the "story" (of exploration) cannot be a coherent whole for reasons explored in chapter four, it cannot but take the form of a serial fabrication, namely

"scenes'' or "episodes''. In fact *Travels and Discoveries* is, as a narrative, a series of episodes, or a temporal series, held together by narrativity, or what Barthes (1977: 87) has called "the horizontal concatenations of the narrative 'thread'".

This in fact is what makes *Travels and Discoveries* a collection of narrative frames, and not even a single comprehensive or integrated set of frames. As a narrative, the text is a series of, a disparate collection of, frames of plot-events and structures, inscriptions, re-framings, codings and encodings, emplotments and enframings. What "holds'' together these concatenations of genres, discourses, languages and frames and enframings is narrativity, the configuration of the frames themselves into the plot, or meaning-making structure of Beginning, Middle, and End. And since this is the case, then the author-narrator is himself a plot- structure, as will be discussed below.

But a plot-structure is a fictional structure. A good illustration is the manner Barth *reduces* himself to his own foot. For example he draws attention to his foot which he congratulates on "her" ability to enter "*new regions never [before] trodden by European foot*" (TD2: 345; my italics). Note, however, that at this point it is the foot's activity that is an overwhelming concern of the narrative. Metonymically, the foot is the episodic structure par excellence: It is the symbol of the great journey which in the narrative begins not in London, the source of the *mission*, as it happened in extra-textual real time but in Africa (Tripoli), and then proceeds through dystopian regions (chaotic worlds), and moving steadily in a southerly direction, that is, towards the quest objects, namely Kano, Kukawa, Timbuktu, the Benue, the Shari, the Niger, the Mandros Oros, Atlantika, Hambori,

which the narrator calls the "longed-for object of my journey" (TD1:389). As he said a little while before, "All my thoughts were bent on the South" (376). So it is the presence of narrativity which makes possible the reduction of the whole to the part, and vice versa. This is partly why the text is composed of "sights" or "scenes" or "settings." The journal form in which the episodes are organized into chronological, sequential and temporal series marked by the date (for example: *Monday, July 15th [1850]*) is a fitting illustration of the point. And this is one reason why the book is composed of linear chapters of varying lengths.

The episodes are, however, presented as temporally segmented diary entries. But these would make no overall sense unless they are integrated within the basic storyline. Yet the storyline itself is held together by narrativity, that is, the configuration of events, or what has been defined as the "syntagmatic dispersion of events across a temporal series" (White 1978:9). Yet again, the temporal series are themselves a sequence of sights and settings, namely stories of ruins, valleys, mountains, rivers, exotic bodies, savage customs, exotic languages, and sentimental and ideological rites of passage. Sometimes, the narrator even absents himself, or rather takes leave of his reader the more to be fully involved in the narrative scene. In such cases technical and anthropogeographic language dominates the description. The narrator becomes, in addition to being a foot, a sort of "cinematographic eye", or a moving camera, cataloguing the scene, configuring the events, registering sights and sites, scanning the landscape for traces or networks of traces of narratable episodes of difference and commercial resources.

The events in and of *Travels and Discoveries* unfold within a linear yet not always chronologically sequential episodic structure. To this extent, the text is a series of "stories" rather than one collective or all-encompassing Story. Typically, an episode begins with a dramatic situation, namely the defining or de-familiarizing moment, followed by human response to this situation. Then follows what narrativists call "development" or "explication", or "chronicling" of the set of conditions or actions within the dramatic situation. This may or may not advance the situation or action. The final stage, the resolution, is seldom reached in *Travels and Discoveries* because "discovery" cannot come to a close, or synchronic pathos, because it cannot admit of a resolution, and because Barth the writer and narrator works within the Manichean allegory of utopia/dystopia. That is, within an ideology of the civilizing mission oriented to a future rectification of the Sudan. In other words, the episodic form implies a narrative prose-discourse striving for *form* within a seeming formlessness, or representing a narrative movement from "fictionality" ("events...partly of fictitious importance" [TD2: 234]), and ultimately to an *anticipated* future state ("an immense field is here opened to European energy" [TD3: 369]).

Thus in *Travels and Discoveries,* the episodic form implies a *narrative style* in which the syntagmatic elaboration of events within a vertical axis (Barthes 1977:87) inevitably means *showing* and *displaying* (in narrativist consciousness) the Sudan as a past which must come to a close in the present. This, then, is the *secret* of the episodic form as a structure or "function" of narrativity: the recodation of the Sudan from the domain of "reality''' (noesis) to the domain of *knowing,* or what is

but the same thing, the direct recordation of the comprehensive description of the narratorial experience embodied, artificially enough, by Barth the real author and Barth the narratorial agent.

Below are a sample of the four different types of the episodic form in which the narrator is the subject and object of the action, the teller, and, again artificially enough, the retrospectively *cohering* agency of the narrative as a whole:

> *A)* Monday, July 15th. This was a *dies ater* [black day][3] for me. Overweg and I had determined to start early in the morning for the remarkable mountain; but we had not been able to obtain from a Tawarek a guide to conduct us from thence to the next well... At length I reached the bottom of the valley... At length I became puzzled as to my direction... My strength being exhausted, I sat down on the naked plain, with a full view before me of the whole breath of the wadi... I even thought for a moment, that I beheld a string of camels passing in the distance. But it was an illusion; and when the sun was about to set, not being able to muster strength enough to walk a few paces without sitting down...(TD1: 189-90).

> *B)* But sometimes the patients proved rather interesting, particularly the females; and I was greatly amused one morning when a handsome and well-grown young person arrived with a servant of the lieutenant governor, and entreated me to call and see her mother, who was suffering from a sore in her right ear. Thinking that her house was not far off, I followed her on foot, but had to traverse the whole town... and it caused some merriment to my friends to see me strutting along with this young lady. But afterward, when I visited my patient, I used to mount my horse; and the daughter was greatly delighted when I came, and frequently put some very pertinent questions to me, as to how I was going on with my household, as I was staying quite alone. She was a very handsome person, and would even have been regarded so in Europe, with the exception of her skin, the glossy black of which I thought very becoming at the time... Among others, there came one day a buxom young maiden, of very graceful but rather coquettish demeanor, accompanied by an elder sister, of graver manners and further proportions, and complained to me that she was suffering from a sore in her eyes, begging me to see what it was; but when I approached her very gravely, and inspecting her eyes rather attentively without being able to discover the least defect, I told her that all was right, and that her eyes were sound and beautiful, she burst out into a roar

> of laughter, and repeated, in a coquettish and flippant manner, 'beautiful eyes, beautiful eyes' (TD2:521).
>
> *C)* Monday, July 8th [1850]. The caravan of the Tawati having passed by our encampment at an early hour, we followed betimes, having an interesting day's march before us. For the first three miles we still kept along the large valley, into which masses of sand had been driven down from the plateau by the strong east winds; farther on it became dry and bare. To this succeeded an irregular knot of hollows and plains between the sides of the plateau, which, in some places, formed imposing promontories and detached buttresses, all are one and the same level. We then began to ascend along a sort of broad valley, which gradually assumed a regular shape, and bore the name of Tisi. The slope of the plateau was shaped into regular strata, the uppermost of which form steep precipices like the walls of a castle; the lower ones slope down more gradually... We continued our march, always ascending, till a little after noon we reached the edge of the pass, a perfect watershed, of more than 2000 feet elevation... (TD2: 182).
>
> *D)* CHAPTER LXXI
> DIARY CONTINUED
> BEING enabled to collect a good deal of information, as far as my situation is concerned, I did not choose to accompany the sheik when he again went to the tents on the 24th of January (TD3: 369).

Episode *(a)* is the typical trial scene in which the authorial narrator encodes his hardships. It typically begins with a dramatic situation (which is also a revelation) and introduces the hero's heroic suffering. This is followed by a second stage in which the dramatic situation is developed into an ego-centred narrative of changes in the hero's situation. There is no heightening of tension, no *agon,* no *pathos* but only what Frye (1990:187) calls the "*anagnorisis* or discovery''[4], for in the end the hero's suffering culminates in a "philosophic'' discovery, as it were: "it is, indeed, very remarkable how quickly the strength of a European is broken in these climes, if for a single day he be prevented from taking his usual food'' (TD1:

192).[4] The episodic quality of this is also novelistic, as the surrealistic, dream-like image of passing camels testifies.

This episode *(b)* is not headed by the typical journal or diary entry format, but by a chapter heading (L [50]), with the title of the chapter given in upper case. The chapter conveys the idea of description, arrival, and departure (final), that is, the image of a narrative, narrator and inscription in motion (or odyssey). This episode is, in another sense, potentially erotic. It begins with a "revelation'', and introduces a dramatic situation and a character. The next stage is the explication of the original situation. But there is no chronicling of the events. There is a heightening of tension: the hero's innocence and supposedly disinterested gaze are penetrated by lust and desire. The object of this lust and desire, the "buxom young maiden'' is coquettish, that is, invites the hero's desire and lust, or rather his phallic exuberance, but which is resolved ultimately by an aesthetic response on the part of the object of the desire.

Episode *(c)* is the typical sight/site of "discovery''. It is a geographical narrative, organized around a single event, and a single optical field -- the landscape. There is hardly a plot as such. There are hardly any characters: there is only a sequence of settings or a story of the difficulties of "discovery'', expressed in spatial rhetoric.

Episode *(d)* is rare, and is mostly found in passages in which the narrator deploys essentially synchronic frames, such as in the re-voicing of local history. But it is also the stuff of what Pratt (1992) has called "captivity narrative''. This is the favourite of the historians, who normally ignore the narrativist function of the

"vision'' or "sight/site'' episodes which imply a contrapuntal immobility of the narrator. As he says, the writing (of the journal) resumes only when he is "enabled to collect a good deal of information'', namely the legends and myths of the local people, and the "topography of the country'' (TD3: 369). As an episode, this scene reveals the *secret* of the exploration journal: It "moves'' only when the writer/narrator is optically present. This should explain why the above episode is tied to the mobile structure (movement and travel) which, in effect, "reveals'' both the authorial narrator and his "objects'' of knowledge only incrementally, so that the picture grows, expands or shrinks to the extent the Journal "grows'' incrementally and semiotically, so that it is not just the narrative ego that is assembled by the (se) episode (s) but narrativity itself. For example, twice, in Bagirmi and Timbuktu, the narrator is imprisoned. Paradoxically, however, it is during these moments of captivity that the narrator re-voices the "history'' of these places. It is as if "history'' is the antithesis to movement and diachrony. Surely, Barth's narrative of his imprisonment exists side by side with his historical re-tracing of these localities. Such "captivity narratives'', are highly allegorical constructions in which captivity is mixed up with abolitionist rites of passage. Yet Pratt (1992:185) has observed that the captivity narrative traditionally constitutes "a safe context in which to narrate the terrors of the contact zone because the story is told by a survivor who has returned, reaffirming European [and imperial] social orders''. In the case of *Travels and Discoveries*, this is supported by the fact that the narrator's release from captivity permits him to resume his imaginative and textual mapping of the surrounding world.

6.2 **Narrativity, Narration, and Fictionality**

The author-narrator-hero in *Travels and Discoveries* uses the metaphor of the theatre, and the concept of interval in the theatre, to convey the unreality, fictionality or comedy of an event or episode. He, for example, labels Sudanese realities theatrical exhibitions, as in the case of the boats of the Yedina which he calls "small and awkward... resting quite flat on the water, strikingly remind[ing] me of theatrical exhibitions in which boats are introduced on the stage'' (TD2: 66). In occasion he says that all inscriptions tell their own story (TD1: 55), and that behind every grave situation lies "farce and mockery (TD1: 240). Said (1978:63) has argued that the European explorer's representations of the Orient, for example, had been a theatrical one, in that it was constructed as "a closed field, a theatrical stage affixed to Europe''. This is equally true of Barth's narrative of the Sudan, as evident in the narrator's persistent construction of the indigenous landscapes and events as a *theatre,* or indeed the stage.

One implication is that the Sudan is a store-house of deception and distortion, against which Barth must fashion a counter-strategy, that is, construct the Sudan as a visual economy, a series of palimpsests, or a *legible* space "whose cultural inscriptions, however faint or obscure, could be deciphered'' (Duncan and Gregory 1999:115). For example, the narrator describes a marriage procession, consisting of the bride and her mother mounted on horse-back, accompanied by a large number of female attendants carrying household furniture on their heads as "interesting'' and "cheerful intermezzo'' and *perceptible* (TD3:127). The visual metaphor of perception as seeing objects in their "light'' is highly suggestive. The

narrator equally calls his moving troop of guides, informants, bodyguards and servants as forming, or causing, a "theatrical *intermezzo*" (TD3:476). Finally, the hero describes his "enjoyment of the beautiful scenery", while seated on the promontory of an enchanted series of ravines, and the image of two boats filled with local people, as "procur[ing] me an interesting intermezzo" (TD3: 505).

Now *intermezzo* is a musical term, meaning a brief *entr'acte*, or a short movement or interlude separating the major sections of a symphonic work, such as the division between *allegro* (quick) and *andante* (slow). In Barth's usage, a "theatrical intermezzo" means a musical drama, or opera, which is a theatrical event set to music. The image of a boat full of locals as an opera is highly suggestive of the figural element in Barth's thought, or rather his narrativization of the event-episode as a movement from beginning to middle and end. Here the narrator looks out on the local landscape, reports it, and makes it speak itself *as a story*, analogous to spoken dialogue set to music, as in the opera. Thus by the use of the concept of "theatrical intermezzo", the narrator has represented real events as both "speaking themselves" *and* represented as "telling their own story".

In this sense, there is no question of conceptualizing Barth's text as indicating as Kirk-Greene has argued, Barth's "passion for conscientious exactitude", or his "meticulous style" (1962:54). The essential elements of narratives, claim Scholes and Kellog (1966:211), are *selectivity* and *movement*. Now it does seem that Barth's constitution of the Sudan within a comprehensible plot-structure necessarily dictates that he tailor the so-called facts to the requirement of legibility, readability, textuality and scripting, namely the story form. And if

Travels and Discoveries is "coherent", or has, as the historians have argued, achieved an "overall coherence" of temporal or episodic series, *in* the coherence of the story form, then this is achieved only at the cost of a narrative that is partial, selective and provisional.

However, only by drastically and artificially selecting from, or configuring the so-called factual data within, a set of fictional or imaginary events can the narrator achieve an overall coherence. In other words, narrativity is an artificial and fictional and fictionalizing trope, more to do with rhetorical adornment than with the facts, or what is called "things as they are". It must be striking that a text such as *Travels and Discoveries* which has been claimed as the supreme example of realistic reportage and factual precision, and allegedly validated by an objective format is imbricated with, and self-consciously constructed within, a rhetorical language, or rather the poetic imagery of the theatre, legibility and the visual economy. But it is not just a failure of intention, or an unconscious slip. Rather it is the inescapable penetration of *noesis* by *poesis*.

The tropes that performatively ground Barth's text are themselves signs of absences and exclusions. For the text has to exclude certain facts about the Sudan, has to displace, distill and simplify the messy and far more complex Sudan, if it is to achieve a coherence of form (continuity), namely the translation of the real, intransitive Sudan *into* a fictional, *invented* structure (of beginning-middle-end). By this process, the Sudan becomes a metaphor, that is, reclassified from a *distant topic* to a familiar object or domain of experience, to an uncommonly present object, or rather "encoded adequately enough to be felt to be humanly useful, nonthreatening,

or simply known by association'' (White (1978:5). This supports Said's argument that the European explorer has to win "two confidences at once: the [native] one of engaging companionship... and the Western one for authoritative, useful knowledge'' (Said 1978:160). This is why the Sudan is, in Barth's narrative, a familiar set of culturally sanctioned categories: savage, chaotic, decayed, pleasurable, exotic, all of them metonymic indicators of the Sudan's uneasy existence as both "fact'' and "fiction''.

The massive and intimidating erudition and textual sophistication of *Travels and Discoveries* could be read as the text's attainment of narrative fullness, which we associate only with the novel. But it is a mistake to see this narrativist manner of speaking as the form that a realist discourse or consciousness must inevitably take. Those such as Bivins (1997) who celebrate Barth's text as a supreme achievement of realistic reporting, can do so only by ignoring or suppressing the fictional element at the heart of its discursive practice. This is why even the text's "fullness'' is constructed, to adopt White's phrase, "on the basis of a set of events which might have been included but were left out'' (1980:14). It is in this sense that *Travels and Discoveries* is a distillation, a simplification, a *literary* work (text).

But this is precisely why it is futile to seek to go back, as it were, to the original Sudan, so as to confirm whether Barth has adequately or accurately "mirrored'' or "reflected'' her in his narrative. For the Sudan is not a photograph or an *icon* which resembles its portrait in a causal relationship, but a metaphorical statement (the metonymic domain of the unfamiliar). This is the case because the apparently *historical* appearance of the text is a ruse, despite Barth's self-conception

as the non-fictional, real and transfactual, subject (in touch with the non-fictional world). As Lang (1990:182) would argue, a writer's text, whether set in his/her present or past, "has a figurative and not simply an historical function; it is an element of the representation, as one decision among others [that] shapes the motif or theme that the writer 'discovers' in his life" (in the Sudan, or both at once in the case of Barth).

As the example of the Yedina boats above has shown, the landscapes, bodies, interiors, characters, normativities and philosophies of the Sudan encoded by *Travels and Discoveries* are only plot-events and structures, in which the reader is asked, and invited to think of her in a certain sublimal, ideological and cosmological direction. Thus it is the *disconfirmability* at the heart of the narrative discourse of *Travels and Discoveries* that testifies to the essentially fictional and *literary* nature of the text. On the issue of (dis-) confirmability of the content or events of Barth's text, which normally occupies the problematic of historiography, it should be stressed that it is the narrative itself that is, for the literary critic, both primary and incorrigible. In the final analysis, then, it is Barth's normative perceptions, the figuration and framing of this perception, the manner in which he *represents* himself as located in the events that would always matter because, in any case, this is what he has (or had), consciously or unconsciously, decided to foreground for the reader. As indicated above, the rhetorical and figurative and semiotic dimension of the text cannot be negated or extracted or suppressed. This non-negatable dimension is narrativity itself, which is, in the last analysis, a

fictional, poetic structure by which the rhetoric of discovery or exploration constitutes and colonizes its visual, perceptual and discursive field.

This is why Barth the narrator has inevitably to fictionalize, or draw on the language of fiction in his characterization of, many aspects of the Sudan. The point is that neither Barth the writer nor Barth the narrator could have recorded the events only as they naturally occurred, or in the order of their original or natural occurrence. Rather, it is the fact that Barth's text and narrative have recorded them otherwise, "in an order of narrative, that makes them at once questionable as to their authenticity and susceptibility to being considered tokens of reality (White 1980:23).

That the narrator could evoke the image of the stage, or theatre, to characterize aspects of Sudanese reality goes to show that the "discourse of the imaginary'' is not a supplement, in *Travels and Discoveries,* to the "discourse of the real'', but a fundamental part of the narrator's shifting, by narrative means, of *meaning.* In other words, by calling or inscribing or narrativizing a piece of the Sudan as a stage, a theatre, or a musical movement, the narrator-author has made his object *wear the mask,* as it were, of a meaning, that is, *constructed* as a stage, and confined to *that;* and the narrator represented (by the text and his narrative which strives to give events a regularity and fullness by, paradoxically, locating them with respect to himself) as *the* figure whose role it is to represent the larger whole, the enclosed *stage* that is the Sudan.

This is why the presence of narrativity indicates "closure", or the revelation of a structure which is assumed to be immanent in the events, the "pretence'' that

the plotting of the events has been found or discovered (within the Sudan itself), for example, rather than invented, or configured within narrative spaces. In the same way, the narrator-explorer could pass *judgment* on, narrate in judgment of, the Sudan and still appear *objective*, and claim for his narrativizations a moral/or epistemological authority. This is the sense in which Macherey speaks of narrativity as the ideological form, which writers find or encounter in their texts. That is, they configure it as such by permitting it to come to an end (resolution). Narrativity (the patterning and re-ordering of the indigenous subject-matter) is not the only strategy available to the explorer in his secret desire to, according to Said (1978:160) "Comment on, acquire, possess [and] order everything" around him. One other is to see the non-European landscape as *exotica*. Another is the use of organic concepts, namely himself as ageless and the Sudan, for example, as going through the natural life-cycle. Another still is refusing a *marriage de convenance*, the offer of marriage from the local girl. In this way, the explorer both preserves his "authoritative identity" and bolsters "the objectivity of his narrative". On this, see TD2: 140; TD3: 430.

But it is also narrativity that dictates not only the *end* but also the *beginning*. For example, the starting-point for Barth's text might appear "natural" in virtue of the date (November-December 1849). But this is deceptive, since there is no account of the pre-journey days, and so on. So it is Barth's subject position as the writer that has dictated or determined the decision to begin the narrative at a particular point and date, and to disclose one thing and conceal another, for example his gift-giving moments and those he spent at the toilet respectively. Finally, we

should ask: What "happens" before the opening lines of the text or after its last lines?

It does seem, however, that Barth's story, which is embedded in the textual spaces of *Travels and Discoveries*, is capable of illumination, the power to give, or to appear to give, knowledge. In a sense, then, *Travels and Discoveries* does contain some knowledge of a kind, as evident from the text's canonical status or prestige within modern historical studies and historiography. The argument that the text in question is literary or, in the last analysis, fictional, does not, and should not, detract from its status as a form of referential discourse, containing some factual statements, or what, following White (1992:38) may be called "singular existential propositions". This is why "representation" is not, wholly, a pack of "pseudo-statements", since on a limited scale, it is subject to judgment as true or false, typical or topical, and so on. The text's *emotive* qualities inhere in a representational and thus referential dimension. So *Travels and Discoveries* cannot be detached from its "objects" (of representation, the events). This is why the text is *knowledge* of *a particular* kind.

This because even the most fictional or imaginative texts do arguably teach us something about the world, the workings of language, or about the rhetorics of writing itself. Perhaps it is the failure to problematicize these issues that leads the historical authorities on Barth such as Usman, Kirk-Greene, Bovill, Schiffers and Ayandele to, in general, hold the assumption that the kind of stories Barth tells of the Sudan are *lived* or *real* stories which can yield useful knowledge once the protocols of the scrutiny of the "primary source" have been observed, so that the

"reality" or "evidence" in the stories can be recognized without much difficulty. As has been discussed in the previous chapter, Bivins (1997) is a good example of a recent historian who has used Barth's narrative as a "realistic consciousness", or as an index of the objectivity, seriousness and realism of his account of the Sudan. She writes, for example, that while Barth's framework of exploration is faulty, "he carefully reports the evidence" (5). But it turns out, on inspection, that the fault of Barth's procedure lies in his ignorance of what Bivins calls "the master metaphor of sibling relationships" in his account of the history of the seven Hausa states. In other words, Bivins separates "evidence" from "metaphor" (figuration). The paradox of all this is indicated by Ranke's contradictory appeal to the literary. On the one hand, he wants the historian to "capture" reality, or the past, as "how it essentially was" [*Wie es eigentlich gewesen*]. Yet this means, argues Ranke, seeking to understand the "poetry", the *zeitgeist* (inner being, spirit) of the past. This tension is still to be resolved: the historian *has* to use the text (document) and writing (figuration) to *do* history; and yet would argue that the historical discourse is extra-textual or non-discursive.

The point is that it is not at the level of plotting, emplotment or the use of narrativity (plot events and structures) alone that the artificiality, the fictional and fictionalizing dimension of Barth's story or text is underscored or uncovered. Another is at the level of the relationship between narration on the one hand and story and text on the other. In the first place, narration is not inherently found only in real or fictional worlds. As Rimmon-Kenan has contended, narration only "suggests a communication process" within which the message is transmitted by

addresser to addressee, and that narration indicates the necessarily "verbal nature of the medium [used] to transmit the message'' (1983:2).

This sounds unproblematic enough. But then as Toolan has observed, narration, by the fact of its being a verbal process, is "necessarily a way of linguistically representing past experience, whether real or imagined'' (1988:248). Thus understood, there is something strange, and, until now, unnoticed about *Travels and Discoveries.* While modern narrative theorists see the relation between "narration'' and "story'' as one of the narration of past events (after they have happened), and narration which precedes the events (predictive narration), they have not theorized the apparent abnormality of exploration narration.

In *Travels and Discoveries,* the narration precedes and *causes* the events or actions to occur. In other words, it is the narration of the events that precedes and causes their occurrence. In normal situations, the events are "inaugurated'' by (their) narration, that is, precede their narration (in time sequence, say by anything from a few seconds to many centuries). It is the other way round in Barth's text: narration "happens'', *then* the events "occur'' as a matter of course. This is not to suggest that the narration is "futuristic'' or a form of "prophesy'' (predictive narration). Rather, it is to suggest that Barth not only knows in advance (already knows) what has happened and will happen in the story, but also encodes *his own narration itself as an event or action.* To this extent, the past tense in *Travels and Discoveries* is a fictional device: the Sudan as a *foreign* and *exotic* body is, and can only be, the past, that is *fixed* as a (meaningful) metaphor. This is the significance of the words "discovery'' and "travel'' in the title of the text. That is: the thing (the

Sudan as a *sign*) has *already* been narrated *prior* to its discovery, or unveiling, or *dis*-covery. The future is that which has already been seen, anticipated, and affirmed. Thus in *Travels and Discoveries*, "discovery'' and "travel'' are nouns which not only function as adjectives, but also work as "pocket" forms of "anterior narration" in that they indicate or tell both what *will* happen and what *has* already happened.

What transforms such nouns into adjectives is narrativity itself. For example, in anterior narration proper, narration precedes the events. This is indicated by the use of the future tense, but sometimes also the present tense. But in the special case of the narration of exploration and discovery that we have been considering, it is narration that *becomes* the event itself. Consider the following passages:

> I was anxious to obtain some news of Mr. Richardson; but these people were utterly ignorant of the actual or expected arrival of any Christian [Mr. Richardson] in that place (TD1:561).

Yet the above passage is *preceded* by the following on *page 552* (vol.I):

> [I] asked the news from Kukawa, and heard that all was well, I continued my march. It shows the slowness of intercourse in this country that these people were ignorant of Mr. Richardson's death, although he had died twenty days before at a place only six days' march on this side of Kukawa.

In the first passage, the reader sees Barth inquiring about a man whom he had previously known/learned had died as the second passage clearly shows. And he is inquiring at the very place mentioned in the second passage! The strangest thing is that it is only on *page 565* of the same volume that we find the narrator inquiring about Mr. Richardson, only to be told about his death, and an offer by a local to escort the narrator to the grave (of Mr. Richardson). Here is the passage:

> I approached him [the headman of a Kanuri party], and asked him the news of [Kukawa]. He most probably took me for an Arab, and told me that all was well, but that the Christian [Mr. Richardson] who had been coming from a far-distance country... had died, more than twenty days ago... (TD1:565).

Note that this is the same piece of information previously divulged by the narrator on *page 552.* But it is only on *pages 572-73* that the reader gets to know the circumstances of Mr. Richardson's death, and the narrator's "pilgrimage'' to the deceased's grave. Above all, the narrative of the impending death of Mr. Richardson really begins on *page 426 (vol. I),* in the form of a premonition, a presaging of the impending demise of Mr. Richardson, as the following passage shows:

> Mr. Richardson being ready to start, I took a hearty farewell of him... He was tolerably well at the time, although he had shown evident symptoms of being greatly affected by the change from the fresh air of the mountainous district or Aïr to the sultry climate [of the Sudan]. There was some sinister foreboding in the circumstance...

The same narratorial strategy is found in the narrative of the death of the narrator's other travelling companion, Mr. Overweg. Let us consider this case, too.

First, it is said on *page 66* (vol. 2) that it *would* be a year to come (in a year's time) that Mr. Overweg would "expire'' (Barth's word) in this town called Maduwari, the town, says the narrator, which "will contain another white man's grave'' (TD2: 67). The event is narrated *before* it actually occurs, or happens. The modals "would" and "will" indicate a predictive vein in the narrator's speech. However, this is deceptive, since these modals also indicate a telling not of what will happen but also what has, retrospectively, happened. Then on *page 576* (vol.2) the narrator tells of the following:

> When on my return I met my companion [Mr. Overweg] at the gates of the capital [Kukawa], I was surprised at his exhausted appearance, and I was sorry to find that *my first impression was*

> *confirmed by what I saw afterward...* accompanied him about as far as the village of Dawergu, and we separated with a firm hope that the excursion would do him a great deal of good... (My italics).

Then the *revelation,* the beginning of the plot-sequence, comes last, namely the death of Mr. Overweg, on *page 579,* when the reader is told about the manner of Mr. Overweg's death, and his body being "laid... in his grave [under] the shade of a fine hajilij [tree]".

Thereafter, the narrator launches into a sentimental discourse on Overweg's status as a "martyr to science", and as having met "a most honourable death" for the future rectification of the Sudan (TD2: 579). Many a reader may be tempted to see the above account as only the narrator's hitherto unnoticed novelistic technique of pre-stating presentiments of, or prescience about, an unhappy future. It may well be, but it should be noted that it is this episode which concludes volume 2 of the narrative. In other words, it is Overweg's death that serves as the pretext for volume 3 of the narrative, and, artificially enough, marked by chapter 53 of the volume. This is not simply the decision of editors or the publisher. Although Barth says that the death of Overweg dampened his spirit, in reality it is this "death" which frees him from other obligations, and to accept Lord Palmerston's recommendation that he "penetrate" to Timbuktu from Kukawa. Hence the extension of the narrative beyond chapter 52 (L11). Chapter 53 (L111) opens with Barth's meditation on Overweg's death, and his acceptance to go on to Timbuktu. Indeed the sub-title of the opening chapter of volume 3 is, "Departure for Timbuktu..." (p.17). So a presumably extra-textual death has led to the birth of a monumental text (vol. 3), a chapter and a journey.

On the other hand, however, narrativity is a stratagem of immortality. This is seen in Barth's use of the retrospective voice, as in the following examples:

> I have remarked that, when I entered Kukawa, the cultivation of the ground had not yet begun... Rain was very plentiful this year, 1851, and I am sure would, if measured, have far exceeded the quantity found by Mr. Vogel in 1854 (TD2: 229).

The qualifying clause, "this year, 1851", was clearly written *after* 1854, when Vogel wrote his account, as indicated by the conditional clause, "if measured..." Another example is the statement: "The reader will remember that the fields round this place were just being sown on the day of my leaving it; and during my absence rain must have been rather scanty" (ibid: 218). All these cited passages are examples of the retrospective device that functions to exert a very strong *cohering* effect on the narrative. In these situations, the retrospective voice is a marker of narrativity because the latter has arisen not out of the experience of the journey, but out of a *subsequent* reflection on it. However, the same cohering device explored above also indicates the artifice at the centre of narrativity; for to configure a concatenation of events is, at the same time, to impose a structure, a cohering device, on the events.

It is thus the presence of narrativity that shows up the fictional techniques within Barth's mobile narrativizations: he wishes to portray a "death", the static and unchanging Sudan *while* also inscribing a "life", his diachronic, mobile and unconditional profile. If Barth is unceasingly on the move, surely the Sudan, too, cannot, should not, be restricted to the very synchronic frames within which she is, or has been, scripted (as a death mask). It is here that the "deconstructive" nature of narrativity reveals itself: Barth's attempt to leave behind, as it were, the Sudan, is

not achieved because within the signified content which his text transports, and which also transports it, the Sudan has inevitably to "move" with what Derrida calls the self-identity of the signified, namely the union of Barth *and* his writing.

Now this underscores the point, argued by Nash (1990:131), that narration of any kind "involves the recounting and shaping of events'', and that it "connects and records [and] in some cases even defines the events it connects''. In the passages quoted above, the events constitute stories embedded within, and chained together, as it were, by narration. Thus the events *are,* in the last analysis, story-forms which are first narrated *before,* and *then,* they unfold.[5] A good example is Barth's "chaos thesis". Images of chaos require stasis and immobility. Yet narrativity is also about movement, a developing configuration. And thus quite independently of Barth or his presentation strategies, narrativity introduces diachrony, movement, development, change and progression into the otherwise panoptical description of the Sudan. What Barth's text or visual imagination attempts to show as unchanging and static, the narrative frame shows as changing, unstable, and contingent. This justifies the conclusion that Barth's image of the Sudan as a chaos, for example, is both a narrative strategy and, paradoxically, the *effect* of *narrativity*. Narrative strategy in the sense that his narrative of native chaos and apocalypse proceeds only on the rhetorical and logical condition that it produce the effect of having filled in all the gaps inherent in the chaotic Sudan, and, at the same time, reinscribe the image of order, coherency, and meaning in place of the chaos and apocalypse. The effect of narrativity in the sense that "plotting" is the process and mechanism (both at once) by which Barth imposes a meaning-laden form on the Sudan as an object of

interpretation. In both these ways, Barth makes the Sudan speak for her lacks and absences, or rather *represents* himself speaking *for* or *about* her, for example that she is visible, or that she is no more than a series of lacks or plenitudes--- all within the instrumentalist and ever-present dimension of narrative sequence. But since the whole thing can be, and has now been, revealed as nothing but a narrative sequence, Barth's strategy is, as authority, incomplete and never wholly effective.

Perhaps the most poignant example of the fictionalizing "function" of narrativity in *Travels and Discoveries* is in its effect on narration, and in the duration of the narration, that is, the time it takes to tell the story. Here, it is clear that Barth's five-year, six-month journeying, travelling and residence in the real, intransitive Sudan is told in two and a half textual years, or two and a half years of journal entry. And we know from Barth's preface (Abstract) and Prothero (1958), that it took the writer Barth three years of writing to narrate five years and six months of actual life in the Sudan, in the form of five volumes of *Travels and Discoveries* (1858).

The conclusion seems inescapable: that even the narration has lagged behind the actual living and the Journal or Diary itself. Of course, the writing of a diary is a form of narration, even when the writer is not aware of it. Also, Barth the narrator has surreptitiously excluded the *context* in which the actual writing of the text took place. Only the context of the narration is mentioned and staged. Thus there is not an *analogy* between Barth's writing of his text and his narration of the events of which his text speaks. For while the writing *as a whole* happened/took place in London, the narration happens in the Sahara and the Sudan. In fact the narration,

artificially enough, *begins* in Tripoli and ends in London, or indeed in Lord Palmerston's study in a London suburb, while the writing, in the last analysis, neither begins nor ends.

Thus both Barth the writer and Barth the narrator are, from the semiological and semantic angle, fictional, that is, to borrow a term from Rimmon-Kenan, *intercalated.* This says something for Derrida's remark that writing is impossible without repression (1978:226) and Rimmon-Kenan's claim that "narration is always at a higher level than the story it narrates'' (1983:92). But it is equally true that narration may equally always lag behind the story it narrates. This is so because as Chatman (1978:223) has observed, narration may cohere in a summary, or "the desire to account for time-passage, to satisfy questions... about what has happened in the interval''. A striking example of this process can be found in volume two, page 259, where the narrator refers to the events of 1854 while speaking within the diary entry for September 23rd 1852. Significantly, the year 1854 appears in brackets, or as we might say today, bracketed.

Surely, to return to the discussion of the relation between narration, and story and text, in Barth's text, it is (his) narration which, paradoxically, "blocks'' or "prevents'' or "dis-configurates'' the (real) story. Here lies the truth of Barthes' celebrated remark that "Narration can only receive its meaning from the world which makes use of it: beyond the narrational level begins the world'' (1977:115).

However, the "world'' of which Barthes speaks above is not, in the last analysis, the intransitive world of non-textual representation, but of the domain of study and text. *In truth, there is no story as such in Travels and Discoveries.* This

may sound hyperbolic. What exist are narrative events, and plot-events, what may be called "actions'' and "happenings'' encoded and dispersed and elaborated across a whole collection of syntagmatic series, or chronological orders. It should, however, be noted that a story is not a thing-in-itself, existing in the world, that is a "pure unmediated representation of extra-linguistic fact'' (Lamarque 1990:137) but a poetic and rhetorical element. For events, whether real or fictional, are intrinsically narrational and representational. It may in fact be argued that there are no intrinsically real events as such in *Travels and Discoveries,* for the text's referents are specific events which are then invested with a significance (representation) that they would have lacked as ordinary events. Stories may have started as "facts'' or propositional contents, but they are, in the last analysis, an index of the feature of language called *displacement,* which Toolan (1988:5) defines as the "ability of human language to be used to refer to things or events that are removed, in space and time, from either speaker and addressee.'' This is the sense in which all narrative discourse is the endowing of events with propositionality, that is, with prefabricatedness and constructedness.

Rimmon-Kenan claims, with some justification, that "story'' and "narration'' are the two metonymies of the text (1983:4). That is, "story'' evokes the text as "narrative content'' while "narration'' evokes it as text-production. Although Rimmon-Kenan's scheme can be questioned on the argument that it implies the separation of form and content, it does, however, explain one aspect of the historian's propensity to elide the question of the text's essentially rhetorical and narrativist dimension. The historian who thinks he can extract "referential''

information from Barth's narrative of the Sudan does so on the more or less unspoken assumption that the text is *directly* available to the reader, without extraneous elements such as rhetorical tropes (metaphor, synecdoche, etc) intruding in, or mediating, the vraisemblatial space of (the meaning of) the text. The historian may believe that knowledge (useful and corrigible information) can be acquired from *Travels and Discoveries.* This may be so, but the illusion is sustained by two sources. First, *Vraisemblance,* that is, the anti-rhetorical manoeuvres of the text itself, which is always striving to convince the reader that it is a truthful representation of reality, or of the extra-linguistic fact. *Vraisemblance* is, however, never successful because the writer has causally established a view of himself to the extent that only he may confirm. This is why the first-person, as any other, narrative voice is imbricated with a sense of "privileged knowledge" (special access or authority). Barth's position is, here, analogous to the position of a lone surviving witness to an accident or event. It is, without doubt, on the basis of this *kind* of (privileged) account that *Travels and Discoveries* has been written/narrated. To this extent, even *vraisemblance* is a kind of fiction-making: the events of a story, say Barth's text, are immune to any external test. In any case, the reader of the text has no option but to depend on the "authority" of the writer's telling. Yet the critical reader should see that the writer's account, while immune to refutation as such, *does not necessarily correspond to any facts or events as they naturally existed or occurred.* This is the truth of the claim that the *truth* of a narrative form can only be displayed indirectly, that is, by means of the trope of *allegoresis.*

The other is the empiricist philosophy of Post-Enlightenment historiography for which history writing is presumed to possess, or be capable of, reproducing the concreteness and accessibility of historical milieu. On this view, *Travels and Discoveries* could be (referentially and paradigmatically) a neutral "container'' of the so-called facts about its subjects matter which it presumably encodes within its textual fabrics.

These may not be unconnected with the paradoxical function of narration, story and text: all three are a form of *Vraisemblance,* namely the "naturalization'' of the artificiality, the fabricatedness and the tropological nature of a form of knowing based on the hermeneutic self-constitution, or gaze, or voice, of a single, lone, individual subject. For on this untenable or false view or conception, Heinrich Barth the historical traveller or discoverer, is not a novelist, a creative artist or a painter, but an authoritative eye-witness, with the characteristic "eye-witness'' claim to truth. Against such a limited view should be opposed another view that insists that the reader should endeavour to stare not just at Barth's telling, and its putative referents, what the telling points to, the more or less spatially and temporally remote object, but also to the framing and the frame: the *mediation* of the telling in, and by, the tellable story that is the story of the so-called native which *Travels and Discoveries* inscribes and erases both at once.

6.3 **Narrativity as Translation**

This section examines the process by which what the authorial narrator verbally affirms is denied, or erased, by the very productive activity of (his) writing; and how his representation of native speech is a form of "translation" which seeks to

reproduce a cultural other as the same, the familiar, the non-threatening. It will be seen that in representing native speech, Barth has inevitably to adopt the stand point of the narrator who occupies the space of interlocutor and interpreter, in short a translator. As translator, Barth must produce the native's words as the "foreign text", so that he can more effectively act as the central subject, or rather the very structure of the conceptual signified itself.

Now and again, Barth acknowledges his debt to this or that indigenous guide or informant for the information collected, as indicated by his frequent use of the explicit reporting clause "he *said*", or the ever-present prepositional phrase "I then wrote from the mouth of Gajere and Yahia..." (TD1:447). The authorial-narratorial voice admits, and inscribes, its debt, to local knowledges[6]. The text itself shows the (fault) lines of its negotiation and incorporation of indigenous languages, ideas and normativities. Indeed "discovery" in *Travels and Discoveries* consists, at a very pragmatic level, of incorporating, appropriating, and absorbing local knowledges. As Loomba (1998:67) has pointed out, the indigenous landscapes were "penetrated, mapped and annexed literally on the shoulders of local inhabitants".

And yet the phonic and existential absence of the indigenous subject, the so-called archetypal native, signifies the very essence of *Travels and Discoveries*. It may, in fine, be argued that while Barth speaks of his intellectual debts to the local informant, his text, or his symbolizing inscription of his text, *denies* this. For even the phonetic transcription of the local informant's utterances or voice is repressed by textuality, or rather by the words that erase the words that evoke the native voice. Silence, even the silence of the speaking local subject, is the code of speech of the

narratorial subject. The native is not summoned to speak his mind but to be seen and spoken for. This has to be so, otherwise Barth would never have had to represent his very informants, and even to speak for them. There is, then, a contradiction, an *aporia,* or what Derrida and Macherey would call a *drift,* between Barth and his writing which operates as an object in its own right, and as "a structure cut off from any absolute responsibility or from consciousness as ultimate authority" (Derrida 1982:376). The name for this aporia that installs itself between Barth's manifest consciousness and the independent semantic productivity-activity of his writing is narrativity. If, in the narrativist manner of speaking or writing, one renders *comprehensive* that which is chaotic and exotic (as the Sudan is said to be in Barth's narrative), that is, imposes the chronological structure of beginning-middle-end on a concatenation of events, then the representation of another's speech within a larger framing speech is a translation, what Lidchi (1997: 166) calls "the transposition of alien concepts or ways of viewing the world, from one language to another, from one conceptual universe to another". However, the narrativist standpoint is itself not immune from the fictionalizing play of narrativity.

Consider the passage below:

> I listened with interest to the Zintani, who told me that the valley produced an excellent kind of barley, and that the Kuntarar, as well as the people of Zintan, his countrymen, and the Welad Bu-Sef, vied with each other in cultivating it, and, in former times at least, had often engaged in bloody contests for the proprietorship of the ground. When I expressed my surprise at his joining the name of his countrymen with those of the other tribes hereabouts, he gave me the interesting information that the Zintan had been the first and the most powerful of all the tribes in this quarter before the times of the Turks, and held all this country in a state of subjection (TD1:105-106).

What is remarkable about this passage is that it is supposed to be the "words" of Barth's local informant, the Zintani (that is, identified by his geographical origin, the town of Zintani). Obviously, it is not a direct speech, a *faithful* verbatim report of the Zintani's actual words. There is the clear absence of inverted commas (speech marks). The presence of the *that* subordinator immediately indicates the presence of a subordination relation between the Zintani and the narrator, Barth. In addition, the presence of deictic orientation denotes the simple past ("the valley produced", "the Zintan had been the first", etc), and also tends to circumscribe the directional movement of the locution. All this indicates that the Zintani's speech has been, paradoxically, inscribed over, or rather silenced, *in the sense that the narratorial reporter of the Zintani's speech has hypothesized*, or made remote, the initially direct speech source (the Zintani's words). Not only has the writer-narrator retained the Zintani's words and deictic orientation, but has also hypotactically appropriated the Zintani's voice. This is so in spite of the narrator's subordinator clause "I listened with interest to the Zintani..." The narrator's reproduction of the Zintani's speech seems, on the surface, to register an objective and descriptive mode of reporting the latter's words. But this precisely is what all translation is about: foregrounding fluency, fidelity, and faithfulness (to the original "foreign text") as the conceptual signified. In the passage being considered, the narrator *attempts* to check the drift of the Zintani's language, or words, *away* from his conceptual concerns; he seeks to minimize the *play* of the signifier in the Zintani's locution. What emerges, in the end, is the narrator's interpretive mastery

of the Zintani's words and conceptual universe as a whole. In fact, the Zintan is the very signified that the narrator has domesticated/demarcated in his translation.

However, Barth makes it clear that he is not effecting a diegesis, giving the impression that it is he who speaks. In Barth's indirect version of the Zintani's speech, the elements of the latter's speech are characterized by *absence*, or *removal*, of speech marks, and the corresponding insertion, *presence,* of the *that* subordinator. This is figuratively why we should not think that Barth's rendering of the Zintani's direct speech in the indirect form is not a transformation of the latter's direct speech, or that the latter's speech had come *first* before Barth's transformed version of it which might imply, to cite Toolan, a "conventional logical dependency of real-world indirect speech" (1988:121). Surely, *Barth may have, and certainly has in fact, reported things that the Zintan never said.* Barth's indirect reproduction of the Zintani's direct speech casts a grave doubt on the formal and mimetic accuracy or corrigibility of Barth's speech or discourse. For not only is it possible that the Zintani has lied or misconceived the issues, he may have also deliberately embellished his account just to appear credible to his interlocutor.

Now this is the case because clearly, the Zintani's speech is not an authentic "direct speech" where we may assume interlocutors to be in control and to speak for themselves. Here, however, it is the narrator who is overtly in control, and reports on behalf of the Zintani. And although the narrator says that he only *listened* to his interlocutor, and thus is not, by implication effecting a diegesis, it is still obvious that the reproduction of the Zintani's speech does, in a sense, imply a *transparent* representation of the latter's speech. As Venuti would argue, fluency, faithfulness,

and fluency are the key discursive strategies of translation in that they produce, in the last analysis, the "illusionistic effect of transparency" (1993: 214). In this sense, Barth's representation of native speech is a translation, a transposition and construction since the logical aim is the making of an other into a comprehensive structure. This is in general why even the concept of "direct speech" is, in textual production, a chimera. For example, the Zintani's direct speech can only be intuitively imagined, since it is framed *within* Barth's discourse. And behind the Zintani's subjectivity and speech is the omniscient, controlling teller, as is made vivid by Barth's use of the sharply critical interrogative clause "when I expressed my surprise at this joining..." Here, the two opposed forms of speech are related paratactically and hypotactically; they are set, as Sternberg (1982:67) would argue, in embedding framing contexts.

This form of narrativity is fascinating because the occasion of acknowledging intellectual debts and of the presence of the native informant, has led to, or is, an occasion for Barth's assumption of full narratorial presence, and the corresponding "absencing" of the native informant phonetically and existentially. For in this case, Barth has represented the native-informant's speech in a condensed, summarized, mediated form; and has, to the same degree, *displaced* the informant's speech. Perhaps not even the gist of the informant's speech, but something else totally different, is reported. In this narratorial speech-representation, the native's language (the Zintani must have spoken to his interlocutor in his native language) has been appropriated, and rendered a subordinate Other hypotactically and paratactically in the medium of a foreign language, the English language which

underwrites Barth's text. Yet this is not the only way by which this process takes place. This process may be seen at work in a form of foreground narrative, or what has come to be known as Free Indirect Speech or discourse. This is a form of style of thought and speech representation in which the direct (the native informant's) and indirect (the narrator's) are mixed, as in the following example:

> I was greatly amused one morning when a handsome and well-grown young person [she]... entreated me to call and see her mother (*TD2*: 521).

The above style mixes or merges "narratorial indirectness" with "characteriological directness''. Yet the term "characteriological directness'' is, in this context, misleading, since the practical result of indirect or free indirect discourse is not only to appropriate the speech of the other but to pass an implicit judgment of their character, as Barth does in his use of the free indirect speech. Notice, however, the *conjunction* of the personal *pronouns*, "She... *me*''. There is, on the surface, no apparent syntactic domination of the character's words, for example, by any reporting clause; or of "mental domination'' of the character by the narrator. It does look, paradoxically, like a form of the free direct discourse (absence of a reporting clause and *that* subordinator). Here is a more extended illustration:

> We had again a long conversation, which was very characteristic of the different state of mind of the Christian in comparison with that of the Mohammedan. While speaking of European institutions, I informed my host [el-Bakay] of the manner in which we were accustomed to insure property by sea as well as on land, including even harvests, nay, even the lives of the people. He appeared greatly astonished, and was scarcely able to believe it; and while he could not deny that it was good 'debbara' or device for this world, he could not but think, as a pious Moslim, that such proceedings might endanger the safety of the soul in the next. However, he was delighted to see that Christians took such care for the welfare of the family which they might leave behind; and it was an

> easy task to prove to him that, as to making profits in any way whatever, his co-religionists, who think any kind of usury unlawful, were in no way better than Christians; for, although the former do not openly take usury, they manage affairs so clever that they demand a much higher percentage than any honest Christian would accept (TD3:344).

The passage blends the direct speech of El-Bakay (embedded in the narrator's indirect speech) with the free indirect speech of the omniscient narrator. There is a frequent use of modal verbs (*might, would, could*) which conveys the narrator's judgmental stance on El-Bakay's utterances, action or ideological position. El-Bakay's speech is completely embedded within Barth's, even on such contentious and emotive issue as religious difference. El-Bakay's "dialect" is also Barth's. Yet the question still arises: To whom do we attribute these spoken words or articulated thoughts? It seems that it is El-Bakay who is speaking, or whose thoughts are being articulated which may actually have been delivered in Arabic or Tamashek. Yet it is also the case that El-Bakay's Arabic or Tamashek speech is embedded in Barth's framing English language speech. We may ask, naively: did El-Bakay really say those things? *So whether we attribute the speech to the character (El-Bakay) or the narrator (Barth), we may never confirm or verify the correctness of our assertion on this matter.* As Toolan says in a different context, "problem is chiefly, then, one of unconfirmability" (Toolan 1988:125). This position echoes the position of Leach and Short (1981:328-33) that free indirect speech or discourse, like the one quoted above, is an open category, and without necessary formal markers of its presence. Although this may well be the case, notice that there exists within the passage a sudden grammatical switch where the simple past tense is immediately and unexpectedly followed by a simple present tense: "for

although the former do not openly... they *manage*... they *demand*...'' This may also indicate, as Toolan has suggested, the interaction of "formal grammar and the unpredictabilities of creative language'' (1988:126).

The free indirect speech *form* is, to this extent, typical of *Travels and Discoveries*. This is not surprising given the hypotactic and paratactic impulse of exploration writing. The presence of that form of discourse in our object of inquiry reveals it as showing its objects in the very process of representing/telling them. The text presents its characters directly and yet indirectly, that is, they are mediated via narratorial strategies of verbal re-production. It is this which makes the narrator appear as both detached and all-pervasive. This technique of speech representation is effectively used to describe scenes, landscapes and bodies: the narrator-character or character-speaker is the witness who is present at the scene, and who reports/narrates what is revealed to him within the scene. The narrator presents only those things that he decides are worth telling. He is, in effect, the reporter who translates the native language to what Venuti calls "target language cultural values" (1993: 210) in an effort to manifest and retrace a cultural other. Such a form of translation is grounded in the narrativist rhetoric because in it, the native and his signifiers are translated, literally transferred, brought back, from being an other to being the simple, yet inferior, extension of the same. This is why Barth has to manipulate temporal order, duration and frequency in his representation of native speech so as to appear to be truthfully presenting the words and thoughts of the Zintani and El-Bakay, for example. The "deception'' is so well carried off that many a reader would mistake Barth's own words or thoughts for El-Bakay's, for the

latter's purported realistic imaging/reproduction has come with his purported words or thoughts. One may, on the basis of this, contend that Barth has, by freely indirectly reproducing Bakay's words, aligned his ideological position with that of Bakay's. But even this is inadequate since a *realist* explanation or account of the free indirect speech is "futile". Such form of speech representation admits only of what might, from the ontological point of view, be called *imagined realities*. According to Jefferson (1981:42):

> From a realist point of view, FID [Free Indirect Discourse] is a doubly disconcerting use of language: its ambiguities cut it adrift from the two points at which we commonly imagine language to be anchored to reality, the speaker and the referent. It is neither fully expressive nor fully referential.

As Ron (1981:28-9) and Rimmon-Kenan (1983:113) have pointed out, such style of speech representation not only projects the narrator as a self in an exotic environment but "enables the reader to make sense of 'deviant' linguistic practices, unacceptable attitudes, even lies, without undermining the credibility of the [text] or of the [author]". This is precisely what has been missed by many historians, especially those who attempt to extract a "presence", a "truthful representation" from *Travels and Discoveries*, or rather the utterances of either the native-speakers or the narrator-writer. But since there is, in Barth's representation of speech, an ambiguity whether the native-informant has actually spoken the words attributed to him or her, then three consequences follow from this.

First, the idea, favoured by historians, that Barth has reported more or less truthfully on the *pre-verbal* perceptions (visual, auditory, and tactile) of the indigenous characters, is untenable. For in a discourse such as Barth's, the subject (the narrator-writer-explorer, the so-called monadic source of knowledge, the

demiurgic/narratorial subject) has utterly *displaced* the object (the native guide, the local informant, the indigenous interlocutor). Yet even this displacement has promoted the illusion of Barth's empathetic identification with his interlocutors for historians such as Kirk-Greene (1970) and Ayandele (1979).

Second, by having recourse to free indirect speech, Barth, the real author, has had access to a *literary* mechanism by which he has attempted to paper over contradictions, aporias, false statements, limited viewpoints by projecting his text and his narrator's verbal representations as in "some sense *analogous* to (mimetic of) reality'' (Rimmon-Kenan 1983:114). Instead of regarding the language or discourse or the rhetorical-aesthetic mechanism of *Travels and Discoveries* as speaking directly to the reader, the illusion is fostered by historians who conceptualize the text as a factual document that the text as a whole is a veritable aspect of a transfactual reality, or that it is the extra-linguistic and accurate representation of the extra-semiotic world of intransitive objects which speaks. This, for the historian, is what makes *Travels and Discoveries* a form of valuable historical/empirical knowledge.

Third, the so-called speech of the indigenous subject in *Travels and Discoveries* cannot be recuperated because his/her speech has no extra-textual origin. The origin, if there ever was one, of the natives' speech is itself, in the last analysis, a textual construct. It has thus no origin, no pure, unmediated presence. For as Derrida has demonstrated, language can only "quote'' or imitate another language. The real author (Barth) is nowhere present as a necessary "mark''. As the narrator of his text, Barth is only a "structure of repetition''. This means, then, that

his cultural knowledge was constructed rather than discovered. Spivak's thesis that the subaltern (the local informants) cannot speak because their subjectivity and voice cannot be articulated outside the play of discourses and the institutional spaces that had constructed them has been vindicated. In the final analysis, therefore, who or what speaks and articulates the sign-native is Barth/Writing.

Fourth, all texts, from the historical (historical documents, or academic history-writing), to exploration texts and novels, are more or less utterances of the same type. Yet they are different kinds of *representation*, this being the chief marker of *non-referentiality* and the *literariness* of all writing. This is why Barth's representation of native speech can only issue in a free indirect discourse, which is, in an important sense, a narrative and narrativist device, with a characteristically fictional ring about it.[7]

This not only establishes the rhetorical and ontological link between narrativity and representation, but also between fictionality and textuality. Just as narrativity "translates" signification (significance) from one performative or symbolic domain to another which has the effect of *fixing* a reading of an event or object, so representation works to produce a *meaningful* and *comprehensive* " space-in-between". However, in all this, the double process, as it were, of inscription and supplementation can only make sense, or be set to work, within textual spaces. This is the sense of Kanneh's suggestion that the moment of cultural translation is "precisely the moment at which the articulation of signs becomes apparent" (1997: 275).

6.4 Narrativity and Textual Spaces

If Barth's representation and narrativization of the native is a fictional device, then his own self-presence or presentation as a veritable subject of assertions is also a narrative ploy. To say this is to take the inescapable *deconstructive* step, namely the *disenchantment* of author and narrator, narrative agent and narrative subject, story and text. In *Travels and Discoveries,* the narrator's position is the ontologically *political* one: he makes a bid for power, for control, and omniscience; he strives to assert his authority as teller, knower and producer of a specific kind of discourse *in relation* to an other-world which/who might be provisionally at least taken as the addressee. And in spite of the fluid, instantaneous and "travelling'' nature of the narrator's forms of address, it is ruled, and racked by a high density of deixis (*I, you*), tense choices (*present, presented*), discriminating adverbs and adjectives (*here, there, that, this),* which implies the narrator's spatiotemporal location and ideological orientation, or what Toolan (1988:67-68) calls the "inevitable and copious specifications of time and place... the vantage point from which the spatiotemporally determinate events are related''.

Now this opens the possibility of unravelling the *secret* power of the narrator, and ultimately of the author himself. It is argued at several points in this research that Barth, by inscribing himself and his self-activity within the textual fabric, has inevitably, *fictionalized* himself and his "authority''. Nowhere is this the case more than in his self-activity as the narrator or syntagmatic elaborator of a "telling''. The paradox is that the position of Barth the writer erodes, or undermines, the position of Barth the narrator. On the surface, the discourse-authorship that is

the textual productivity of Barth the narrator is *sourced* in Barth the writer, yet the *thinking* and *seeing* does not, in many a situation, issue from Barth the narrator or the author. That is, despite the great appropriative power of Barth's text and narrative, he is compelled by the sheer slipperiness of the signifier, to encode or narrate scenes where it is someone else, the Other, who sees or has seen.

For example: on approaching a Saharan town, the narrator, accompanied by his guides, camel-drivers and watch-keepers, arrives at a high rocky mass. Moments later, an inquisitive guide comes running, says the narrator, "up to inform me of his discovery; but it [is] of no interest'' (TD1:134). Here it is the informer who sees, but it is the narrator who speaks. This process is normally studied by narratologists as *focalization,* defined by (Rimmon-Kenan 1983:71) as the angle of vision "verbalized by the narrator though not necessarily his''. However, what is missing in such a definition of focalization is the function of focalization as an index of the explorer-narrator's appropriation of the indigenous point of view.[8] In that passage, the focalization of the informant's sight or vision is rendered not as a true "discovery'', that is conceptual and strategic, but pragmatic, that is, textually valueless and not part of the unitary fabric of volarized visibility. For the narrator adds that the native's "discovery'' is of no interest because it is "plainly recognizable'' (TD1:134).

There is also a passage in which a guide and informant named Gajere is said to have "entertained me with the narrative of a nine days' siege which the warlike inhabitants of Gazawa had sustained ten years previously against the whole army of the famous Bello'' (TD1:447). Later the narrator says that "I then wrote, from the

mouth of Gajere and Yahia... a list of the places lying round about Gazawa'' (TD1:447). Here the narrator's focalization of Gajere's "knowledge'' was the effect of rendering it as a pragmatic "knowledge'', that is a form of "entertainment'', and as "spontaneous'', that is, "abstract'' or a mere auxiliary construction.

The last point can be supported by citing the passage where the words of a local informant, Billama, become a footnote in the text: "Billama was always obliging [and giving] me some information... *which I shall here insert as a note*, though it is not so clear as it might be desired" (TD2: 218; my italics). Once again, a native's "knowledge" has become, in the hands of Barth, a mere auxiliary construction, yet not even a clear, or a fully desired, one. Although Billama's words have been downplayed, and rendered as a secondary utterance, and not part of the unitary fabric of "scientific knowledge", they have nevertheless formed a strategic part of Barth's text. What is remarkable is that if Billama's words were truly not that clear or desirable, why do they now constitute a crucial part of the text? It does seem, then, that, as narrator, Barth must "limit" Billama's words to a spatiotemporal relativity while also reinscribing himself as the author-narrator of interpretation (of the value and significance of Billama's "text"). Thus by textualizing Billama's story, Barth has fathered the words of the former, and has also, to the same degree, turned Billama's story into his own story. As Lawson and Tiffin put it in a study of the local informant in European travel accounts, "the guide has the practical knowledge to reach the goal, but not the conceptual knowledge to see its 'true' significance and thereby pre-empt the European discovery'' (1994:2-3).

It is then fair to conclude that the narrator is not the unproblematic source of, and authority for, the telling. As has been described above, the narrator is, despite his theoretical omniscience, constrained by "limited knowledge". Toolan (1988:72) argues convincingly that where the focalizer is an interlocutor within the narrative, as Barth-narrator is, "the limited view of that spatiotemporally limited observer is to be expected". His appropriation of the indigenous point of view is an attempt, futile as it is, to avoid the position of "limited knowledge". But if this is the case, then the narrator is the fictional version of the real author-writer: he is, in other words, himself merely a plot-structure, a patterning element, since his "limited knowledge" points to the disjunction between narrator and writer. Derrida puts its graphically when he writes that "like all those who write ...like all those who know how to write, he [Barth the writer, for example] let[s] the scene duplicate, repeat, and betray itself within the scene" (1978:229). In *Travels and Discoveries,* the scenes are the inevitable sights and sites of indigenous points of view but written and narrated within the semantic productivity of the narrator. Yet it is Barth the author-writer who encodes what the narrator says, and what, by implication, he should think.

It is here that the "fictionality" of Barth the narrator is most graphically revealed: for not only is the entire text of *Travels and Discoveries* focalized *on* the narrator himself, but also on the native informants such as Gajere, Gatroni, and interlocutors such as Boro, Aliyu, Bel-Ghel and Walati. Thus even the narrator is an interlocutor-receiver within the tale. In other words, focalization in *Travels and Discoveries* has both a subject (Barth the narrator) and object (Aliyu, Gatroni, Dala Hill, the Niger River, and so on). The writing subject is Barth the writer, and the

narrative agent is Barth the narrator-focalizer, that is, the agent, as Rimmon-Kenan would put it, "whose perception orients the presentation, whereas the object (the 'focalized' is what the focalizer perceives)" (1983: 74)[9].

Whereas Barth the narrator presents the "characters" and events of the story, or rather "limited" by narrativity itself, Barth the writer is temporally external to the story, and knows the end when he begins the fictional Barth's narration of the story/events. The narrator does not possess the retrospective understanding implied by the text's past tense, for his perceptions are *limited* by an omniscient writer (Barth the writer and journal keeper) who orchestrates the narrator's story, emplots the actions, episodes and events of the narrative at the time of the narration, rather than at the time the events originally occurred. To put it in yet another way: Barth the writer has unrestricted knowledge of the events, and uses, has used, this knowledge to *construct* a represented, rhetorical world. A situation in which a real agent splits into two is, paradigmatically and causally, a narrativized, represented and fictional situation. One example of Barth splitting, or drawing attention to his splitting, into two is TD2: 500-501, where he both at once reports himself as being chained to a spot (imprisoned) and encodes himself as the object of his own focalization. This is conveyed by the embedded clause," Thus I wrote in my journal: 'This is the only means to answer the desired end; every thing else is in vain'" (TD2:501). Here the writer is gesturing to the narrator, and the latter indicating how he had felt at the stage of writing, which now reflects differently at the stage of the narration. This is indicated by what Uspensky calls "words of estrangement" (1973:85), namely "every thing else" and "in vain", as in above.

Perhaps we should say, with Barthes (1977:2) that Barth the narrator is the *language* of Barth the author.

In the final analysis, then, only in an artificial, or fabricated, situation can there be a *central* subject properly called. This is most evident in the so-called first-person narratives in which the speaking subject encodes itself as in *direct* contact with real events, or as Julia Kristeva (cited in White 1984:12) has argued, encoding itself as the "subject of a family; a clan or state group''. For Kristeva the syntactically normative sentence had historically developed "within the context of prosaic and, later, historic narration. The simultaneous appearance of *narrative* genre and *sentence* limits the signifying process to an attitude of request and communication.'' This is not to suggest that Barth's text deals only in the activities of the central subject, for the text also deals in *other* agents and qualities (the farcical deeds of tragic figures, and the surrounding chaos and disorder). Yet White is right to claim that a narrative of real events presupposes a subject whose *raison d'etre* is to record its activities (1980:16). The expression "story of the story'' indicates the teleological nature of "discovery''. In *Travels and Discoveries* "discovery'' requires a narrative mode for its representation. In fact narrativity constitutes the ontological basis of "discovery'' in that it is the writing, and the narration of the writing that fully constitutes the discovery. This is why Barth feels let down when he fails to discover, even though indigenous guides lead him to the object of discovery.

While there is a central subject in *Travels and Discoveries,* there are also a plurality of voices and sights and consciousnesses that both the writer and his

narrativized self (the narrator) have *failed* to suppress. Attempts by Barth the writer to impose a single, panoramic view, a dominant, hegemonic and unified perspective on the Sudan as a whole is fractured, undercut, and subverted by narrativity, or rather by his adoption of inescapably fictional devices, namely plot, narration, narrator, and the activity of writing itself. It is also subverted by the writer's use of the footnote. And there is a footnote on virtually every page of the text. While the use of the footnote is intended to convey, or actually conveys, the impression of the text's ability to represent, or be in touch with, the real (extra-discursive) world of objects (as a reference to event, another story or text), it has the paradoxical effect of drawing attention to the constructedness of the text, namely the presence of a narrator or writer selecting, condensing, and displacing discursive phenomena, and reflecting on his own representation/narration/writing of significance. The use of the footnote may actually emphasize "the status of the text as artifice, provoking reflections about fictionality and textuality which are typical of self-conscious narratives'' (Rimmon-Kenan 1983:100). And as Derrida has observed, the "text we call present may be deciphered only at the bottom of the page, in a footnote or postscript. Before the recurrence, the present is only a call for a footnote'' (1978:212).

To this extent, the real author's focalizeds (Gatroni, Gajere), narrator (the focalizer), narratees (Aliyu, Sheik Omar, Bakay, Lowel, Haj Beshir, etc), are *fictional* entities, that is, convenient and provisional-narrational strategies. These could also be conceptualized as the narratee, that is, the "visible fictional character whom we witness being addressed by an even more visible second-order narrator,

and behind their fake dialogue is some story-teller (the first-order or foundational narrator'' (Toolan 1988:80). On this view, the narratee is both textually real and intransitively absent. In this sense, none of these are, or could be shown to be other than, real, blood-and-flesh, or extra-textual, entities. As Barthes puts it:

> Narrator and characters... are essentially 'paper beings'; the (material) author of a narrative is in no way to be confused with the narrator of that narrative. The signs of the narrator are immanent to the narrative (1977:111).

It remains to be asked, however, whether there is or was a real, extra-textual, blood-and-flesh Author standing behind *Travels and Discoveries.* Should the reader, to begin with, refer only to Barth the Author as the mental image of the Barth s/he conjures up from their reading of his journal, and of biographies written by historians such as Schiffers, Schubert, Prothero and Kirk-Greene? This is a crucial question, for it is at the heart of the debate between the empiricist historians who have traditionally approached Barth's text as a more or less problematic *primary source* of historical events or facts, and the literary critics such as the present writer who approach the text as both a material substance and a space of narrative-textual representation. It is almost certain that a historical Barth did exist, and did visit the West African regions collectively called the Sudan between 1850 and 1855. And we do know, via other texts, that his text was conceived and written within what Foucault would call "discursive formations", or the institutional manner of observing of conventions, the following of patterns and the figuration of the real world (literary genre). All these are discourses that are inevitably anchored in, and within, determinate formations.

And yet all these have become available to the reader as textual spaces, or rather text-worlds. In other words, even the historical blood-and-flesh Heinrich Barth, the real author of *Travels and Discoveries,* has been apprehended by historians, biographers and anthropologists, and can conceptually and ontologically only be apprehended, via other narratives, other texts, other representations (e.g. historical writing, anthropological books and literary-biographical portraits). These in truth are the only versions of Barth the Author, Writer and Traveller that we know, and will ever get. In fact it is debatable whether Barth would ever be known *outside* or independently of his text. As far as the historian's account of Barth's travels is concerned, he has nothing but texts, Barth's texts, in order to construct a "history" of the events. Thus there is no extra-textual matter-of-fact in the historian's allegedly non-textual reconstructions, only textual spaces. Of course, Barth could be known for other writings and for other accomplishments that do not involve writing at all, yet he was, and is, known to us through writing, the writings of his biographers and historians, and even from Abbega's account which is also a writing (and written). This, to be sure, raises no special epistemological difficulties since there can be no literal, matter-of-fact, or non-figurative presentation of subjectivity, history or society in textual representation. This is to stress the obvious situation in which even the so-called objective studies (biographies and historical discussion of Barth) have functioned as a tacit preface to the writing and analysis of the historical Barth. The great paradox is that even the historical Barth is now no longer distinguishable from the textual-narratorial Barth of his texts. The latter picture of Barth has persisted as an "aura" for studying the presumably historical

Barth, the Anglo-German who was born in 1821 and who died in 1865. This is the sense of Derrida's remark that there is nothing outside the text. But as Macherey (1978) has argued, there is nothing inside the text either: only an *absence*, an *incompleteness*, a silence.

This is doubly significant for a literary study of Barth and his text. It is, paradoxically, the conceptualization of Barth as a "text", as a narrative space, that permits a most sustained *deconstruction* of his textual and ideological-political practice. This is the sense in which writing, textual production and narrativization are fictionalizing discourses in which even real, transcendentally-grounded authors and historical subjects are fictionalized, or become a fiction. As Toolan writes:

> Even if we know an author personally, we still perform the same process of forming a mental picture or representation (itself a kind of narrative) of that author to ourselves, as an integral part of the activity of knowing a person. In short, the pictures we have of authors are always constructions, so that all authors are, if you like, 'inferred authors' (1988:78).

The above conception of the author re-echoes Derrida's celebrated remark that "we must be several in order to write, even to perceive" (1978:226). On this view, Barth the writer and historical personage has, in writing *Travels and Discoveries* within the first-person narrative voice, not only narrativized himself, configured his self-productivity as a plot-structure, but also duplicated himself, for in encoding a narrative text of his objects of "travelling and discovering", he has *erased* himself as a literal subject, and thus is written and simultaneously writes. The use of the term *erased* here does not imply either that Barth the narrator is transitively insignificant or that his narration has had no empirical or historical consequences. On the contrary: by narrativizing the Sudan, Barth has "captured" or

"colonized'' her. Ashcroft *et al.* have called this process "possession by narrativization'' which they see as "capturing'' as commercial exploration or conquest, and as directly facilitating exploitation and intervention, so that once "'explored' and so 'known', these territories were possessed and able to be catalogued as under the control or influence of one or another of the colonizing powers'' (1998:97).

Yet as powerfully "capturing" as Barth's narrative is, it *fails* to be dominant, magisterial, or wholly referential because the reader does not have, and cannot have, in Barth's text, *the* full account of the Sudan: for neither the beginning nor the end of the Sudan is available to Barth-author or Barth-narrator. Neither Barth nor his text has access to the beginning of the Sudan; and to the end none has at all. And this because the narrative's movement or encodation or transition from the inaugural (beginning) to the terminal phase (end) is arbitrary, and therefore only deployed in an effort to give the sequence an *appearance* of coherence. It is the re-codation of the inaugural to the terminal phase that constitutes the *middle* of the narrative. This is what Barthes (1977:124) would call "the logic... exposed, risked and satisfied'', that is, the mere *variation* (not repetition) of the "beginning'' and "end'' within the "middle''. In the last analysis, then, behind Barth's story, narrative, representation, and writing of his adventure in the allegedly *dystopian* region called the Sudan, there is nothing but narrativity, the offering up of both a text to be *read* and a conceptual signified to be rhetorically demarcated, and metonymically *reduced* to the *sign* of writing.

NOTES

1. For the "story-within-story" episodes, see TD2: 274, 280, 258-9. 381 and TD3: 26, 371.

2. Kirk-Greene has argued that "Barth's passion for conscientious exactitude is nowhere clearer than in his published journals" (1962:55). It is instructive that Kirk-Greene could fault Barth's description of a faulty thermometer as "deranged" as expressing, on Barth's part, a "subliminal translation"(55). That Kirk-Greene has failed to be sensitive to the (possible) metaphoric implication of Barth's usage is obvious.

3. The narrator is here quoting from Virgil's *Aenid.* Note, also, the potentially ironic implication of the expression *dies ater* which means, in English, *black day.* Why, may we ask, should Barth's bad day, or day of suffering, be described as *black?*

4. *Travels and Discoveries* possesses the features of a "heroic romance", namely the salvational or redemptive conception of life. This is suggestive because the real author was in fact travelling to open up the Sudan to European civilizing mission. For this, Barth has to demonize the Sudan, while also encoding his Utopian transformations. As Frye (1990:193) notes, "the quest-romance is the search of the libido or desiring self for a fulfillment that will deliver it from the anxieties of reality *but will still contain that reality* (original italics). This surely explains why Barth's text is *Manichean,* that is, set in semic organization: hero/villain, angelic/demonic, etc.

5. This defies Fowler's typology in Fowler (1986) and as summarized in Toolan (1988:82-3). Note, however, that Barth's text implies the existence of an omniscient narrator within and outside the story.

6. It is, surely, through interaction and dialogue with indigenous guides, interpreters and informants that Barth has produced his monumental text. But as Mills (1997:122) has pointed out, "the aim of this knowledge is often to make clear differentiation between colonised and colonising cultures".

7. Bronzwaer (1970) has argued this point most forcefully and convincingly.

8. For a fuller discussion on the topic of focalization, see Uspensky (1973), Bal (1985), Hawthorn (1985), Rimmon-Kenan (1988) and Toolan (1988).

9. For an excellent discussion of perceptual focalization, and the distinction between internal and external focalization, see Toolan (1988:69-76).

CHAPTER SEVEN:

CONCLUSIONS

This study, by confronting the textual dynamics of social representation as embedded in a specific text of exploration, the *Travels and Discoveries*, has revealed more complex interactions and relationships between Barth and his writing practice on the one hand, and his 19th century institutional and discursive formations on the other, than historical analysis can uncover. One of the findings of this study is that Barth is a highly mediated product of Western humanist and Enlightenment rhetorics and discourses which have historically and discursively co-existed with European cognitive aggression and imperial culture as a whole. To this extent, Barth stands revealed as a mid-Victorian evangelical reformer and a handmaiden to imperialism. In his travels, explorations and evaluations, Barth not only re-cycled and re-produced the standard racist and exoticist conception of Africans but also paved the way historically and discursively for Christian missionaries such as William Balfour Baikie, and for colonialists and colonial administrators such as Lord F.D. Lugard. Baikie used Barth's dispatches on Kano and the Niger-Benue confluence to the Foreign Office to chart his own missionary preoccupations; while the Lugard used Barth's cartographic and imaginary maps of the Sokoto Empire in his determination to subordinate the Empire to the *Pax Brittanica*

This study demonstrates the fact that no historian, indigenous or expatriate, has ever stressed Barth's links with imperialist cultures and discourses. As the study has shown, racial, colonialist and Eurocentric ideas had, since the 17th century, saturated the conceptual, rhetorical and institutional universe of European exploration writing to such a great and determining extent that any study of the interaction of European travel or exploration accounts and the representation of non-European regions such as Africa which ignores or downplays the intertextual dimension of such interaction is inadequate. Yet, alas, this is the case with the historical admirers of Barth. They are so assured of his scientific, and analytic authority over his descriptions that they take his writing as the literal truth, the direct evidence of its fidelity to the facts. This they uphold so wordlessly that they spend not a moment of scrutiny of his text's representational and signifying strategies.

Thus the claims of Kirk-Greene, Ayandele, Hodgkin, and Smith that Barth is the empathetic explorer, the humanist-diplomatist traveler, the founder of Nigerian historical studies, and the most accurate and meticulous of the explorers respectively are, in the light of the findings of this study, ironic. After all, intertextually, Barth's largely patronizing, condescending, and denigrating view of the Sudan can still be found in World Bank and the International Monetary Fund's writings on contemporary Africa, and in many a Western intellectual and literary circle.

The preceding arguments should call attention to a curious and disturbing tendency in the historians who have studied Barth. Despite their much-advertised training in historical reconstruction, they are silent on Barth's own *historical* heritage. The standard works on his historical formation written by Schubert and

Kirk-Greene are remarkably silent on Barth's literary and discursive heritage, his ideological and institutional formation within Post-Enlightenment and Positivist problematics. For example, the historians are silent about Barth's very imbrication in the 19th century discursive structures that produced the modern genre of exploration, as opposed to the Post-Renaissance travel, writing. As the study has established, Barth's text was written for, and was itself the mediated product of, a narrow Victorian audience and reading formation. The claims of Ayandele and Davidson notwithstanding, Barth wrote for, and spoke the *lingua franca* of, an imperial metropolitan audience.

This "discovery" of the Study has far-reaching consequences for the evaluation of, and approach to, Barth and his career. First, *Travels and Discoveries*, far from being a universal statement about a specific place, is the product of a complex literary culture, the mid-Victorian culture or style of representing the non-European Other as an "odd text". It was this literary culture that mediated the writer's evaluation and description of indigenous life forms.

Second, it was this very culture that allowed and enabled the seemingly anecdotal and fictitious descriptions of Barth's text to be presented, first by Barth himself and later by the historians, as factual and objective descriptions. It should be stressed that the kind of information or description that Barth produced about the Sudan would not, under other circumstances, have counted as knowledge, or as factual, scientific information at all. For example, his account of his journey to Timbuktu, gift giving, arrival and departure scenes, the description of Kungu, Gajere, Gatroni, and Bel-Ghet, and so on would have been treated as banal and

uninteresting descriptions but for the institutional and discursive contexts within and for which he wrote. These contexts were the very *loci* of the *developing* colonial relations between Europe and Africa. And it was these which *certified* Barth's descriptions as credible, objective, scientific, and thus the basis for a history of this part of Africa. It is the text's mode of insertion within this reading formation, rather than its alleged intrinsic virtues, scientific qualities, or factual-documentary strengths which made, and still makes, *Travels and Discoveries* a canonical text within academic history. So Barth's text has been kept alive and socially and academically activated by institutional history writing in its struggle to keep the text within determinate cultural, political and ideological spaces.

Yet again, this rather simple finding should point to the reason for the historians' breathtaking blindness towards the text's literary and fictional dimension. If for Ayandele, Smith and Usman, Barth's text is a properly and irreducibly historical text that is because they have opted to close their eyes to its, or are actually unprepared to see its, imaginative-performative dimension. As seen in chapter two Usman, in particular, sets history irretrievably apart from literature or the literary. So for Usman, for example, the possibility of Barth's text being an anecdotal-rhetorical reinvention of an unfamiliar culture, or, indeed, a creative and rhetorical production in the same manner as a novel or a play is unthinkable. The same attitude is shared by Davidson and Ayandele who uncompromisingly conceive of Barth's descriptions as a *veritable* epistemological formation, imbued with a valuable accretive form of knowledge which signals the arrival of the definitive

truth about the historical Sudan, the *form* in which the Sudan has found its own true reflection.

One purpose of this study has been to interrupt, uncouple and disrupt this narrowly empiricist conception of Barth and his text. The findings of this study do not support Usman's and the historians' premises. This study finds that Barth is himself a written and writing self. His appearance in his own text as an ego, a first-person pronoun, that narrates its own deeds indicates precisely his use of a common fictional device used by writers and poets since the dawn of writing. To say of this technique that it is the mark of a full scientific presence of the writer in his descriptions is untenable.

However, this conclusion invites a critical consideration of the "media" used by Barth in his representations. It has been demonstrated in this study that Barth's is a mobile profile of the Sudan. His text *inscribes* the narrative ego's movement through material and imaginative landscapes. And the ego engages these spaces and imaginative reproductions in the media of the pen, pencil and visual imagination. This means that travel is inseparable from textual and writing processes, processes that are themselves fabrications in the sense of their being the productions of the differential traces within the rhetorics of representation. This study finds that for Barth to elude the problem sprung on him by his own textual self-productivity, by the instability of representation, he must strive for a full presence, that is, must appear as being in touch with the world outside the text, outside his writing and verbal activity, and thus pose as an insider who reports his self-presence directly to a self-constituted audience or readership.

But, alas, this is where the artificiality, prefabricatedness, and fictionality of the whole thing are inadvertently revealed. To make his presence and representations appear truthful and believable, Barth is forced to provide great details, which, he thinks, would bestow on the representation the richness and proof of the experience of (his) being there in the Sudan. But the more detail he provides the more *writing* there is, so that the Sudan becomes a *swollen* text, a profusion of Barth's verbal behaviour, and semantic and semiotic memory. But then, where there is memory there is also the *sign*, the sign of memory, Barth's memory *of* the Sudan *as he encountered* it *in the signified past*, not the textual present. So bit-by-bit the Sudan becomes, or is turned into, *writing*, and the *result* of the writing, the *Travels and Discoveries*, is *then* held, by Barth and by his reader, to be the determinate, the empirical, manifestation, the sign, mark, language, voice, and presence of the real, matter-of-fact Sudan.

And although Barth *was there* in, and actually did visit, the Sudan, the cities of Kano, Katsina, Timbuktu, Sokoto, Kukawa and so on, the proof of that presence does not come in the form of Barth *in* the Sudan, but in the form of a massive text. So Barth's presence is, this study concludes, not ultimately a real, transfactual one, but a textual one, a presence which rests for much of its effect on the free-play of fictional-rhetorical devices. Yet the paradoxical function, and effect, of such fictional devices are precisely this: they both reinforce and undermine the attempt by Barth's text to achieve veracity and authenticity for its reader.

For example, Barth's trampling, mobile and "itinerant" knowledge has, paradoxically, produced a relatively stable synchronic picture of the Sudan which

can be read, re-read, consulted and stored in a retrieval system. Barth is able to do this thanks to the use of a creative textual and narrative process, namely ocular penetration, metonymic representation, and graphic-imaginative mapping. But the aporetic result of all this is that the Sudan then *re*-appears in Barth's text as nothing but a series of narrative spaces, metaphorical indices, proliferating sets of signs, dramatic landscapes, disenchanting scenes, the visible, lisible body----in short, the flat spaces of writing, rather than a bounded material, cultural, tactile, and auditory property. And as a narrative space, the Sudan is revealed, devoured by, and laid out in, the activity of Barth's writing as metaphor, metonymy, imagery, visibility, and the subjective voice, the eye/I (of writing).

It is in this sense that this study concludes that Barth's text is both creative and noncreative. It is creative to the extent that it delivers a potently imaginative text, rich in allusive, metonymic and graphic reinventions. The study proposes that the reader should find an aesthetic significance in such imaginative creations, for they point to Barth's undoubted poetic abilities, just as we admire a Shakespeare, an Achebe or a Khayyam. Yet we should also deplore, and condemn as a rhetorical deception and dictatorship, the unacceptably logocentrist notion that Barth has accurately and scientifically captured the full presence of the Sudan, or that there exists a full extra-textual Sudan in his text. For it is not even the case that Barth has only *traced* the Sudan by re-inscribing her. In his text, the Sudan has been re-inscribed, re-presented and narrativized for one and one reason only: to be read by the imperial readers so as to *do* something about her, to give her a beautiful form (civilization) and a voice (the Bible). It is in this sense that this study concludes that

Barth's narrative has a direct relationship to the "violence of the letter" and to "death"--- the creatively noncreative process of the parasitic appropriation of a foreign reality, the Other, by a vampiric consciousness, the Same.

In the light of this finding, one must conclude that as a material sign, *Travels and Discoveries* has undoubtedly "happened", has taken place in *the world.* But as a linguistic sign, the text has "happened", has taken place, *not* in the world as such but in narrativity, in the words of its telling, and in the flow of marks on its pages. To this extent, the text does not refer to any real world outside of its telling, but to its own self-generated intelligibility, and the possibilities of language.

This is not to suggest, however, that the text is about nothing in particular. It is rather to suggest that as narrative and narration, *Travels and Discoveries*, in attempting to be densely referential in relation to a historically specific Sudan, has repressed another narrative and narration (for example, Gajere's or Gatroni's) and another *alternative* construction of signs (for example, Zintani's or Bel-Ghet's). In this sense, Barth's text is not, and cannot be, about a fixed past prior to it, but about a re-shaped, re-modelled present, i.e. the Sudan that lives in its narrativist universe. This is the sense in which *Travels and Discoveries* has committed violence and outrage against the extra-textual Sudan: both the text and its author have only brought the Sudan, and the *meaning* of that Sudan (the extra-textual Sudan, the one that had lived outside the text) to nil, emptiness, void, silence --- the chilling silence of typographical space, the space of writing.

For this study, however, there is more than one death. What also dies, figuratively, is Barth himself. And the symbol of this death is his own text itself.

Barth's recourse to writing, and to fictional strategies such as narrativity is telling. Why, one might ask, is the Sudan not represented in any other way? The answer is simple: *there is not another way*. Herein lies the text's connection with the literary and to fiction. Whether seen as a historical or as a cultural document, *Travels and Discoveries* rests ultimately on its ability to narrativize a past history or culture, and thus at the same time to suppress its existence as a textualized reminder/remains of a history, and a culture. Barth inadvertently admits this when he writes in the preface to the Narrative that he has greatly and pleasurably embellished his descriptions.

But if Barth has embellished, narrativized and represented, then the account, and the ultimate source of that account, Barth's cultural imaginary, are an imaginative, a performative act, a fiction in the sense of something made or fashioned, an artifice, rather than a piece of social reality. This is why the text is artifice all the way: footnotes, pagings, the words of others, figures and so on --- all in full play. To this extent, Barth too has ceased to be a veritable matter-of-fact subject in its own right, but has become a fictional, writing-narrativizing device, a semiotic sign of "death". Yet his "death" is not the end. Rather it is the beginning of a full blown textual life for the Sudan, Barth, and his fictional ego, the narrator of the story (of Barth's *historical* presence within the 19th century, the *past*, Sudan.

In using narrativity, Barth asserts an intricate relationship or connection between his assemblage of the fictional and rhetorical materials that make up his text, the connections implied by this relationship (narrativity), and the very "readability" of these connections for the audience or readership. But to do this successfully, Barth must split into three: real traveller, real author, and fictional

narrator. But this is not possible in real life, but only in a literary-fictional universe where representational devices such as pen, ink, paper, the microchip, and the pre-determined textual system condition the treatment of the subject matter.

Yet it is here that fictionality reveals itself as both a sign of death and of the infinite productivity of the sign. To write, Barth must select for recording only a few of the incidents or events that might have happened. Yet this *selective* treatment of the events means that only *particular* meanings can surface on the narrative. As anyone can see, this manner of proceeding imposes a *pattern* on the events themselves. This is why narrativity and textuality (writing) are interactively related (entwined). To write is to select, and thus to produce a mark which infects other marks with its own productive play. To narrativize is to use a determinate fictional technique which exists largely outside the conscious control of the writer.

One conclusion of this study which logically flows from this insight is that even if it is granted, as the historians have argued, that Barth's text is a *primary* document of history it does not detract from the fact that the past in *Travels and Discoveries* has arrived in the form of a text, a published account, not in its full redeemable presence. Therefore, this study cannot but reiterate that the writing of anything – history or travel – is analogous to writing a story because the writer is inevitably restricted by the tropes, conventions, and media of textuality and writing, rather than the allegedly intrinsic truth of the presentation or of the signified content. It is this insight which accounts for the fictional and linguistic indeterminacy at the heart of Barth's textualizations of the Sudan. Indeed it is this fictional and linguistic

liquid (the spillage and leaks of signification) which both *enables* and *destabilizes* Barth's representations.

This finding then commits this study to the proposition that because Barth writes, or has written, within a textual system whose logics and rhetorics he cannot manipulate at will, he himself has no absolute control over what he writes, and has written. In fact he uses the textual system only by submitting himself, up to a point, to its patterning and aporias. This is why his writing can proceed only by exclusions, or rather by erecting a system of demarcations and oppositions across an otherwise empty (textual) space. In fact this study finds that the entire rhetorical and conceptual universe of *Travels and Discoveries* consists of nothing but the translation of aporias into a decipherable script.

And so, as with all textuality, beyond and behind *Travels and Discoveries* there is, or has been, *nothing* but *writing*. Those referents or presences which the text names --- viz. the Sudan, Kano, Gajere, Caliph Aliyu, Sheik Omar, River Niger, Mount Baghzen, the *Tsamiya* tree, Bu-Sefi, etc --- have always existed, could exist only, as traces, supplements, substitute significations. This precisely is why *Travels and Discoveries* could exist as a book in the first place because if this were not so, that is those referents disappearing as natural presences, the text will have had no meaning, no language, and no signification. Thus the real, indubitable and naturally existing Sudan and its spiritual and material contexts have, paradoxically, *vanished* and been replaced by, and as, the signified content: the *Travels and Discoveries.*

It is this that explains why the historians have no option but to invoke the fixist concept, the *dead* historical metaphor, the *Travels and Discoveries* itself, as

the supplement and substitutive signification for that vast and multiplex *living* reality called the Sudan. Yet the historians' logocentrism is an implicit identification of fictionality with falsehood, or unreality. This is totally mistaken: thinking, writing and rationalizing cannot take place outside the imaginative or metaphorical act. Fictionality, this study finds, is neither presence nor absence, neither truth nor falsehood but the very *basis* of signification itself. It is thus clear that the well-entrenched academic historical practice of using Barth's interpretations as a *primary* text completely ignores or side-steps, the fact that Barth has merely *re-written* that which in itself has had its own meanings and contexts.

What the historian also misses is the insight, central to this study, that in the final analysis, Barth's desire to align the Sudan with a set of powerful and circumscribed meanings and interpretations, an ideal logocentrism, is never achieved. This is because his representation of the Sudan is available only as *his own* self-presentation; a self-presence shot through with traces of his repressed Other. Yet even those traces are not of the blood-and-flesh Other, but the Other which his text re-presents to the reader. It is here that we see the function of fictional devices such as rhetoric, representation, and narrativity in Barth's work. Just as Barth attempts to mark and organize the writing of, and over, the Sudan, so he has himself to be marked and organized by his text within a structure of artifice and prefabrication, as chapters four and six have found. To this extent, Barth has failed, despite the effort, to impose an interpretive closure on both his text and the Sudan, as the reader might have noticed in chapter five, where the landscape as a

whole (sceneries, bodies and voices) has both to figure as enchanted/disenchanted and pleasant/unpleasant.

At the beginning of his story, at the Preface to be precise, Barth lays out his system with aplomb. But by the end, he breaks down before our very eyes, and turns to the reader to help him stabilize the dazzling proliferation of signifiers he has unleashed, and which are now beyond his control.

And so Barth ends his book on a note of anxiety about his place in the pantheon of Western discoverers. And so discovery, which begins as a self-confident Reason, ends as middle-aged Rhetoric drowned in an ocean of anxiety. This study has found that anxiety indeed will continue to haunt many a historical study of Barth. Here is a Novel which, however, presents itself as an Encyclopaedia; a Representation that thinks it is the Original. And here also is the historian, who has, for institutional and discursive reasons, to pretend that what he is studying is a *document,* a *primary* archive, rather than a metaphor, the trace of writing, the shadowplay of infinite signification.

One purpose of this study is to uncover and highlight and bring to the surface the artifice, the prefabricatedness, fictionality and literariness of one of the most powerful texts of Eurocentrism and imperial arrogance. All this might show how we have been seduced by empiricist mythology, how we have been manipulated by bourgeois ideology, and the ramshackle yet pernicious way in which humanitarian and imperial Reason has been put together.

From the literary perspective, this study has found that the study of Barth as a storyteller, a narrativist and an embellisher need not be any less instructive,

profound or liberating than the study of Barth as a historian. Perhaps all this should, one day, be mobilized in a future struggle to decolonize knowledge, and thus unmask, for the benefit of *human* emancipation, all forms of colonial and dominatory discourses now masquerading as scientific or disinterested knowledges.

But this task could really begin, within Literary Studies at least, only when Literary Criticism begins to engage with the whole range of cultural practices and textual organizations, not just narrowly fictional works such as novels and poems. Only then can the literary critic demonstrate, and make sense of, the historical, political, and literary effectiveness that textuality, all textuality, has had, will continue to have, on the broad cultural, epistemological, and pedagogic fields.

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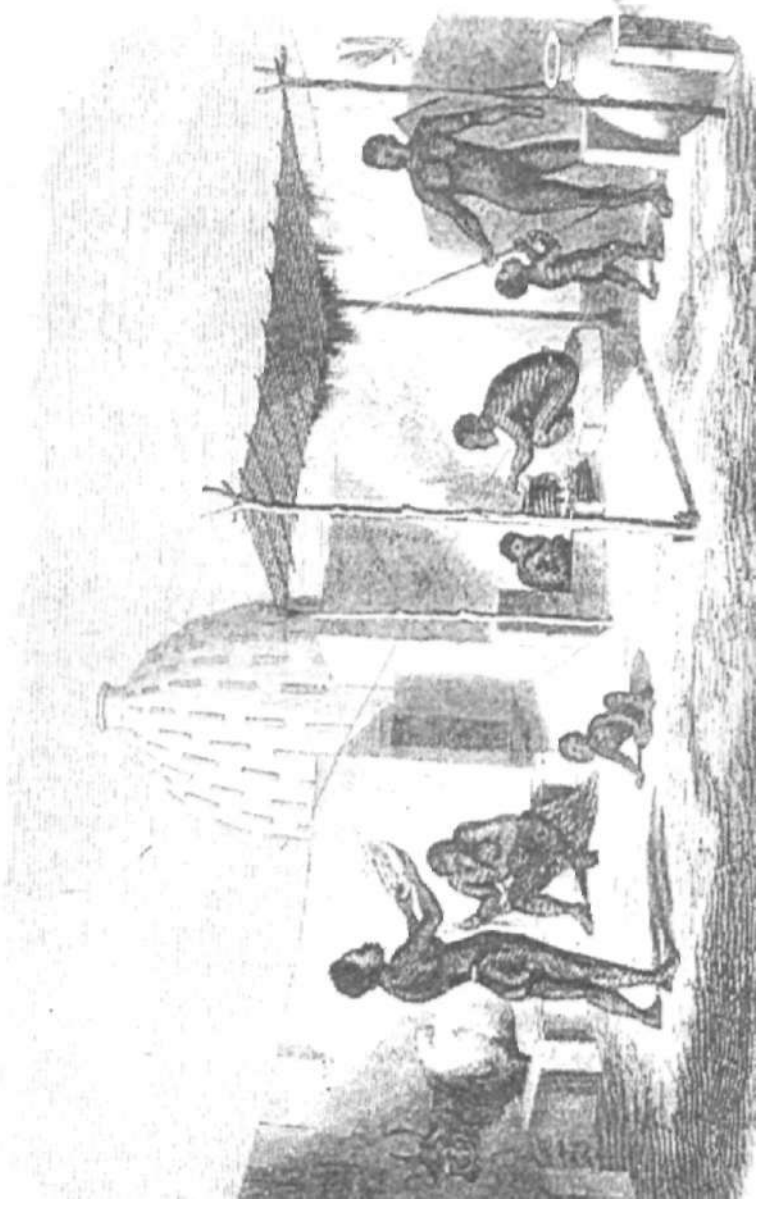
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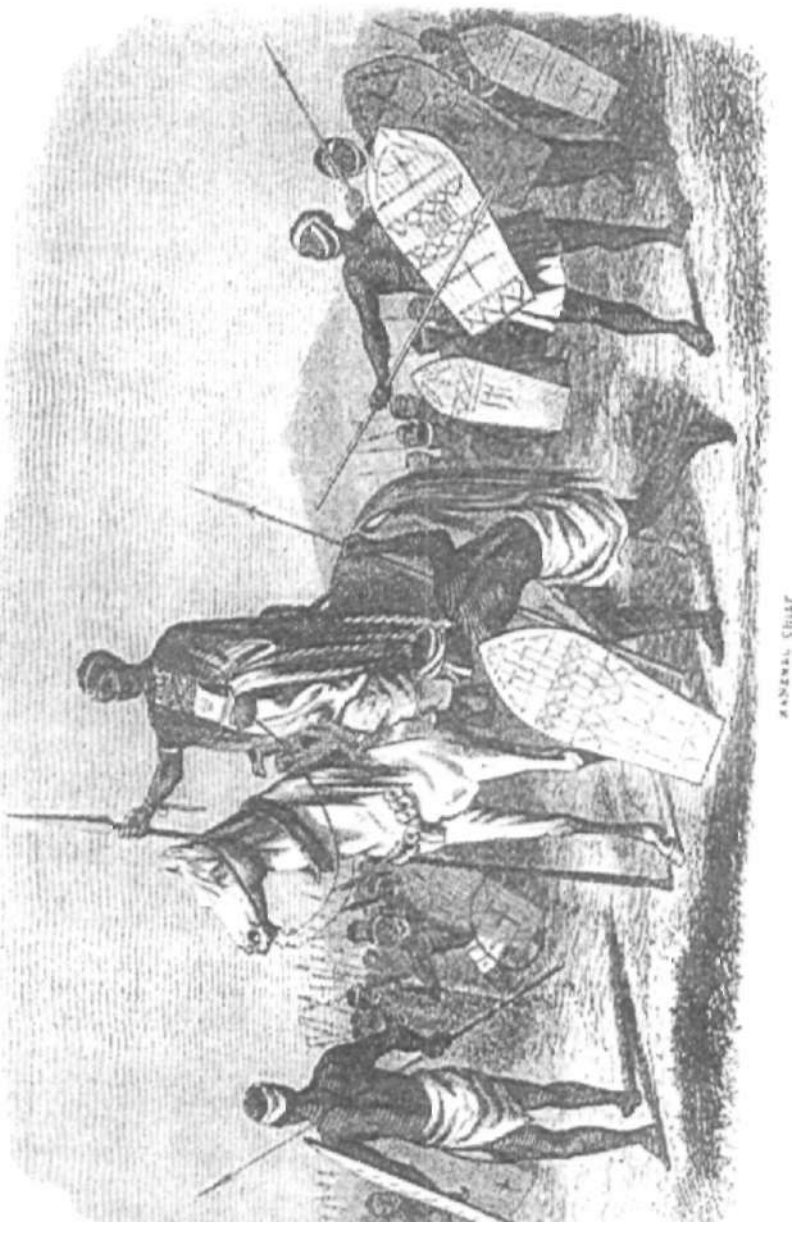
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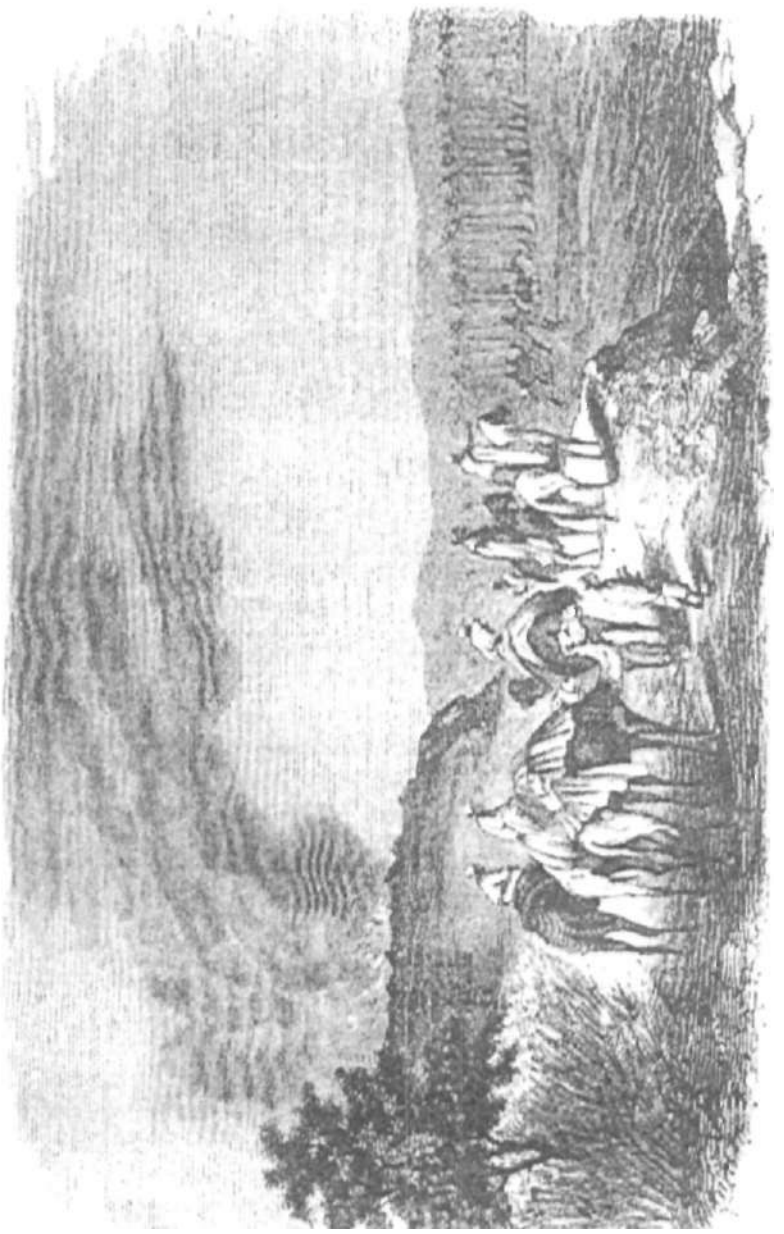
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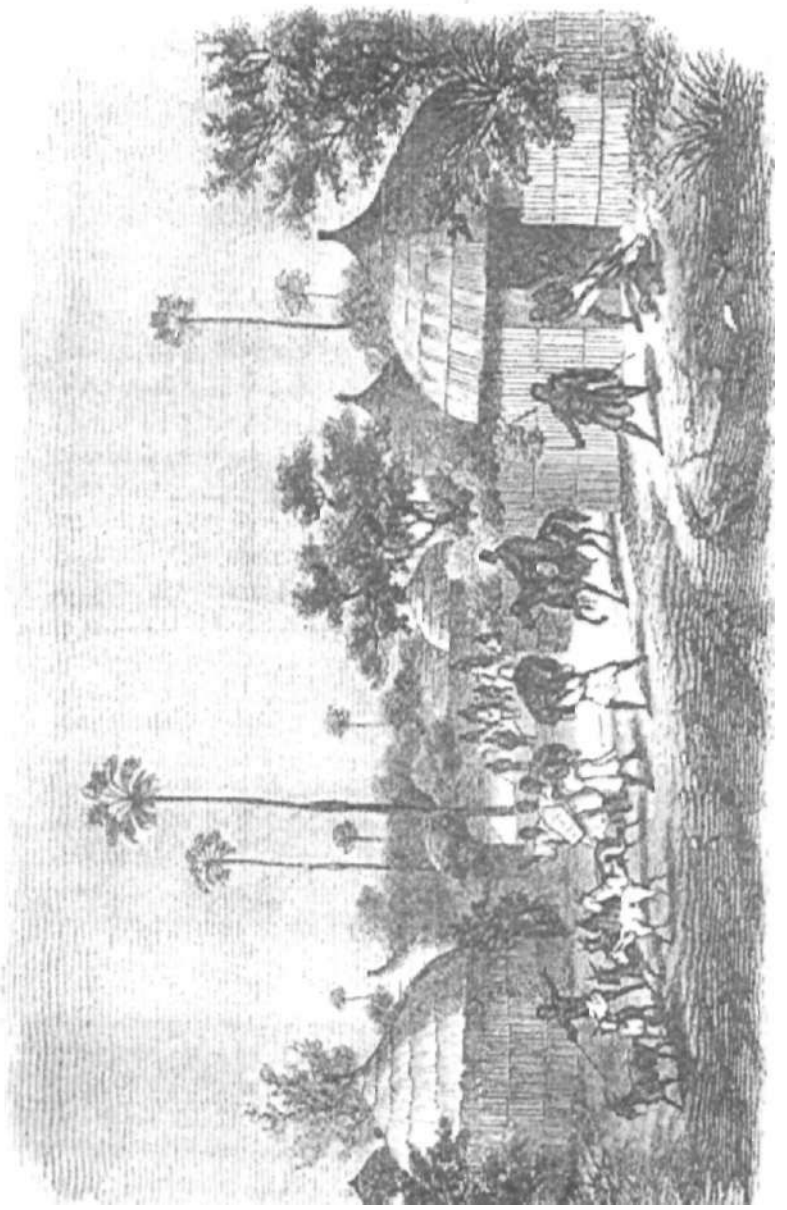
APPENDIX

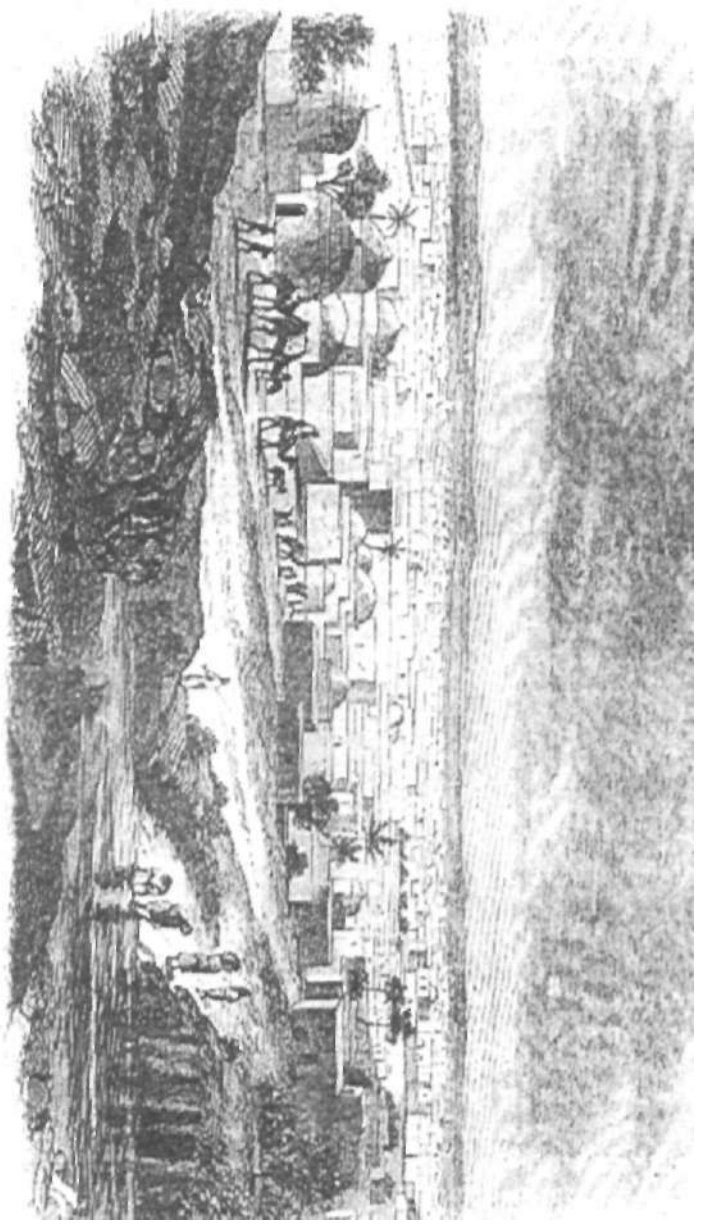
[Barth's Engravings are not captioned. They are intended to be contemplated in silence]



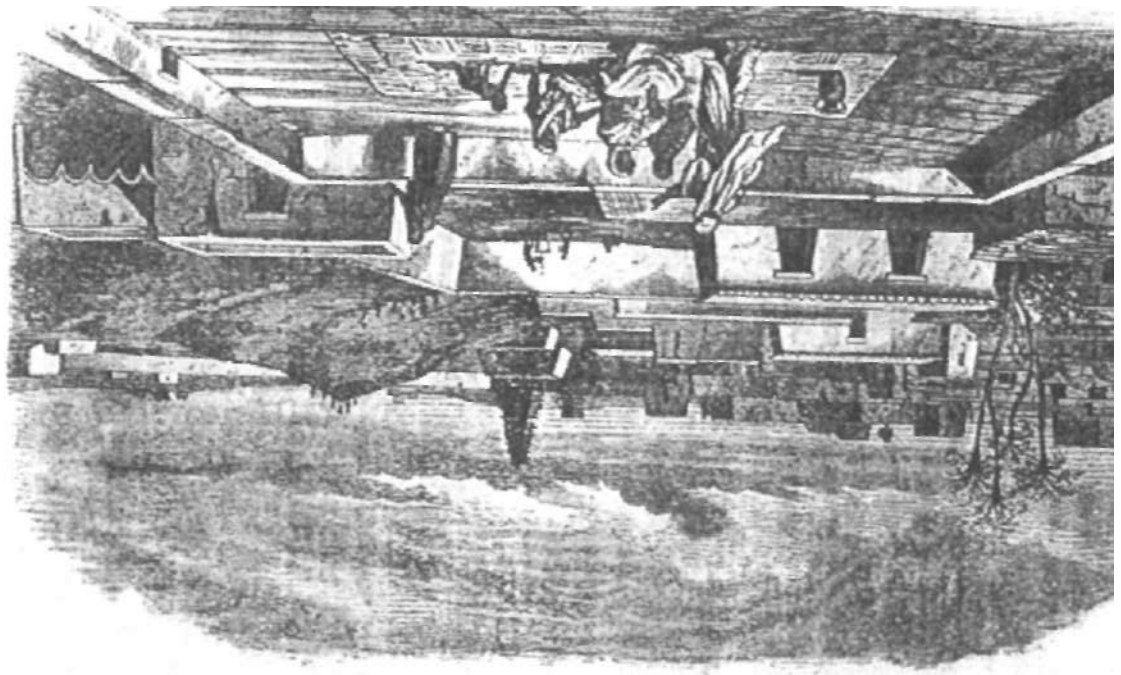


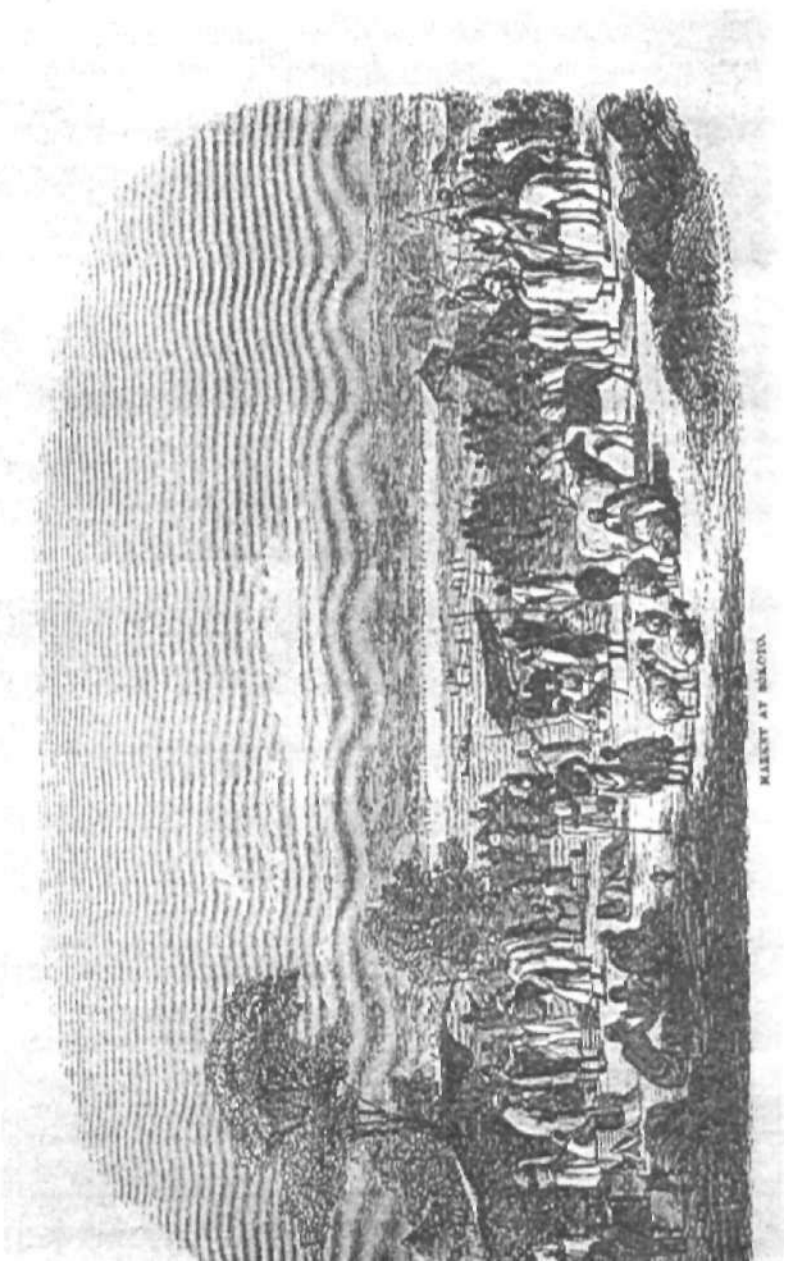











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