

Concurrences in Contemporary Travel Writing: Postcolonial Critique and Colonial Sentiments in Sven Lindqvist's *Exterminate all the Brutes* and *Terra Nullius*

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Abstract

Recent research highlights contemporary travel writing's complicity in global politics, and the genre is claimed to reproduce the discourses that constitute our understanding of the world. It has also been argued that the genre holds a possibility to help us gain further knowledge about contemporary global politics, as it may work as an arena where global politics is commented on, intervened with and reshaped. With this double view, current research exemplifies how scholars today grapple with the challenge of accounting for simultaneous and sometimes conflicting histories and conditions that are altered and affected by colonial contacts, practices and ideologies, and by recent globalisation. This article explores this double characteristic of the travelogue through the concept of concurrence, and discusses how this concept is useful as a tool for a new understanding of the genre. How can this concept be employed in an analysis of travel writing that is deeply engaged in a critique of colonialism and its legacy in today's globalism but is simultaneously enmeshed in and complicit with the legacy that it critiques? "Concurrence" is introduced as a concept for such analysis since it contains both the notion of simultaneity and competition. It is suggested that "concurrence" provides a conceptual framework that allows us to account for controversies, intersections and inequities without reinscribing them into a reconciled and universalizing perspective. In exploring the concept of concurrence, this article provides an initial analysis of two contemporary Swedish travel narratives by Sven Lindqvist. The analysis is focused on the genre's tension between fact and fiction, its discursive entanglement in colonialism, and the problem and possibility of writing postcolonial critique by use of this genre.

Keywords: Concurrence, complicity, decolonisation, Sven Lindqvist, postcolonial critique, travel writing, universalism

Introduction

“Are we there yet?” Debbie Lisle asks at the end of *The Global Politics of Contemporary Travel Writing* (Lisle 2011: 276). Echoing the traveller’s curiosity, impatience, and urgency of arrival, Lisle’s question refers to her call for a new form of travel writing that would “resuscitate” the genre as “a crucial site for political debate and resistance” (Lisle 2011: 276). While arguing that “travel writing is a form of global politics”, as it “reproduces the same discourses of difference that hold our prevailing understanding of the world in place”, Lisle also suggests that the genre holds the possibility to “help us understand the discursive terrain of global politics” (Lisle 2011: 277). In addition, she argues that because of its involvement in the reproduction of difference, its occasional participation in debates about global politics, and it being widely read, travel writing as such carries within it “the opportunity to comment on, shape and intervene in the ‘serious’ events of global politics” (Lisle 2011: 1, 276-7).

However, in her wider analysis of contemporary travel writing, Lisle identifies a number of issues that need to be addressed if the genre is to realize this opportunity. Pointing to the genre’s historical affiliation with the colonial project as being a fundamental problem that travel writers consistently fail to address, and showing that the encounter with and construction of difference are both the driving force and predicament of travel writing, she concludes that the genre is still “a profoundly *uncritical* literary formation”; it lacks a level of “*meta-conversation*” and self-reflexive questioning about the prevailing popularity of the genre and what role it plays in shaping and disseminating contemporary views of globalisation (Lisle 2011: 261-67, original emphases). It may not come as a surprise then that her answer to the question of arrival is negative. Despite the promise contemporary travel writing holds, the possibility of debate and resistance is yet to be fulfilled. Notwithstanding these points, and this is the strength and originality of her study, Lisle still refuses to forward a final analysis of the genre as “corrupt”. Nor does she provide a formula for evaluating or judging travel writing. Instead, she emphasises the “profound opportunity” to push at the boundaries that contemporary travel writing provides, and contends that the genre holds “the potential to re-imagine the world in ways that do not simply regurgitate the status quo or repeat a nostalgic longing for Empire” (Lisle 2011: xi).¹

Such re-imagination seems to be the objective of Swedish writer, literary scholar, and political debater Sven Lindqvist who in *Exterminate all the Brutes* and *Terra Nullius: Journey through No Man’s Land* makes use of the travel narrative as a frame for what is principally a history and searing critique of the colonial project, and its legacy of racism and genocide.² Both narratives were clearly written with the intent to contribute to a discussion of global politics. In *Exterminate all the Brutes*, Lindqvist sets off on a journey through history, scientific tracts, literature, 19th century imperialism, and the “deadest area of the Sahara” in order

to uncover the origins of Kurtz' chilling words "exterminate all the brutes" in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (Lindqvist 2007a: 2). In *Terra Nullius*, he travels through central and western Australia, telling yet another story of colonial brutality and genocide while visiting significant places in the history of white Australia's mistreatment of the Aboriginal peoples. The point of *Exterminate* is clearly stated, we already have the knowledge, "[w]hat is missing is the courage to understand what we know and to draw conclusions" (Lindqvist 2007a: 2). Lindqvist's narrative is meant to provide that courage. Likewise the story about the mistreatment of the Aboriginal peoples is well known; what Lindqvist hopes to achieve is to encourage a confession of the crime so that it can "be changed", rethought and reconciled, be given a "new setting and a new significance" (Lindqvist 2007b: 213). With such objectives, Lindqvist's travelogues may indeed belong with the travel narratives that Lisle envisions capable of commenting on, shaping and intervening in global politics.

However, Lindqvist's two travel narratives are not included in the travel writing that Lisle discusses in *The Global Politics*. Translated into English in 2007, *Terra Nullius* was not available to an English readership until the year after the publication of her study. However, *Exterminate all the Brutes* was translated in 1996, and it is unfortunate, though perhaps not surprising, that Lisle seems to have missed it despite the fact that it was widely acclaimed, was chosen as one of the best books by the *New Internationalist* in 1998 and described as a "beautifully written integration of criticism, cultural history and travel writing, underpinned by a passion for social justice" (*New Internationalist* 1999: par 5).³ The travelogues span the same period of the 1990s and the first years of the 21st century that Lisle studies and would have complemented the analysis. Like the travel narratives by Jennie Diski, Amitav Ghosh and Harry Ritchie, which Lisle argues are more critically aware and thus come closer to providing a site for debate, *Exterminate* and *Terra Nullius* clearly "acknowledge ... the constraints of traditional history telling" (Lisle 2011: 259), as Lindqvist combines historiography and travelogue in order to provoke his readers to acknowledge what they "already know" and "draw conclusions" about the legacy of colonialism.⁴

Convening thus at the intersection of European imperialism, political debate, global politics and travel writing, Lisle's study and Lindqvist's travelogues provoke further discussion about the challenges of writing postcolonial critique. They provide a site for re-addressing significant questions about the possibilities and constraints of writing postcolonial critique, questions which writers, scholars and critics as diverse as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Walter D. Mignolo already discussed in the early 1990s but which still remain topical in the field of postcolonial studies today. At the core of the discussion is, what Mignolo calls, "the locus of enunciation constructed by the speaker or writer" or the "what where and why" (Mignolo 1993: 122). Thus, what these critics brought to early attention is that geographic location, cultural entanglements, and epistemo-

logical privilege (or disprivilege) need also to be considered intrinsic parts of the act and praxis of postcolonial critique.

This article aims to re-examine the complexity of writing postcolonial critique through a close reading of Sven Lindqvist's two travelogues, set in relief against Debbie Lisle's study. Beside the reviews from the time of their publication, there is very little research or published criticism on *Exterminate* and *Terra Nullius*. While adding to the scholarship on Lindqvist's travelogues, this article does not provide room for presenting an outline of Lindqvist's literary and scholarly production, or for providing an in-depth analysis of the narratives as such. Instead, the main objective is to let the comments on the narratives function as stepping-stones to a more general discussion of the challenges of voicing postcolonial critique through the particular genre of travel writing.

The impetus of this study is the basic question: How is it that Sven Lindqvist's postcolonial critique has elicited such ambivalent response by its reviewers? The question may also be formulated as how is it that Lindqvist's critique can be so compelling to the reader while at the same time the mode in which it is written is considered so disturbing? The thesis of the study is that this ambivalence is neither a weakness nor a flaw of the narratives, but a necessary effect of Lindqvist's chosen genre of writing and a prerequisite for his postcolonial critique.

Implicit in this article is a theory of concurrences that takes globalisation, anxiety about the genre of travel writing and the tension between fiction and non-fiction as significant and interconnected discursive fields. I will explore how their interconnectedness becomes a constitutive feature of the postcolonial critique that Sven Lindqvist articulates in *Exterminate* and *Terra Nullius*.

The Global Present of the Colonial Legacy

The narratives of *Exterminate all the Brutes* and *Terra Nullius* were written with the ambition to contribute to a discussion of global politics. Their historiography does not merely constitute a digest and explanation of patterns in the colonial past, it also forms the claim that these patterns are still at work in the present. Moreover, this present is a global present. At the end of *Terra Nullius*, it is implied that white Australia needs to understand that its historic debt to the Aboriginal peoples is not solely a local and past matter but part of a current global condition.⁵ Hence, the reader is prompted to draw the conclusion that Lindqvist's critique in *Terra Nullius* should not be read as simply a critique of white Australia's inability to deal with their local history but also as a critique of the global now. Similarly, the concluding points in *Exterminate* maintain that we must not read the different instances of oppressive colonial regimes as "unique" and "one-of-a-kind phenomenon[a]", nor continue to deny that these regimes were part and symptoms of a massive colonial ideology and practice that had and continues to have global ramifications (Lindqvist 2007a: 171 and ch. 166-168).

Lindqvist's Affinities with Postcolonial Criticism

With this insistence upon a global now of the colonial legacy, Lindqvist's travel narratives promote a perspective on the contemporary world order that is similar to the revisions of colonial historiography that emerged in the 1990s and redefined the "post" in postcolonialism. No longer understood or used as a periodising term, "'post-' in 'postcolonial criticism'", to borrow a definition from Neil Lazarus, became "directed against the assumptions of the 'ideological discourses of modernity'" instead of denoting "a 'cut' or break in time, such that one could speak of a colonial 'before' and a postcolonial 'after'" (Lazarus 2012: 12). Thus, by maintaining in the preface to the English translation of *Exterminate* as well as in the travelogue itself that there are decisive links between the colonial project of "European world expansion" and "new outrages" such as the Holocaust (ix), Lindqvist displays his affinities with the postcolonial criticism that is formulated in the 1990s by scholars such as Homi Bhabha, who at the time described the postcolonial perspective as "formulat[ing] critical revisions" of the historical narratives and as bearing "witness to the unequal and uneven forces of cultural representation involved in the contest for political and social authority within the modern world order" (Bhabha 1994 : 171). Thus, following Lazarus' analysis, "post-colonial", as employed by Bhabha, "is a fighting term, a theoretical weapon that 'intervenes' in existing debates and 'resists' certain political and philosophical constructions" (Lazarus 2012: 12).

Although Lindqvist does not explicitly claim to be a postcolonial scholar or historian, *Exterminate* and *Terra Nullius* undoubtedly carry the ambition to "intervene" and "'resist' ... political and philosophical constructions" when Lindqvist rewrites European histories of genocide as deeply enmeshed in colonialism, and Australian settler colonialism as genocide. Moreover, Bhabha's notion of postcolonialism as a "fighting term" is also appropriate for describing the fighting stance of Lindqvist's texts, which make use of scenes and imagery of combat when describing his research and travels, so that "fighting" becomes a trope in the texts.

The Battle of Research, Travel and Truth

What kind of a traveller is Sven Lindqvist; why does he travel? To Lindqvist, travel is always secondary. First and foremost, he is a reader and a researcher.⁶ Travel is, however, integral to his writing, and Lindqvist's method of writing has been described as a two-step process: first he reads in the library, second he travels to find out whether the books told the truth or not (Lundqvist 2004: 7). His travels thus take place either to authenticate or to challenge what he has discovered in between the covers of the books, and on the shelves and in the boxes of the archives.

Lindqvist is also a writer who is resolute about finding and telling the truth, which many bear witness to and his own writing takes as a central theme. In *Röster om Sven Lindqvist* (Voices on Sven Lindqvist), a collection of papers and conversations from a symposium in 2002 about Lindqvist and his authorship, several of the contributors present Lindqvist as a seeker of the truth. For instance, literary scholar Horace Engdahl takes the matter of truth as the topic for his paper as he argues that Lindqvist not only seeks to find and report on the truth, he also wishes to bear witness to it. Engdahl then continues to point out that Lindqvist's "truth" in *Exterminate* oscillates between two irreconcilable kinds of truth: the researcher's "be convinced" and the traveller's "believe me" (Engdahl 2004: 30, my translation). Research, travel and truth are thus interlinked in Lindqvist's writing.

Furthermore, Lindqvist himself emphasises this interlinking as he often frames his search for truth as an intellectual as well as physical battle and uncovering that takes place at the moment of travel itself. Already at the outset of *Exterminate*, reaching truth is described as a struggle that takes place in a colonial-postcolonial site that is simultaneously material and ideational, as the traveller-researcher has to fight Algerian soldiers for a seat on the bus whilst being encumbered by the embodiment of his collected colonial history, his computer:

You fight your way to a seat in competition with a dozen or so soldiers in crude army boots who have learned their queuing technique in the close-combat school of the Algerian army in Sidi-bel-Abbès. Anyone carrying under one arm the core of European thought stored on an old-fashioned computer is obviously handicapped. (Lindqvist 2007a: 2).

What may at first read like the everyday bustle on crowded desert buses turns out to be a metaphor for both Lindqvist's research and postcolonial critique in general. The traveller-researcher must not only fight for a seat on the bus; but also, that fight is directly related to the legacy of colonialism, which is literally his luggage. Fighting his way among the soldiers whilst carrying "the core of European thought", Lindqvist's fight for a seat is also a fight with and against the political and philosophical constructions of which he has set out to explore and learn the truth.

In *Terra Nullius*, the struggle to unravel the ramifications of European thought takes place as a fight against Australia's collective amnesia about the treatment of the Aboriginal peoples. And, as in *Exterminate*, it is a struggle that takes place on site. Here, the narrative opens with a short note on the meaning of *terra nullius* and how it was "used to justify European occupation of large parts of the global land surface" and in Australia "legitimiz[ed] the British invasion" (Lindqvist 2007b: 4). This section is then followed by the story of the writer's attempt at finding Moorundie, the "site of the first fighting between whites and blacks in South Australia". However, the site turns out to be very difficult to find, and by juxtaposing the concept of *terra nullius* with the story of finding the site, Lind-

qvist establishes the association that the contemporary struggle is a direct consequence of the colonial mindset that dispossessed the Aboriginal peoples of their land in the first place. The difficulty to uncover the site becomes emblematic for Australia's forgetfulness, something that sorely needs to be fought against and rectified by the writer, since Moorundie is marked on no "maps or itineraries", and neither the South Australian Museum (which we are told offers an Indigenous Australians exhibition), two tourist offices, nor "the RAC in Adelaide . . . know anything about it" (Lindqvist 2007b: 4).

The Rhetoric of Peril and Discomfort

Opening both narratives with images of struggle, Lindqvist thus links his writing to the notions of fight and intervention in postcolonial criticism and signals that he is engaged in a critical pursuit in more than one way. The pursuit is critical as he writes a critique of the global condition. In addition, it is critical, as in being dangerous and life threatening, as he inscribes his traveller-researcher into the rhetoric of peril, of the dangers of exploration and hardship of travel, which is so often found in travel writing.

Images of fear and perilous adventure appear frequently in *Exterminate*. Stepping off the bus in the middle of the night near the desert town of In Salah and unsure of which direction to take, Lindqvist remembers that it was in this very place that "the Scottish explorer Alexander Gordon Laing was attacked and robbed", and expounds in great detail on the brutality and "dreadful gash[es]" of the "five saber cuts" the explorer suffered, effectively linking his own exposed situation as a lone stranger lost in the dark desert to the plight of his predecessor (Lindqvist 2007a: 3-4). And in the subsequent chapter, the topic is fear in Conrad and Hobbes, which leads on to Lindqvist pondering on his own fear of travel (Lindqvist 2007a: 5). In addition, on his way to Arlit, Lindqvist suffers a sand storm that makes him fear for his life: "Suddenly, I realize this is my very last moment. That this is where I have come to die" (Lindqvist 2007a: 95).⁷

As Carl Thompson points out in *Travel Writing*, a recent introductory guide to the genre and current debates in the field, this rhetoric of peril is not only common in travel writing, it has a function of lending authenticity to the narrative:

[A]n air of conspicuous hardship and peril will also frequently serve a useful rhetorical purpose for travellers and travel writers. By this means, a journey may be presented as a genuine challenge, and so as a genuine learning experience, for the travelling self. This in turn allows the journey to be presented as a form of pilgrimage or exploration, rather than some sort of self-indulgent jaunt. One might suggest, therefore, that dangers and discomforts often function principally as the *markers* of the supposedly "authentic" travel experience, and that they are therefore sometimes deliberately sought out so as to strengthen the traveller's claim to have acquired a more authentic and insightful knowledge of both self and Other. (Thompson 2011: 124, original emphasis)

Thus, the hardships and dangers that Lindqvist's traveller-researcher recounts in *Exterminate* lend authenticity to the narrative on two levels. The descriptions of the physical hardship of the travels bestow credibility on his intellectual pursuit as well as authenticity on his analysis of the "core of European thought". The "learning" that has taken place is "genuine".

A similar rhetorical strategy is at work in *Terra Nullius*. However, in this travelogue, the rhetoric of peril from *Exterminate* has been superseded by a rhetoric of discomfort. Yet, this rhetoric does not fully convince, which I believe is one of the reasons that the critique in *Terra Nullius* is also put into question by several of its readers. In fact, Peter Conrad even chides Lindqvist for it, arguing in his review that the hardship Lindqvist suffers is inauthentic and paints a stark contrast to the suffering on which he is reporting:

[Lindqvist] relishes the discomforts of the journey: he is a liberal performing a penitential rite, volunteering to suffer in commiseration with his afflicted subjects. But how profound is his empathetic pain? A hotel near Moorundie, he reports, is "shockingly overpriced" with "hollow, sagging beds". Outside Kalgoorlie, he breakfasts in another hotel where "the smell of the food is so greasy you could fry eggs in it". Somehow, I don't think that lumpy beds and fatty fry-ups qualify as a course of self-mortification. (Conrad 2007: par 8)

Here we can see that the rhetoric of discomfort is in place; the reviewer clearly identifies it but in this example it is judged bathetic and unqualified.

Besides lending the narrative a mark of authenticity, as Thompson points out, I would further emphasise that the rhetoric of peril and discomfort has the function of providing the narrator with discursive authority; the knowledge the narrator purports is accepted more readily by the reader because he has risked his life or comforts to gain it. The risks "strengthen the traveller's claim to have acquired a more authentic and insightful knowledge" (Thompson 2011: 124). This function of the rhetoric becomes highly visible in the passage where the traveller-researcher of *Terra Nullius* finds himself at "the end of the road", having endured the discomforts of the "coldest night of the year in Kalgoorlie", and as a result discovers that documentation and real experience correspond: "Just seeing a place like that on a map gives me an adrenaline rush. And to actually be here, to see map and reality coincide for a moment – what does it matter that the room is shabby, the lights dim, the food inedible? It matters not at all. I'm happy" (Lindqvist 2007b: 144-6). Discomfort strengthens the significance of the insight gained through experience.

Yet, the problem with *Terra Nullius*, which Conrad's review brings out, is that Lindqvist's discomforts do not match the gravity of his historiography, nor his "Olympian judgements about Australia" (Conrad 2007: par 10). The claims of the historiography apparently do not match the expectations placed on the genre of travel writing.

Discursive Authority and Conflictual Entanglements

It seems there is an inherent conflict and imbalance in the travelogue that arises from Lindqvist's combination of narrative forms. Both historiography and travel writing are invested in discursive authority and conveying "facts" about the world. Yet, this authority is also set against the inherent tension in the genre of travel writing and its affinity with story telling and fiction. Arguably, this is also the challenge of writing postcolonial critique in the form of travel writing, and something that contemporary travel writers must address more explicitly: the conflict and imbalances between fact and fiction, and between history and story. Yet, I do not argue that this is an imbalance that needs to be settled. On the contrary, I maintain along with Lisle, that the "genre's precarious positions – between fact and fiction, identity and difference, local and global, and past and present" is what makes travel writing "a crucial site for political debate and resistance", and that the real challenge is to grapple with the imbalances and "draw significance" from this position "*without* re-installing hegemonic discourses of difference" (Lisle 2007: 276).

In both narratives, it is quickly established that Lindqvist as traveller and writer is quite similar to the travel writers of the typical travelogue: "they seek after 'truths' they imagine they already have in their possession" (Holland & Huggan 2000: 11). In the Sahara, Lindqvist already possesses the truth he is to uncover during his travels through the desert; as we have seen, he literally carries it with him. In Australia, he knows more about the history and geography of the place than the expert locals – the museum personnel, the tourist offices and the RAC. Hence, *Exterminate* and *Terra Nullius* can be said to "occupy" the same "space of discursive conflict" that Holland and Huggan argue is characteristic of contemporary travel writing as they too "claim validity – or make as if to claim it – by referring to actual events and places, but then assimilate those places to a highly personal vision" (Holland & Huggan 2000: 10). The reported moments on site are quickly interpreted as "evidence" of what Lindqvist set out to unveil in the first place.

Holland and Huggan further claim that the discursive conflict arises as travel writing "negotiates the slippage between ... two modes" of writing, namely "subjective inquiry and objective documentation", and point out that this negotiation in fact becomes a means to "maximize the writer's discursive authority" (Holland & Huggan 2000:11). Indeed, this maximization of discursive authority becomes particularly prominent in Lindqvist's narratives since the gap between objective documentation and subjective experiences on site is wider than in most travelogues. The historical documentation is meticulously presented in both narratives in a notes section at the end; in *Terra Nullius*, the heavy annotation is further complemented with a chronology of historical events and a bibliography. Compared to other travel writing, the subjective experiences of the actual travelling are signifi-

cantly less reported on. In fact, it is quite surprising that none of the reviewers, writers and scholars that have written about the narratives questions the reason for Lindqvist's travels, nor do they comment on the fact that the historiography on imperialism and genocide in both narratives could just as well have worked on its own without the interspersed anecdotes of travel. Perhaps the reason for this lies in the genre of travel writing itself; the discursive conflict is already taken for granted and accepted, and since both narratives include enough signals to place them safely in the genre despite the unusual amount of historical documentation there is no need to pose the questions. Both narratives display phrases that connote travel on the cover, "one man's odyssey" and "journey through no one's land"; they open with section headings indicating a geographic destination, "To In Salah" and "To Moorundie"; and in *Terra Nullius* there are maps of Lindqvist's itineraries at the beginning of each section.

However, by combining historiography with the subjective experiences of travel the maximization that Holland and Huggan point to also runs the risk of a minimization of discursive authority since it opens the narrative to travel writing's fictional character. Because with this combination, Lindqvist inscribes his historiography in a discursive setting that is characterised by dubious claims of truth and truthfulness. When the researcher's epistemological "odyssey" and "journey" is thus interlinked with actual travel reportage, the historical narrative simultaneously gains and loses discursive authority. Precisely because of the stress on the writer's actual presence on site and having witnessed what he reports on, travel writing is a genre where authorial reliability and unreliability is highlighted. As Carl Thompson points out, the genre's

appeal to the authority of the eye-witness, however, is not without its problems for travellers and travel writers. If on the one hand it lends the traveller's report an authoritative status, on the other it may also render the traveller an object of suspicion. Rooted as it is in personal experience, the traveller's account will often contain details that cannot be confirmed by any other witness, and that cannot receive external verification. The audience to any traveller's tale must therefore frequently defer to the traveller, taking on trust his or her report. This requirement to trust the traveller, however, may engender scepticism rather than belief. (Thompson 2011: 65).

Losing Discursive Authority and Problematic Representations

Writing postcolonial critique through such a fraught genre may thus seem to risk discursive authority to such a degree that the critique loses its efficacy. Indeed, this also happens in some of the reviews of *Terra Nullius*, where Lindqvist is criticised for writing Aboriginal history yet in his narrative never speaks to a single Aborigine. Robert Manne, for example, writes in *The Monthly*: "It is a very telling weakness of *Terra Nullius* that, during his travels, he appears to have taken almost no interest in contemporary Aboriginal societies" (Manne 2007: par 9). Likewise, Sean Gorman of *The Age* is mystified by the absence of Australian indigenous

people in the narrative: “there is not a single sentence of conversation with a blackfella. Where have they gone?” (Gorman 2007: 24). This lack of contact with indigenous Australians has also been noted by Swedish reviewers and there is no denying that it is a curious absence in a text that has such a clear objective to report on and to critique not only past crimes against the indigenous population but also contemporary Australia’s failure to properly address the guilt and legacy of the colonial project.

However, the absence of the Aboriginal peoples in *Terra Nullius* is not absolute. There is one single scene of “encounter” in the travelogue, which occurs when the traveller-researcher visits a bar in a town at the rim of the Great Victoria Desert. The encounter is described in one short paragraph:

Whites are drinking with whites in the bar, blacks with blacks. They pretend not to notice each other. The black people are watching dog and horse racing on television, faithfully staking their money in a betting machine before the start of every new race. By about six, Thursday evening in Laverton has begun. Only the hotel, the liquor store and the police station are still open. (Lindqvist 2007b: 146)

The paragraph is short but charged, and can be interpreted in different ways. On the one hand, it can be read as an illustration of what Lindqvist is trying to “fight” by writing his historiography and travel narrative: the fact that the Aboriginal peoples are present but are still “made null” in white Australian society. They are “unseen” by the whites and respond by not “looking back” as the two groups “pretend not to notice each other”. The passage could thus function as an example of how white and (colloquially referred to) black existence still takes place in coinciding yet separate spheres and that the structures of colonialism are still at work. On the other hand, since this is the only appearance of contemporary indigenous persons in the narrative, the way they are represented in this passage becomes counter-productive to the objective of the narrative, since it threatens to inscribe contemporary Aboriginal people into the same narrative of victimhood and loss as the one that his historiography describes. There is a note of misery here, of drinking, betting and possible clashes with the police, that caters to a one-sided view of contemporary Aboriginal life as marked by alcoholism, addiction to gambling, and recurring problems with the law.

Due to the fact that Lindqvist’s narrative is not counter-balanced by further encounters, includes no other images and representations of the many different lives that the Aboriginal peoples lead today, and it only recounts the story of their past, the narrative becomes entangled in the old colonial imagery in which indigenous peoples are “symbolically displaced onto”, what Anne McClintock has called, “*anachronistic space*” (McClintock 1995:30, original emphasis). In *Imperial Leather*, McClintock discusses how the “myth of the empty land” available for colonisation entailed the notion that “indigenous people do not inhabit history proper but exist in a permanently anterior time within the geographic space of the modern empire as anachronistic humans ... bereft of human agency – the living

embodiment of the archaic ‘primitive’” (McClintock 1995: 30). With his historiography, Lindqvist tries to counteract this colonial trope as he shows us that the Aboriginal peoples do have a long history both before and during colonisation. Nonetheless, his narrative cannot fully escape placing the contemporary Aboriginal peoples in a similar anachronistic space. Lindqvist critiques the fact that white Australia has not acknowledged its past crimes and thus perpetuates the past; yet here, he simultaneously places the Aboriginal people outside contemporary Australia. Even though they figure briefly in this passage, the contemporary “blacks” in Lindqvist’s narrative do not really share the space and time from which the traveller-researcher tells their story; their space and time is rather that of the Aboriginal peoples whose past fate is the topic of the narrative.

It could of course be argued that the passage shows an equally miserable and problematic view of the white Australians in the bar. However, taking into consideration that there are other encounters with white Australians in the narrative, and that together they give a diverse representation of the whites, the argument does not hold. For one thing, Lindqvist’s traveller-researcher speaks with the white Australians that he meets on his journey, and reports on their conversations. But we never get to read a word uttered by a living indigenous Australian along the road. The different encounters and reported conversations with white Australians thus make it possible to recognise them as encounters with individuals, whereas the singular appearance of contemporary indigenous Australians in the bar scene shifts the image of them toward a universalising, essentialist representation of a timeless people.

Hence, another problem with Lindqvist’s historiographical travel narrative is that he has taken upon himself to interpret and speak *for* Australian indigenous people without ever having spoken *with* them. He tells their history, but that history is based on sources from predominantly Western “archives”: the narratives of colonists, anthropologist, scientists, and missionaries. The history that we get to partake of is a colonial history into which the Aboriginal peoples have already been assimilated.

The Challenge of the Postcolonial Critic and Lindqvist’s Method of Writing

With the imbalance in encounters with contemporary whites and blacks, lack of direct contact with contemporary indigenous people, and tendency toward an essentialist representation of them, *Terra Nullius* reprises the same problem of the indigenous and colonized subjects’ historical representability that Spivak brings attention to in “Can the Subaltern Speak?”. In this seminal essay on the problems and challenges of Subaltern Studies,⁸ Spivak dismantles and warns against the tendency of the “benevolent *Western* intellectual[s]” to speak for the oppressed as an authoritative representative without considering their own entanglement in the

epistemic systems that have constructed the subaltern subject in the first place (Spivak 1994: 87-9, original emphasis). In her analysis, the way many postcolonial scholars have been speaking for indigenous and colonized subjects has instead had the effect of “muting” them. She argues that “the substantive concern for the politics of the oppressed ... can hide a privileging of the intellectual and of the ‘concrete’ subject of oppression” (Spivak 1994: 87). The challenge for the postcolonial critic and consequently for a writer like Lindqvist, “who feel that the [indigenous and colonial] ‘subject’ has a history”, is to “resist and critique ‘recognition’ of the Third World through ‘assimilation’” (Spivak 1994: 88). And by “assimilation”, Spivak means the propensity in Western epistemology for the “ethnocentric Subject” – the Western critic – to “establish... itself by selectively defining an Other” (i. e. constructing the colonial subject as that which the Western Subject is not) and for “the complicity of the investigating subject ... to disguise itself in transparency” when establishing this self; both of which have the effect of either making the subaltern disappear into silence or function symbolically as an “invocation” of “the *authenticity* of the Other”, as well as repeating the epistemic violence of imperialism and making its circuit invisible once again (Spivak 1994: 87-90, original emphasis).

Spivak’s argument in “Can the Subaltern Speak?” is complex. It builds on both Marxist and poststructuralist theories of power and knowledge, and it resists brief summary. However, the crucial point that I wish to highlight here is the problem of transparency. What Spivak points to regarding “transparency” is the long history of Western epistemology that renders the place of the investigating intellectual as being objective and free of complicity and ideological entanglements. The methodological challenge for the postcolonial critic is thus to find a way of acknowledging and understanding the ramifications of this position of alleged transparency. It is a “sanctioned ignorance that every critic of imperialism must chart” (Spivak 1994: 86). At the same time, Spivak implies that this work can never be completed; assuming a resolution would be to reassimilate one’s position into that ideational transparency once more.

Although Spivak’s critique in the essay is specifically directed at the work of the Subaltern Studies group and focuses on Western feminists’ construction of the subaltern woman, her problematization of the position of the postcolonial critic is equally applicable to contemporary travel writing with ambitions to comment on global politics. The position of the travel writer is seldom reflected upon in contemporary travel writing, and this is also what Debbie Lisle argues needs to be addressed if the genre is to fulfil its promise “to encourage a radically diverse global community unconstrained by Enlightenment notions of civilisation and progress” (Lisle 2006: 6). However, according to her study, much contemporary travel writing “continues in the colonial tradition: it reproduces a dominant Western civilisation from which travel writers emerge to document other states, cultures and peoples. In this sense, travel writers continue to secure their privileged

position by categorising, critiquing and passing judgement on less-civilised areas of the world” (Lisle 2006: 3).

What is interesting about Lindqvist’s travelogues is that in *Exterminate* and *Terra Nullius* the privileged positions of the postcolonial critic and the contemporary travel writer concur. Moreover, Lindqvist’s method of writing, of combining historiography and travelogue, not only highlights the position, it also includes an awareness, albeit limited, of both the constructed notion of and the impossibility of achieving such a transparent position. This, I would argue, is yet another reason why his narratives, and *Terra Nullius* in particular, have received such ambivalent response by the reviewers. Lindqvist’s chosen form of combining two different genres of writing poses new challenges for the reader whose expectations of the narrative as travelogue are suddenly confronted and jeopardized. The comfort of reading within the boundaries of genre is disturbed and we shall see presently how this troubles one reviewer in particular.

Both travelogues have on the whole been quite well received both in Sweden and by the English-speaking readership. A quick sampling of the reviews shows that even though some find the conclusions quite a mouthful and overreaching, the texts are considered timely, thought provoking, and an important contribution to contemporary debate. In fact, two reviewers even recommend *Exterminate* as “school curriculum material” (Baird 1998: 34), and as being “appropriate for upper division and graduate courses as the starting point for a discussion of European imperialism or intellectual history” (Melancon 1998: 686).

At the same time, as noted in earlier examples, several reviewers express different levels of unease about the way Lindqvist voices his critique and draw attention to incongruities in the narratives as, for example, the fact that Lindqvist in *Terra Nullius* complains about the discomforts on the road and poor standard rooms while travelling in the footsteps of genocide (Conrad), and that he purports to tell the history of Aboriginal experience and Australian guilt without talking to any Aboriginal people (Conrad, Ehrnrooth, Gorman, Hallgren, Manne, Sandström). Furthermore, Swedish reviewer Hanna Hallgren has brought attention to questions that Lindqvist does not discuss, such as how his position as a white man affects the narrative perspective (Hallgren 2005: par 6).

However, there is one review that I wish to draw particular attention to since it addresses the topic of this article, namely the effect Lindqvist’s choice to combine historiography with travel writing has on his postcolonial critique. In the *New Humanist*, Daniel Miller ends his review of *Terra Nullius* with a comment on why he thinks the book is highly flawed and “comes to feel hollow and false” (Miller 2007: par. 8). I will quote this at length because the “problem” that Miller identifies runs against the grain of what Debbie Lisle, Patrick Holland, and Graham Huggan consider a possibility of contemporary travel writing today, namely, the transgressive blurring of generic boundaries which may open up a space for political commentary:

The fundamental problem with *Terra Nullius*, the one from which all its other problems derive, is stylistic. It tries to be too many different things at the same time. ... On the one hand, it understands itself as a travelogue, refusing to explain, refusing to offer a rational critique, and thus cheerfully abdicates all claims to real political seriousness. On the other hand, it tries to be a political history, and thus wants [to] be taken extremely seriously, and so swerves into rhetoric, a domineering tone and a sarcastic manner, in a vain effort to achieve this on the cheap. The overall effect is unhappy, and at several points grotesque – most notably ... where Lindqvist takes a series of ill-tempered pot-shots at the Western philosophical canon, and the numerous moments throughout where he swerves into staggeringly glib Neo-Orientalist fantasy. For all of Lindqvist's high moral purpose, this book is frankly disastrous. (Miller 2007: par 9)

Apparently, Miller is disturbed by the fact that the narrative seems to be neither nor genrewise. Structured as a travelogue, it cannot be taken seriously as it does not “offer a rational critique”, at the same time the objective of writing serious “political history” is not achieved due to the level of rhetoric. The comment on “Neo-Orientalist fantasy” also signals that the narrative may still, to borrow a pertinent phrase from Lisle, “operate” in an “uncertain political terrain that is haunted by the logic of Empire” (Lisle 2011: 5). In Miller's reading then, *Terra Nullius* falls short of its aim to offer a tenable critique of the postcolonial condition in Australia because of its stylistic transgressions.

On several points, Miller's criticism is quite accurate. Other reviewers have made similar comments about tone and manner.⁹ On other points, his comments are less precise. The case here, however, is not to contest Miller's impressions. Instead, I would like to explore what would happen if we were to read the stylistic choices as deliberate rather than unfortunate, as a considered method of writing critique that Lindqvist has developed over years of writing cultural debate. Lindqvist is quite a self-reflexive writer, and the problem of writing critique is actually addressed in *Exterminate all the Brutes*. Here he is very much aware of the problem of the position of the critic, and the impossibility to remove oneself entirely from the discursive entanglements and practices of the topic at hand. By addressing this problem, Lindqvist shows that he is attentive to the same questions about writing critique and the problem of transparency that were discussed by postcolonial researchers at the time that he was writing *Exterminate*.

In the middle of the narrative, there is a scene in which the traveller-researcher sits in his hotel room. He is writing what will become *Exterminate* when he “suddenly catch[es] sight of a man carrying an empty picture frame” (Lindqvist 2007a: 103). The way the man carries the frame makes it look as if he is within the frame, separated and elevated from the rest of the environment. Then when he shifts from carrying the frame on one shoulder to carrying it on the other, Lindqvist remarks that it is as if he steps out of the frame and ends the description of the sight with: “It looks as if that were the simplest thing in the world” (Lindqvist 2007a: 104).

This scene introduces an interesting discussion about the impossibility for the writer to do the same:

Even in the most authentic documentary there is always a fictional person – the person telling the story. I have never created a more fictional character than the researching “I” in my doctorate, a self that begins in pretended ignorance and then slowly arrives at knowledge, not at all in the fitful, chancy way I myself arrived at it, but step by step, prof by proof, according to the rules. (Lindqvist 2007a: 104)

He then asserts that it is the scientific demand to omit “all that is personal” that creates this fiction and concludes: “The reality ‘I’ experience in the desert is authentic, however condensed. I really am in Arlit. I can see the black man with the gold frame. But I can never, by the very nature of things, step out of the frame” (Lindqvist 2007a: 104).

With this passage Lindqvist addresses the position of both researcher and traveller, illustrating the impossibility of a transparent position even at the moment of “authentic” experience during travel. He further demonstrates that the transparent position of the researcher and scholar is a construction, “a fictional character” that acts its part in the fiction of steady and orderly epistemic progress.

A similar scene is also included in *Terra Nullius*. However, in this narrative the problem of transparency is not as clearly spelt out as in *Exterminate*. In *Terra Nullius*, the principal form of travel is by car, which means that throughout his journey, the traveller-researcher is close to the ground. One part of the journey, however, he travels by plane, and it is in this part that the narrative illustrates a similar problematisation of the transparency of the traveller-researcher’s position and its fictionality. The scene of flying over the same roads and landscape that the writer has already travelled is used to introduce a discussion of “vantage point” and what it might entail: “I’m aboard a taxi plane, taking the short-cut across the Great Victoria Desert from Ceduna to Alice Springs. It saves me three days covering a route I’ve already driven. Above all, it gives me a new vantage point”(Lindqvist 2007b: 161-2). The narrative continues with a detailed description of the ground beneath him, which includes an image of “traces of water events that used to happen once but aren’t happening any more” (Lindqvist 2007b: 162). Yet the traces are there for the researcher to read and interpret, and at the centre of the passage the traveller-researcher compares himself to Sherlock Holmes, the Victorian master of deduction and empirical observation: “You feel you could read the ground as Sherlock Holmes reads the scene of a crime” (Lindqvist 2007b: 162). At this point, Lindqvist’s traveller-researcher seems to have achieved a vantage point that allows him to read the traces of the land as clearly and unencumbered as that master detective whose success as a criminal investigator stems from his ability to look at any event from an unprejudiced and wholly rational vantage point, that is, an ultimate position of transparency. But this position turns out to be temporary, and it is quickly suspended by Lindqvist as the passage ends with images of the difficulty to discern the border between sky and

desert and the comment that “the clarity of focus only lasts a moment” (Lindqvist 2007b: 162).

Even though Lindqvist does not explicitly discuss the fiction of this epistemic vantage point in the passage, as he does in the example from *Exterminate*, the comments on the difficulty to pinpoint the horizon and the fleeting character of the moment of clarity are enough to trouble the position of the master interpreter and of the traveller-researcher by extension. Moreover, the troubling is reinforced in the subsequent chapters, in which Lindqvist expands on the issue of the vantage point. Only this time, he turns to the detrimental vantage point of “white research” (Lindqvist 2007b: 164).

The topic of the chapters is how white research is complicit with the “presumption that Australia at the time of the British invasion had been ‘no one’s land’ and therefore “missed the significance of place” for the indigenous inhabitants. (Lindqvist 2007b: 164-5). Referencing the early anthropological studies of Alfred Radcliffe-Brown (1881-1955), and Baldwin Spencer (1860-1929) with Francis James Gillen (1855-1912), Lindqvist argues that the fact that they studied the family ties and relationship with animals on Aboriginal subjects already removed from their homelands caused them to overlook “the relationship between the people and their land”, and that this neglect is connected to the colonial trope of *terra nullius*, concluding that “[t]he vantage point they had selected made place invisible” (Lindqvist 2007b: 165). As a consequence, Lindqvist effectively links the problem of the researcher’s position with the position of the colonising subject and shows that they in fact intersect. He demonstrates how in this context “white research” is far from transparent and instead highly complicit with and entangled in the colonial project.

As we can see from these examples, Lindqvist is not as unaware of the problems entailing the traveller-researcher’s vantage point and position as a first reading might lead us to assume. However, it may be that Lindqvist’s method of writing, of combining the genres of historiography and travelogue, obscures rather than clarifies this. For the reader who expects “rational critique”, the metaphorical dimension of such passages requires perhaps too much interpretation where the analysis is already assumed to have taken place and should just be related. For the reader who expects a traveller’s tale, the self-reflexive dimension of such passages does not fit the familiar structures of the genre and may be overlooked or disregarded as fictional embellishment instead of epistemic critique.

Conflicting Epistemic Practices: The Problem of the Global and the Universal

Paradoxically then, Lindqvist’s method of combining the genres of historiography and travelogue has the effect of simultaneously unveiling and maintaining the very aspects of colonial and epistemic practice that it critiques. To recap, the trav-

elogue is still troubled by the genre's entanglement in colonial and Western epistemic structures, which makes it an uncertain form for postcolonial critique. Moreover, its history of association with the tall tale and its inherent tension between fact and fiction easily jeopardize the discursive authority of the critic as regards the experience of travel and the historical analysis. At the same time, the dimension of empirical investigation through travel and the genre's rhetoric of peril and discomfort effectuate a maximization of discursive authority that surpasses the strictures of the genre of historiography as they convey a sense of experienced "authenticity" and "truth". In addition, Lindqvist's combination of genres not only illustrates how the position of the travel writer and the position of the researcher are equally troubled by the question of transparency; it also provides a form through which this position of transparency can be dismantled and examined.

With these coinciding and conflicting aspects of Lindqvist's critique and mode of writing, it is no surprise that his narratives have been both commended and sharply criticised by his reviewers. The diverging responses that *Exterminate* and *Terra Nullius* elicit seem thus related to Lindqvist's mode of writing, a mode that is riddled by paradox and self-contradiction. Because to a certain extent, Lindqvist's critique is enmeshed in and complicit with the colonial legacy it intends to expose.

But do "paradox" and "self-contradiction" really provide us with sufficient tools for dealing with diverging and even conflicting narratives such as *Exterminate* and *Terra Nullius*? Or do they in fact belong in the same category of epistemic construction as the transparent "I" of Western science and the "grand narratives" that postmodernist and postcolonial theories alike have put under scrutiny? Are not these concepts already inscribed in an epistemic system that aims to transcend human situatedness and epistemological diversity by appeal to such ideas as unity, transparency and universality?

We are here confronted with two different ways of thinking. On the one hand, we could disregard Lindqvist's narratives as flawed because of their self-contradictory aspects, using the principles of universalist epistemology as our standard. On the other hand, we could interpret the contradictory aspects of the narratives as signs that a universalist epistemological perspective proves insufficient for understanding and capturing the complex realities of global events and conditions like colonialism and its legacy, and that what is required is a "thinking otherwise".

Postmodernist and postcolonial criticism have for quite some time been engaged in such "thinking otherwise", which can be described as a thinking with the objective to dismantle and rewrite the tenets of Western modernity and make room for the "counter-narrative of the colonised" as well as the counter-narratives of other subordinated groups.¹⁰ However, this "thinking" is still under development and at the moment there is an important shift taking place in the field of

postcolonial theory. This shift has to do with the shortcomings of the conceptual frameworks and methodological tools hitherto used predominantly within the field. In conflicts over issues such as land rights, religion, and marriage and sexual custom, where Western and other legal and epistemic systems and practices clash, it has become evident that many established frameworks and tools in the field cannot meet the challenge of explaining and confronting processes on a global scale and on equal terms. Instead, good intentions aside, these frameworks interrogate the colonial project and current global contention and conditions from within a Western universalist system of thought that allows no room for cosmological and epistemological diversity.

The challenge and shift seems thus to originate in the tension between “the global” and “the universal”. How are we to deal with global perspectives and events that include different and sometimes irreconcilable analyses, narratives and experiences without conflating them in a universalising interpretation? How to avoid making the same mistake as many other projects before, as for example Marxism, and refrain from, in the words of Ramón Grosfoguel, “export[ing] to the rest of the world ... universal abstract[s]” such as communism “as ‘the solution’ to global problems” (Grosfoguel 2012: 94)? Herein lies also the challenge for contemporary travel writing if it is to achieve that re-imagination of the world without replicating the structures and violence of colonialism and its legacy.

Yet what if the problem does not really stem from the tension between the global and the universal but in the impasse that is created by an epistemic assumption that we must consider this in terms of an either/or? That the available course in approaching the global must *either* lead to a universalizing grand narrative *or* result in an inadequate assemblage of fragmented and incongruent narratives, and piecemeal, scattered knowledges?

What if instead we were to consider this seemingly inevitable choice to be yet another “mythology”, another grand narrative of Western thought? What if we were to “decolonise” this choice between the “either” and the “or”, similar to Robert J. C. Young who in *White Mythologies* considered ways of decolonising the concept of history? ¹¹

Concurrence as a Conceptual Framework

I would argue that one way of decolonising this either/or choice would be to re-conceptualise and remotivate postcolonial critique and the postcolonial project. This is where the concept of concurrence comes in as a methodological tool and theoretical perspective.¹² In the dictionary definition, “concurrence” is synonymous with “simultaneous”, as “occurring together in time”. It may also signify “confluence”, a “combination in effecting any purpose or end”, the “co-operation of agents or causes”, as well as “agreement” and “consent”.¹³ With these multiple yet related meanings, “concurrence” captures and encompasses several of the top-

ics and challenges of difference, entanglement and complicity that postcolonial studies has brought to light and grappled with in the last decades, since they deal with different instances of simultaneity. Among these topics and challenges we find colonialism's simultaneous construction of the colonised subject as an incomprehensible "Other" as well as something that can be known through Western means of investigation; the notion that "colonialism" is a confluence of entangled ideologies and practices; and further, that colonialism is not a singular force but includes a co-operation between agents and causes complicit with the colonial project. Within these particular instances of postcolonial theory, we can see that there has indeed taken place a partial decolonisation of the either/or since these are instances of thinking otherwise that acknowledges processes that are both/and: the colonised subject is *both* known *and* unknown.

However, there is another meaning of "concurrency" by which we may also identify what remains to be decolonised as regards the choice between either/or. Concurrency, in its more archaic form, also signifies "rivalry" and "competition".¹⁴ This draws attention to the contestations over epistemic entitlement, competing (and sometimes conflicting) narratives of (post)colonial encounters and experiences, and territorial claims, with which studies with a global perspective invariably must grapple. The remaining challenge for postcolonial theory and critique is thus to find strategies to account for competing and rivalling knowledge systems, narratives and claims without incorporating them in a universalising system of either/or.

Concurrency could thus serve as a methodological tool for identifying areas of competing claims and instances of entanglement as remotivating nodes for study. Concurrency could also serve as a theoretical perspective since it signals an assumption about the global reality that underlies the questions about simultaneity, conflict and complicity that have emerged recently within the humanities and the social sciences.¹⁵ Hence, concurrency may be described as an alternative mode of thinking, with new epistemic potential, that is characterised by a higher level of flexibility as regards universalism.

Concurrency of Concrete and Abstract Universalism

Returning to the matter of writing postcolonial critique in the form of a travel narrative, I will now explore how the concept of concurrency can work as a tool for further unravelling the question of why Lindqvist's travelogue-cum-historiography about the impact of colonialism prompts such ambiguous response. I will therefore briefly revisit a couple of nodes of epistemic conflict within the narratives where universalism is simultaneously at work and under erasure. I will suggest that even though Lindqvist's two travelogues purport to operate within a legacy of Western universalism; they do so in a narrative field where universalism is simultaneously at work and deconstructed.

As noted earlier, *Exterminate* and *Terra Nullius* make strong claims about the need to “draw conclusions” and to confess the crimes. By doing so, Lindqvist arguably exports Western universal abstracts of “reason” and “confession” as the solution to the global problem of white Western atrocities against the “other races”. The underlying assumption of the narratives is that by providing a reasonable and truthful account of the atrocities, and by adopting a convincing scientific stance of analysis, further verified by empirical field work (travel), the problem will be solved as long as we “draw conclusions”, that is, if we employ Western reason. Likewise, in *Terra Nullius*, Lindqvist exports the universal abstract of “confession” as the solution to the problem, since the central claim in the narrative is that reconciliation can only happen when white Australia owns up to its crimes.

I am here borrowing the concept “universal abstract” from Ramón Grosfoguel who in a recent article, “Decolonizing Western Uni-versalism”, discusses forms of decolonising that do not discard universalist thinking per se but aims for a dialogue between the universal and the particular. Western universalism, he explains, is characterised by abstraction and vertical relations, whereas decolonised universalism tends towards the concrete and the horizontal (Grosfoguel 2012). I find Grosfoguel’s approach to be quite similar to a framework of concurrence, because it too opens towards a more flexible and elastic approach to ethico-political diversity that is including and dialogic, rather than perpetuating the excluding and monologic stance of Western universalism. Furthermore, Grosfoguel’s differentiation between abstract and concrete universalism makes a useful distinction for my analysis of Lindqvist’s ethico-political claims and method of critique in *Exterminate* and *Terra Nullius*. Because this differentiation captures both the challenge of writing postcolonial critique and the reason why Lindqvist’s narratives are so disturbing. Therefore, I will briefly recap Grosfoguel’s main two examples of decolonised universalism at work. The ambivalent nature of Lindqvist’s postcolonial critique arguably stems from a conflict between his abstract universalist stance as a historiographer and his traveller’s aim to narrate the particular. A comparison with Grosfoguel’s examples will make this conflict more tangibly clarified.

In the article, Grosfoguel explores Aimé Césaire’s call for “a universal rich with all that is particular, rich with all particulars, the deepening and coexistence of all particulars”, from his mid-1950s letter of resignation to the French Communist Party, as an early example of thinking otherwise regarding universality, arguing that Césaire makes here an important move from Western abstract universalism to a concrete universalism (Grosfoguel 2012: 95-96).¹⁶ He also discusses the Zapatistas’ way of doing politics as a decolonised form of universalism. Comparing the Zapatistas’ method of “walking while asking questions” with the method of “walking while preaching”, which he claims is a universalist practice within the “Judeo-Christian, Western cosmology” that is based on abstraction and that has been “reproduced in equal measure by Marxist, conservatives, and liberals”, Grosfoguel argues that the Zapatistas’ method is in accordance with concrete uni-

versalism rather than abstract since it is “constructed as a *result* ... of a critical transmodern dialogue which includes within itself the epistemic diversity and the particular demands of all the oppressed people of Mexico” (Grosfoguel 2012: 99). Here, we can see that decolonising universalism, according to Grosfoguel, is a matter of concurrence, of conceptualising an alternate universalism directed at a Césairean coexistence of particulars and a Zapatista intersection of diverse epistemes rather than “set[ting] out from an abstract universal (socialism, communism, democracy, the nation, as floating or empty signifiers) in order to preach to and convince all Mexicans [or Others] of the correctness of this view” (Grosfoguel 2012: 99).

In the light of this suggested decolonised universalism, it becomes possible to discern that Lindqvist’s method of writing postcolonial critique is tending towards a concrete universalism while simultaneously being enmeshed in abstract universalism. This is made visible when considering once more his choice to combine travel and historiography. Because on the one hand, Lindqvist’s method of writing his critique while travelling, seems at first rather close to the Zapatistas’ method of “walking while asking questions”. As in all travel narrative, the reason for travel is to either literally or metaphorically “walk” to the place in question and take part of the local sights and customs, of engaging in some form of “asking” about the particular place. And when Lindqvist travels, he travels to “ask” about the “truth” of the colonial project on site. On the other hand, it is an “asking” that does not fully come to fruition since, as we have seen, he does not engage in any form of dialogue with contemporary Australian indigenous peoples. Lindqvist is, as we have seen in the analysis, like many other travel writers, a traveller who already knows the truth his journey is meant to verify. Hence, it could be argued that the impetus for his writing postcolonial critique is not “walking while asking”, but rather a “walking while preaching”. The dominant mode of investigation and “instruction” in the narratives is abstract rather than concrete since its epistemic project, to map the impact of colonialism, is founded on, to borrow from Grosfoguel, the Western “epistemological myth” of “a self-generated subject with access to a universal truth beyond space and time by means of a monologue” (Grosfoguel 2012: 89).

Lindqvist’s traveller-researcher, despite his travelling to ask for the truth on site, never manages to fully discard the myth of this subject with “access to a universal truth beyond space and time”. One telling sign is that the traveller-researcher does not leave the library and the archive behind when he takes off on his journey. In *Exterminate*, Lindqvist not only totes a computer with him, but also, and more interestingly, he is scrupulous about letting his reader know about the extreme volume of knowledge that is at his disposal at every moment on his trip:

The disks are no larger than postcards. I have a hundred of them, in airtight packs, a whole library that together weighs no more than a single book.

At any time I can go anywhere in history, from the dawn of paleontology, when Thomas Jefferson still found it unfathomable that one single species could disappear out of the economy of nature, to today's realization that 99.99 percent of all species have died out, most of them in a few mass exterminations that came close to wiping out all life. (Lindqvist 2007a: 7)

With these sentences, Lindqvist's traveller informs his reader of two things at once. One, that he writes from a privileged position of epistemic abundance and two, that this abundance is at his complete command no matter what his geographical position is. Furthermore, the topic of his narrative, the extermination of the brutes, turns out to be just a small part of the immense overview; here, we are told that he can access the topic of extermination on a global scale, as regards all brutes, not just the human ones.

Concurrence and Contemporary Travel Writing

Whether this image of the traveller's access to an all-encompassing epistemic treasure trove is to be understood as a methodological statement, or is included to function as a means for balancing the discursive authority that travel writing's association with the "tall tale" might undermine is difficult to decide since, as the analysis has shown, there are instances in both narratives where the transparent position of the traveller-researcher is either pursued, taken for granted, or questioned. And claiming either interpretation is neither the objective of my analysis nor of this article. Doing so would be counter-productive as it would strive for textual reconciliation and push the analysis towards yet another universalizing perspective. Instead, I have aimed to show that Lindqvist's narrative technique and postcolonial critique are characterized by simultaneity and conflict on multiple levels, that is, by concurrence. As we have seen, fact and fiction, story and history, discursive authority, and the position of the traveller-researcher, all of these are simultaneously employed and put into doubt through Lindqvist's combination of travel narrative and historiography.

But what is even more interesting is that the two narratives' critique is articulated in a field of conflicting universality, where concrete and abstract universality concur. Lindqvist's method of writing while travelling seems to promise an engagement with the concrete and local effects of what is also a global condition. Yet, this promise is counteracted and contested by the travelogues' entanglement in narrative and epistemic structures that are cathected by colonial sentiments and abstract universalism.

Hence, what my analysis of Lindqvist's postcolonial critique ultimately wants to draw attention to is the fundamental issue that still remains to be problematized further in contemporary travel writing with a global perspective, namely, the concurrence of the global and the universal. Like the critique of many others within the postcolonial field today, Lindqvist's narratives still re-enact the epistemic myth that a global point of view equals a universal one; the accepted "given" in

Western thought that Ania Loomba et. al. also call into question in *Postcolonial Studies and Beyond*: “the way that the very vantage point necessary to enunciate the global implies an allegory of universal knowledge” (Loomba 2005: 9). Yet, as my discussion of Grosfoguel’s notion of decolonizing universalism shows, this confluence of the global with the universal can be repealed as there are alternative ways of engaging with universalism and global perspectives that include rather than cancel out the local and the particular, and thus takes experiential and epistemic diversity into consideration. Emphasising dialogue and walking, Grosfoguel identifies a combination of methods that could be productive in making room for the diversity and situatedness of human experience within the vast scopes of the global condition. This is also where I find the possibility for intervention and critique in contemporary travel writing on a global scale. In the genre’s combination of travel and narrative, the method of “walking while asking” is already in place. Moreover, due to its long history of an already accepted tension between fact and fiction, empirical documentation and story telling, the genre itself makes an example of a form of writing that not only includes and conveys concurrences, but also, as such, gains its vitality and defining feature from concurrence.

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Notes

- ¹ A similar positive view of the possibilities of travel writing and travel has been forwarded by Patrick Holland and Graham Huggan who in *Tourists with Typewriters* claim that “[t]ravel has recently emerged as a crucial epistemological category for the displacement of normative values and homogenizing, essentialist views” while also arguing against the “utopian impulse” that seems to go with contemporary “hypertheorization of travel-as-displacement” (Holland & Huggan 2000: viii-ix). Like Lisle, they approach the genre with the aim to find out whether it “is still primarily a legacy of imperial modes of vision and thought” or if it could “rather be seen as transgressive, an instrument of self-critique” (Holland & Huggan 2000: x). For another recent study that also tries to counteract the “demonized” view of travel writing in postcolonial studies and instead “examine how postcolonial travel texts resist the

- gravitational pull of metropolitan centrality and cosmopolitanism by articulating experiences and ontologies that are often removed from dominant European and North American productions of knowledge”, see Edwards & Graulund 2011: 1-2.
- ² *Exterminate all the Brutes* was first published in Swedish in 1992 and *Terra Nullius* in 2005. I have consistently used the English translations of Lindqvist’s texts unless otherwise stated. The English translation of *Exterminate all the Brutes* is based on the Swedish pocket version from 1993, which notes a few changes from the first edition. The scope of this study does not permit any further comment on the translation and changes between different editions. However, it should be noted that the changes carry some import, and in my further studies of Lindqvist’s travel narratives, I plan to address the effect of the changes between editions as well as the matter of translation.
- ³ My note about this omission not being surprising refers to the Anglophone bias in most research on travel writing and which translations into English do not seem to amend: “non-Anglophone travel writing has received comparatively little attention in British and American studies of travel writing” which have been inclined to marginalize narratives from non-English speaking cultures (Thompson 2011: 8).
- ⁴ Lindqvist’s stated aim to provoke his readers to remember and to acknowledge what they already know thus also responds to Holland’s and Huggan’s anticipation that travel writing “may yet show its readers the limits of their ambition and remind them of their responsibilities” (Holland & Huggan 2000: xiii).
- ⁵ See chapter 111 in which Lindqvist delineates how the “Australian Aborigines’ demands for redress and compensation are part of a global movement” and aligns their demands with similar demands of compensation from American-Japanese prisoners of war, the Sami in Sweden, the Herero people in Namibia as well as African-American and black Brazilian demands of compensation for slavery and discrimination (Lindqvist 2007b: 210-212).
- ⁶ Lindqvist completed a PhD in comparative literature in 1966.
- ⁷ Interestingly, the traveller’s angst in the sandstorm has been simultaneously enhanced and subdued in the English translation since it omits both the laconic punning (which is admittedly difficult to translate) and Lindqvist’s travesty of the standard melodramatic plea to God found in the Swedish original: ‘God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’, in which “forsaken” has been changed to “exaggerated”, i.e. “övergivit” to “överdrivit” (Lindqvist 1992: 137). Thus, Lindqvist’s use of standard rhetoric from early travel writing – the mixture of angst and heroic stoicism at the moment of possible death – does not carry through as much in the translation.
- ⁸ “Subaltern Studies” is an umbrella term for the strand of postcolonial criticism developed in the early 1980s by a collective of intellectuals inspired by Ranajit Guha’s deployment of some of Antonio Gramsci’s ideas to explore the conditions of the colonised subjects in South Asia. The collective is also often referred to as the Subaltern Studies group. For a history of the development of this group and their work, see David Ludden ed. (2002): *Reading Subaltern Studies: Critical Histories, Contested Meanings, and the Globalisation of South Asia*. New Delhi: Permanent Black Publishers and London: Anthem Press.
- ⁹ See for example the reviews by Jay Freeman, Björn Gunnarson, and Robert Manne.
- ¹⁰ I have borrowed the phrases “thinking otherwise” and “counter-narrative of the colonised” from Leela Gandhi and her outline of the relation between postcolonial criticism and post-modern thinking. See chapter 2, “Thinking Otherwise: A Brief Intellectual History” in *Post-colonial Theory: A Critical Introduction* (1998).
- ¹¹ Robert J. C. Young (1990): *White Mythologies: Writing History and the West*, London: Routledge.

- ¹² My thinking about concurrences is indebted to the inspiration provided by the leadership of Professor Gunlög Fur in establishing the Concurrences Centre for Colonial and Postcolonial Studies and in spurring discussions around the potential of this concept among our research team, as well as to the work of my colleagues at the Centre and our Advisory Board. For further reading on the methodological possibilities of the concept in relation to historiography, see Gunlög Fur (2014): "Concurrences," (manuscript submitted and accepted by editors) in *Concurrences: Archives and Voices in Postcolonial Places*, ed. by Diana Brydon, Peter Forsgren and Gunlög Fur (planned publication 2015).
- ¹³ See "concurrency, n." and "concurrency, n." in *OED Online*.
- ¹⁴ A meaning that is still visible in the word for competition in German and the Scandinavian languages: Ge. *Konkurrenz*, Sw. *konkurrens*, No. *konkurranse* and Da. *konkurrence*.
- ¹⁵ I am making a deliberate move here from the specifically postcolonial since I think that the urgency to account for simultaneous and conflicting narratives, claims etc. is just as present among scholars in other fields of study whether they subscribe to "the contention that colonialism ... is the defining experience of humanity in our epoch" or not (Kaiwar 2007: par 1).
- ¹⁶ The cited words are from Aimé Césaire, *Discurso sobre el colonialismo*, Madrid: Akal, 2006 as quoted in Grosfoguel, 95.

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