

Tourism “Back in Time”: Performing “the Essence of Safari” in Africa

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Africa’s *wilderness* through the lens of tourism is one of the strongest imaginaries of Africa, particularly in one of its modalities: the re-enactment of ‘safari’s golden era.’ ‘Back in Time’ tourism offers a journey in time and space and in so doing, fixes the rules of cultural contact, writes a drama, chooses the actors (local people) to be shown and to be in contact with, directs traveller interactions, and so on. The symbols and signifiers of this phenomenon will be analyzed in this paper.

“Imagine a safari that is sophisticated and exclusive, offering privacy, flexibility and the near undivided attention of each camp owner or manager who is also the consummate host, maybe even your personal Safari Guide as well as dinner companion around a great table every evening.” (Global Artichoke Private Travel web site)

In this paper I will analyze one of the strongest imaginaries of Africa: Africa’s *wilderness* through the lenses of tourism, especially in one of its modalities: the re-enactment of ‘safari’s golden era.’ The invitation to have an experience of close encounters with the “wild” (in its different expressions), in its ‘original spirit’ (invoking images of romance, professional guidance, adventure, and elegance), places a narrative that puts in motion powerful images of *artificial Africas* (manufactured and deployed by Western popular culture)¹ in order to sell a new commodity to be consumed by first class travellers. Africa becomes ‘something remote and wild’ but similar to Hollywood films or *Animal Planet* documentaries, invoking for example, the image of the ‘White hunter.’ In other words, tourism produces Africa for the West as the place for “aristocratic dreams of authenticity through the experience of difference, and of difference as pure experience and as spectacle” (Root).² Again the exotic other, Africa appears to be an escape from the “grey sameness of Western culture.”³

‘Back in Time’ tourism offers a journey in time and space, and in so doing, fixes the rules of cultural contact, writes a drama, chooses the actors (local people) to be shown and to be in contact with, directs traveller interactions, and so on. I will try to examine the symbols and meanings of this phenomenon by studying the origins of the *safari* and analyzing (through their home pages) two *safari* companies: *Cottars Camp 1920* (based in Kenya) and *Taga Safaris* (based in South Africa and covering the Southern African region).

Safari: A Travelling Word

Safari, according to the Oxford English dictionary, is an organized journey for viewing wild animals, and it sometimes includes hunting wild animals, especially in Africa (Oxford English Dictionary web site). *Safari*, a Swahili word, made its entrance to English in 1890 in the core of British imperial power. It refers to a journey undertaken with a specific objective: expedition, pilgrimage, trek, or voyage; it is used in the coast and islands of eastern Africa

from Somalia to Mozambique for *msafara*, a caravan, a company of persons travelling together, or an equipped party or expedition. *Msafara* comes from the Arabic *safarly*, journey, *safara*, or travel. In its migration to Africa, the word's meanings took the texture of the local context. The journeys – called in Arabic *safaris* – were made up of caravans of porters carrying oil, skins, and rhinoceros horns out of the African interior to be traded with the Swahili people of the coast and grew bigger and more complex with the rise of the slave empire of Zanzibar in the 19th century.⁴

Europeans, specifically the Germans and British penetrated slowly into the Swahili on-foot caravan routes in the middle of the 19th century through Christian missionaries and explorers, some of whom combined both activities. In this period, the explorer was the dominant actor in a narrative that legitimized his actions in Africa. He was looking for the undiscovered (from the Western point of view) in order to possess it. Africa's experience was linked to hardship and privations (drinking polluted water racked by malaria). In the end, the award was the glory of a 'new' discovery. Porters with boxes of guns used for 'pacifying' hostile villages and the presence of special regiments of guards recruited in Zanzibar (which remained as the starting point of safaris to the mainland), were the most visible changes in these *safaris* compared to the previous Swahili expeditions. Exploration was a practice that unveiled an omnipresent discourse of alterity, established an irreducible other, and produced an imaginary idea of Africa as a land of the "unknown, a place inhabited by exotic and hostile African tribes such as the Maasai and the Sukuma, and dangerous wild animals" (Kenya Government *Annual Reports*, 1924, quoted in Akama, 1999). Commodities identified with luxury safaris, such as wine and brandy, were already included in the porters loads.⁵

Travel in Africa from a Western Point of View

In one of the first books for travellers, Francis Galton's *The Art of Travel* (1869), Africa was defined as a "Wild Country," implying an insecure, remote, dangerous, exotic, not completely fixed place on a map; and Africans were "savages." In this book – written as the outcome of Galton's exploration of South-western Africa in 1850-51 – a special section under the title "Management of Savages" advises:

A frank, joking, but determined manner, joined with an air of showing more confidence in the good faith of the natives than you really feel, is the best...If a savage does mischief, look on him as you would on a kicking mule, or a wild animal, whose nature is to be unruly and vicious, and keep your temper quite unruffled. Evade the mischief, if you can: if you cannot, endure it; and do not trouble yourself overmuch about your dignity, or about retaliating on the man, except it be on the grounds of expediency. (p. 234)

In such rhetoric of mastery we can figure out the traveller: he is the superior white male who has the power and a *natural* right to punish but not to be punished.⁶ *Savages* are depicted as children – often ruled by what Galton calls *the Bush Law* (defined by negation as the lack of civil law) or by a despot – in front of whom it is necessary to keep one's temper under control. Savages, in Galton's words, are *natural* robbers:

...every savage, even your best friends, will pilfer little things from you, whenever they have a good opportunity. (p. 235)

A double moral allows the traveller to behave unscrupulously:

On arriving at an encampment, the natives commonly run away in fright. If you are hungry, or in serious need of anything that they have, go boldly into their huts, take just what you want, and leave fully adequate payment. It is absurd to be over-scrupulous in these cases. (p. 235)

Of course it is the traveller who determines the amount of an “adequate payment.” In other words, in one of the first travel books based on its author’s African experience, the *savage* becomes the ‘other,’ fixed in an asymmetric relationship where the traveller has the power, and the *savage* is always backwards. Travelling has come to be understood not only as physical exploration but also as the imaginative construction of human and spatial alterity. Difference is articulated by discourses of otherness, of which the essence is a concoction of actual exploration experiences and fictional representations in a Euro-centric exercise of power and superiority to control the *new* in Western eyes. A subtext that conjures up primitivism is mixed with fascination and fear confronted (whether in mind or physical experience) with the *Heart of Darkness*. In this process, Africa is no more a geographical location or a specific cultural reference; instead, it becomes a strategic meaning (Suassure’s *signified*⁷). Only white males can be travellers, and they are *discovering* places that are already known to the indigenous people. Then, they recognize and name places, allowing them to come into existence through mapping and describing them through a Western knowledge that almost always opens a *terra nullius* (no man’s land) in its imaginary. Possession is, under this logic, legitimized.

The young manager of the *New York Herald*, James Gordon Bennett, a visionary who entrusted Henry Morton Stanley to find Livingston in Africa on October 1869, thought that Stanley’s mission should also include a description of “whatever is interesting for *tourists*; and then write us a guide – a practical one – tell us about whatever is worth seeing and *how* to see it.”(Stanley, 1872)⁸ In doing so, he prescribes the recipe for a good guide: practical, selective, and pedagogical (teaching what to look at).

Safari for Exploration and Safari for Tourism

When the word was adopted into the English language in 1890, slavery was already abolished, and the Sultan of Zanzibar was no longer the leading power of the *safari* caravans. Europeans (explorers, missionaries, adventure seekers) took his place under the growing power of British and German colonial administrations, pursuing the total mapping (and control) of the region.⁹ Professional and amateur safari hunters adventured in the African hinterland. With colonial administration, transport and communication infrastructures were developed, linking the coast to the hinterland (for example the Kenya-Uganda Railway), and the first modern hotels were established by European residents (the Hotel Stanley in 1890, the Nairobi Club in 1891, and the Norfolk Hotel in 1904).

At the turn of the century, the image of a potential tourist travelling through East Africa was constructed, as opposed to the former idea of the gentleman explorer. The idea of comfort became a pivotal product sold to a new brand of traveller looking for adventure in an already discovered place. Adventure itself was redefined, erasing privation, hardship, and threat and replacing them with comfort and, in the case of first-class travellers, luxury. Hunting was the main activity, making this brand of *safari* a performance of dominance: dominance over nature through hunting big animals and dominance over society by showing European superiority over Africans. Only very rich individuals could afford the high costs of big game hunting expeditions. *Safari* was represented in the time as big game hunting, promoted by powerful men such as then-president of the United States, Theodore Roosevelt, the Prince of Wales (Edward the 8th of England), and writers such as Hemingway. This era of *safari* was shown through the lenses of Hollywood's movie cameras. It became the classical or golden *safari* – identified with the period between 1900 and 1945. The image of the African landscape was transformed from obscure and threatening to pristine (a wilderness sanctuary).



Safari Hero: Measuring White Men's Manliness

According to Gemma Pitcher, Frederick Courtenay Selous (1851-1917)¹¹, “an old-time Victorian hero,” was the pioneer of what we know as *leisure safari*. He embodies the transition between the 19th Century explorer-hunter-naturalist at the service of the British Crown and the “great white hunter” who tracked big game in Africa, becoming a skilled recreational hunting guide to rich and powerful men. Born in London, he arrived at Cape Town in 1871, travelling across the Transvaal to Matabeleland (Zimbabwe). He spent the following 20 years exploring and hunting between the Congo basin and the Transvaal, in part at the service of the British South African Company and contributing with the British Museum as a collector of butterfly specimens. As an explorer he helped bring the district of Manicaland (a Shona region in the east of Zimbabwe) under British control. Selous was the personal ‘white hunter’ of President Roosevelt in 1909,¹² who promoted fighting and hunting “as means of acquiring the attributes of masculinity, without losing the refined status of whiteness” (Mayer, 2002, p. 76). Physically strong and straight, with muscular arms and legs

and blue eyes, Selous became the fashionable role of maleness and the assumed model for Hollywood versions of H. Rider Haggard's famous fictional character, Allan Quartermain in *King Solomon's Mines* (1885)¹³. Roosevelt's *African Game Trails*, Hemingway's *Green Hills of Africa*, and Hollywood movies from the 1930s contributed to the development of this character, the scenery of his adventures, and the kinds of experience identified with an 'authentic Africa.'

Safaris became a distinctive way of hunting – a ticket to the experience of fantastic exceptionality with glamour (Mayer, 2002, p. 77), in a journey that consisted of several days or weeks of camping in the bush or jungle while tracking big game; hunting, and obtaining the skin of selected animals as trophies; and refreshing and taking a whisky in a comfortable tent after a day of hunting, followed by a sophisticated dinner. However, *safaris* also had to keep the feeling of being at risk. In fact, one was safe but with a thrilling sense of danger: "A lion can be right there, almost close enough to touch" (Sutcliffe, 2005). Its attractiveness was linked to these characteristics.

From the original *safari*, this new brand kept the porters and professional guides and added skimmers and sometimes taxidermists. The main hunter was also a guide, who directed customers to prey on foot and instructed them about the techniques of hunting while watching and supervising the process in order to intervene in cases of danger. Wealthy American would-be adventurers became customers for the African tourist industry in the shape of Big Game. The fame and money required to be part of this select group of customers made this kind of safari strictly available to the *super-rich*. As in Galton's travel guide, the masters of the experiences and narratives produced by this pioneer tourism, were White (European or American), rich men. Africans remained in the anonymous image of porters and assistants to guides.

Safari's Comfort and the Massification of Safari

After the First World War, Arusha, Serengeti, and Ngorongoro in Tanganyika were the hot spots for *safaris*. Between wars the motor car to East Africa displaced porters. Tiny planes (like Denys Finch Hatton's in the film *Out of Africa*) helped spot big animals from the air or track passengers between camps. Established camps became more and more comfortable, with modern amenities such as daily newspapers, "doubled walled tents, mosquito netting, chemical toilets, air mattresses and mess tables" (Pitcher, 2004, p. 5). A *safari habitus* was established: "breakfast in the dark, hunting or game-watching in the early morning, back to camp for lunch and afternoon rest, out again until dark, then a hot bath, cocktails and dinner in pyjamas and thigh-high mosquito-boots," and other eccentricities, such as a gramophone, added a chic romantic ambience after dinner (Pitcher, 2004, p. 5). In the process, adventure was domesticated.

From the 1950s on, mass air travel introduced changes to *safaris* supported by post-war economic expansion. In the following decades, the improvement of flight schedules to Africa, lower air-ticket prices, and new international travel arrangements made possible through professional tour companies organizing holiday packages, allowed the expansion of tourism. In addition, after independence in the 1960s and 1970s, some African countries (including Kenya and Tanzania) turned to the development of tourism¹⁴ as an alternate source of economic growth, particularly in the late 1960s when revenues from export crops decreased

due to the fallen prices of agricultural products in the world market (Akama, 1999). Tourism shifted from a small-scale public and private enterprise to large-scale projects which were financed in mostly big proportions by multinational investments (World Bank loans, international corporations, etc.). Government rest houses (a bedroom and a kitchen area) built previously for travelling government officials were reborn as safari lodges for lower-budget *safaris*. As Akama asserts, from the beginning, African countries' tourism development (as in so many Third World countries) was increasingly shocked by dominant exogenous sociopolitical and economic factors, depending largely on external market demands from the developed north. All of this was combined with large-scale, capital-intensive tourism projects established through multinational capital investment, which tends to determine the terms and conditions of projects' contracts and the kinds of tourism projects to be initiated. In the case of Kenya's tourism industry, it has been estimated that over 50% is under foreign ownership and management (Akama, 1999).

With the changes in tourism policies and travel conditions mentioned above, middle-class tourists from western countries could afford a *safari*. The promotion and marketing of wildlife viewing as budget travel resulted in an increase of tourists visiting the region and endangering both the habitat and the animals. Colonial administrations reacted with the creation of 'Game Reserves' that, after independence, became National Parks.¹⁵ In these areas, hunting lost its character of primary activity for *safaris*, replaced by an emphasis on game-viewing, which was more centred on getting close to animals in order to see them. Rifles were replaced by cameras, both paradoxically related by an overlapping vocabulary as tools of possession (Sontag, 1973).

Going back to the 19th-century and early 20th-century *safari* management and organization, and comparing this to the modern variations, the most remarkable difference is the progressive loosening of control of the process by the traveller. In Livingston, Stanley, and Selous' epoch, almost all the arrangements were under the charge of the traveller. Modern versions are erecting a wall between customers and the product, cutting nearly all the contacts with local people in the name of security and efficiency. Travel companies are in charge of the big narrative that governs and directs the process at all levels. In fact, the frontiers of what is to be known and who can be met are strictly established by the travel company, undermining the possibilities of other contacts or agency for travellers who are limited to choose among the already prepared packages:

Typically a tour operator sends a micro-bus to the airport to collect tourists. Such visitors may be in an inclusive package tour already paid for overseas. The tour firms, for example, Abercrombie and Kent, United Tour Company, Kuoni Worldwide, Thomas Cook, and Hayes and Jarvis, would likely be foreign owned, or a subsidiary of a foreign company. The firm takes the tourists to an assigned hotel in Nairobi or Mombassa for an overnight stay. On the following day, the tour operators take the tourists to a wildlife safari in one of the national parks. This safari lasts several days... At the end of the tour, the process is re-enacted in preparation for departure from the country. (Quoted in Akama, 1999, p. 17)

Nostalgia Safari: Experiencing the Bush without Sacrificing Elegance

From the middle of the 1990s, one of the available packages is the *nostalgia safari* which calls for ‘back in time’ tourism, selling as a commodity “the ideal safari,” a brand of safari that rejects the mass safaris (*hordes of tourists*) that dominated East African tourism from the 1970s. Under the policy of high-quality/low-volume tourism, these safaris are again appealing to exclusive tourism. In the case of East Africa, it can be understood as a strategy to surpass the regional tourism industry crisis that has been worsening since the late 1980s (Akama). In the same epoch, Southern Africa’s nostalgic exclusive safaris resulted from sociopolitical changes that follow the end of apartheid. The lifting of international sanctions and the change of its international image allowed ‘trans-frontier safaris,’ linking the joint ventures of regional companies from South Africa, Botswana, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Malawi, and Zambia and marketing tours that include multiple destinations, “erasing” frontiers under a common brand of tourism.

We are a full service tour operator and are connected to various different companies in South Africa and the entire Southern African region and we will take care of all logistics like accommodation, transfers, air charters, tours, etc. We are independent and can book any safari itinerary to suit your needs. Being based in Johannesburg, South Africa we are also available 24 hours, 7 days a week in case of any emergencies or if you need any other assistance. (*Taga Safaris* web site)

Southern African companies such as *Taga Safaris*¹⁶ construct a contra-narrative to global tourism, based on the concept of locality as synonymous of:

1) *Safety*:

Wilderness Safari's Explorations allows you to step back from the overcrowded world, to roam the great African continent in privacy, to experience it by air, foot, water and wheel. An *unhurried safari under canvas*... should you require any assistance whatsoever whilst on Safari, we are merely just a local telephone call away. (*Taga Safaris* web site)

2) *Personal and tailor-made arrangements*:

We will be at your service throughout the entire duration of your stay... It was in 1995 that we discovered that the discerning traveller prefers to choose their own destinations, departure dates and length of time on safari, so we decided to gear our operations towards the tailor-made or custom-made concept. Guest’s safaris are tailor-made to suit their requirements and budget. We believe that part of Southern Africa’s charm is that there is such a wide variety of places to visit and choices of accommodation, coupled with regular and reliable flights, that we don't want to restrict our guests to a routine. (*Taga Safaris* web site)

3) *Local development combined with the protection of African Wildlife* (from a local point of view):

By booking your Safari with Taga Safaris you are helping to create jobs and give a livelihood to the locals whose heritage is the African Wildlife. It is not

only in the reserves where the local populations depend on the wildlife for a living but also in the cities where tour operators such as ourselves also create jobs for those locals who depend on their heritage for a living. (*Taga Safaris* web site)

They are not travel agents, but ‘local tour operators’ or a ‘one stop shop’ that is cut off from intermediate brokers. Local capital and management, especially from South Africa, have an important role in this development and are remarked as being assets providing choices of where one will go and with whom one can book a safari.¹⁷ You are safe because you are in local hands. *Taga Safaris*, a South African Company established in 1994, promotes on its web site:

We feel that the ideal African safari should take you back in time to the Africa of old. Forget big lodges with crowds of people, or large game parks and reserves without privacy. They are not for travellers who want to capture the African heart and soul. All of the camps, lodges and reserves that we visit cater for the discerning traveller and are small, private and exclusive which will give you an unforgettable experience of a lifetime. (*Taga Safaris* web site)

It is not a mass tour, it is exclusive, personalized: “highly memorable” and also “an unhurried safari under canvas”¹⁸ (*Taga Safaris*). Nostalgia becomes *the attraction* with experience commoditized again and available for those who think of themselves as long ago sophisticated “first class travellers” (even if they are not actually members of the so called “high society”). In the case of Singita Ebony, Sabi Sands Reserve, one of *Taga Safaris*’ destinations in South Africa is set apart:

What set the Singita Ebony property apart from the others were the amenities available in each free-standing suite – air conditioning, full power, hair dryers, etc. The suites here also had plunge pools. We loved the British colonial décor, the claw-footed bathtubs and the slate floors. (Comments from Erika Nelson, customer of *Taga Safaris*, 2005 on *Taga Safaris* web site)

Nostalgia *safaris* offer a taste of the colonial experience:

Small extras, like the “bush breakfast” or “sundowner cocktails,” hanker back to an age when there were servants to cater to one’s whims. If you wanted your breakfast on top of a mountain, you could damn well have it, and someone would carry your breakfast things up there for you, right down to the last teapot, napkin and tablecloth. In a high-end game lodge, this spirit is still alive. (Sutcliffe, 2005)



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In East Africa, Cottar's Camp produces a similar narrative based on the Cottar family's long experience as safari organizers. Colvin Cottar is a fourth generation organizer continuing the family business. Installed in an area of 22,000 acres in what is now Masai Mara, the Serengeti and Loliondo reserves from colonial times (Chas Cottar, the first recognized American White Hunter, registered the safari company operated by him and his sons in 1919) promote a crowd-free exclusivity derived precisely from the character of being a private reserve. That is the warrant for the "most authentic safari experience." Its appellation to nostalgia is stronger than in Taga's case. The 1920s are Cottar's safari destination identified with Karen Blixen's *Out of Africa*. Tourists are invited to play the characters of Blixen's memories and especially of the Hollywood version in its magnificent scenery furnished with antiques, a tented library, a lounge area, and high quality dining:

White canvas, mahogany, brass and crystal abound in this 'Out of Africa' film set, whilst the gramophone plays and an old typewriter is on hand for you to record your day's experiences. Your personal butler is also on hand and will arrange massage, fishing, guiding, walking, swimming and picnics – whatever your whim – whilst supervising the silver service and the delivery of your drink of the moment, in any place at any time, irrespective of the relative positions of sun and yardarm. (Global Artichoke Private Travel on Cottar's Camp)

From the start, Cottar's arranged tours include all the *memorable moments* performed in the film *Out of Africa*. As described by Paula Fontaine:

...taking a fourteen-seat, single propeller airplane... seeing giraffes and herds of elephants... I felt like I was flying with Robert Redford in the movie *Out of Africa*... they were waiting for us in a Land Rover outfitted with a canvas roof and no windows: Nick who looked like an English lord, and Parmilia, a Massai warrior... I felt like Meryl Streep playing Karen Blixen. But Streep was shooting a movie, and I was experiencing the real thing... a Massai warrior guided us every

night, walking soberly and silently, carrying a spear in one hand and a kerosene lamp in the other... William, the house butler, who was wearing a white tunic, a hat and a red vest (just like Farah, the butler in *Out of Africa*). (Fontaine, 2006, pp. 70-79.)

They also offer personal and tailor-made safaris, privacy, luxury, guides, porters for on-foot walking back in time, and staff dressed “in traditional attire.” *Cottar’s Camp 1920* has tents:

decorated like an English country home: plush sofas, mahogany furniture, sepia-tinted photos depicting the adventures of the Cottar family on their safaris in the 1930s, ostrich feathers in vases, a glass cabinet with fine china, a piano. (Fontaine, 2006, p. 76)

...British colonial-style living room wrapped in books, down-filled sofas and chesterfield chairs perfect for curling up into; cushioned rattan sun lounger under umbrellas on a deck overlooking Africa; fringed cotton hammocks slung low between trees in dappled sunlight; and even a quiet bench tucked inside the homestead’s organic garden. (*Global Artichoke Private Travel web site*)



The experience becomes in itself a sort of class mobility, “an aristocratic moment” with “different peoples and landscapes” functioning as the “backdrop to a Western aristocratic adventure story” (Root, 1992). In fact, at Cottar’s Camp you stay at a ‘bush home’²⁰ and with your tour package you are buying the life style of Kenyan gentry during colonialism. Coming back home – the stable place – the experience, even lasting a few days, can be told as a tale, one’s story, one’s photos, watching or performing the spectacle of *safari* in khaki shorts with expensive camera equipment.

Nostalgia safari continues to be forbidden for Africans re-enacting difference. Both companies’ home pages show plenty of White tourists. Africans serving customers in “traditional attire,” (such as *askaris*), in charge of the security of the camp or performing “traditional dances,” remain as the other; they are invited actors representing colonial glamour. An exception is John Sampeke, the Massai guide of Cottar Camp. His name appears in the Cottar’s Camp Home Page’s guides section after Calvin Cottar’s. In spite of having earned his credits as a guide with the guarantee of the Kenyan Safari Guides Association (“with the highest grades in his class”), in the Cottar Camp home page’s

narrative, John remains the “exotic other”: “He has fought lion and buffalo with his own hand, drank blood and walked hundreds of kilometres exploring Maasailand on foot” (*Cottar’s Camp* web site). However, to avoid any identification of his “otherness” with the impossibility of communication, a phrase is added: “Highly educated, quietly entertaining and undoubtedly the best Maasai professional guide in the business ... John is an exception because he is ‘in-between’ ” (*Cottar’s Camp* web site).

Conclusion

This is the safari for those who like to be on the cutting edge of the very finest in the world of travel (Micato Safaris). When exploration changed to contemporary tourism, a modern form of possession by exploration became instituted. In fact, the tourist is not exploring in order to know and possess a physical territory or people. He/she is in search of an exotic experience. Classical exploration could keep its glamour and become transformed in fashion – that is to say, stereotyped – and bought by tourists. The *new*, so necessary for tourism industry sales, is established by looking like and re-enacting the already known, presented as exotic in fanciful images of African attractions. It is the tourist fantasy and pleasure that is salient, more than the actual location and its sociopolitical characteristics, which are deleted, sterilized, or sweetened for presentation to the customers.

As a commodity for the tourism industry, Africa becomes the terrain where a particular kind of experience is available to Western subjects: adventure, romance, and danger are available under a home-like control and comfort. Africa is packaged into a tour as a spectacle where difference is consumed, where cultural difference is erected as the provider of authentic experience. In their script, travel agencies construct the “native other” as comprehensible and tamed. His difference is rendered “safe.” Agencies select traits of difference to be commoditized, deciding what difference is and picking up traces of difference from the past by reconstructing its meanings in an exercise for avoiding monotony in the product to be sold (that is the case of the present variety of safaris: tailor-made, exclusive luxury, overland camping, golf-safari, walking, family, and so on). Travel companies *discover difference*, offer a close – but under control – encounter with wilderness, and package it for tourists recurring to mass publicity. In the case of nostalgia-safaris, the discourse which erased any vestige of guilt from colonial exploitation can be summarized in the comments of Ralph Bousfield (a safari guide in Botswana):

“Colonial style was beautiful; the colonial way was not.”(Herndon, 2001)²¹

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- The Enciclopedia of World History (retrieved July 2006) <http://www.bartleby.com/67/1530.html>

Notes

¹ I borrow the expression ‘Artificial Africas’ from Ruth Mayer as an artificial and invented entity (Mayer, 2002, Introduction, p. 1).

² Root uses these expressions in his analysis of Paul Bowles’ *The Sheltering Sky*.

³ Idem.

⁴ Between 1800 and 1880 long-distance trade increased, initiating exchange in in-land societies; with the rise of wealthy traders, regional cultural practices developed, and coastal towns became bigger and more ethnically mixed. Plantation and domestic slavery grew on the coast. Trade led to the spread of Islam and the Kiswahili language in the interior. By the 1870s, most of the East African interior was integrated into the international trade network (with the expansion of the ivory and slave trades) through Zanzibar where Swahili-Arab traders began to trade in the interior for ivory and slaves. Slaves were sought for foreign trade and for clove and other plantations on islands and the coast, while cloth, copper, beads, and guns were traded in the interior. Ivory trade thrived with the Nyamwezi in the central region, while wars encouraged slave trade in the southern region. People from the interior, especially the Nyamwezi, Kamba, and Shambaa, took an active role in long-distance trade as porters to the coast. The ivory and slave trades also stimulated interregional trade in the interior, especially that of iron and salt. Swahili-Arab traders influenced the styles of dress and introduced imported commodities such as guns. (*The Encyclopedia of World History*, 2001)

⁵ “On his first journey, in 1871, [Stanley] took over 400 porter loads of supplies, including four porters who only carried brandy, wine, and vinegar... finally came his huge bathtub, carried a thousand miles inland from the coast on the heads of Africans.” (Pitcher, 2004).

⁶ In fact, Galton advises the “scale of punishment” to be put on *savages*.

⁷ I mean *signified* in the sense of Ferdinand de Saussure, as the product of our mind produced when we process a signifier (when we read or hear a signifier); the referent is the thing out in the world (whatever that might be) that this signifier is trying to evoke. (See Saussure, 2001).

⁸ Bold is mine.

⁹ British colonial rule was formerly established as the East Africa Protectorate (now Kenya) in June, 1895. German East Africa (including present Burundi, Rwanda, and Tanganyika) was established during the 1880s.

¹⁰ Image source retrieved July 2006 from

<http://memory.loc.gov/service/pnp/cph/3c30000/3c31000/3c31400/3c31443v.jpg>

Title: [Theodore Roosevelt, three-quarter length portrait, standing next to dead elephant, holding gun, probably in Africa] / Edward Van Altena, N.Y.C. Creator: Van Altena, Edward, photographer. Repository: Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C. 20540 USA.

¹¹ See Selous, F.C., (1881; 1893, 1908).

¹² Roosevelt’s safari lasted between April 1909 and March 1920. According to Akama (1999, p. 13), Roosevelt shot, preserved, and shipped to Washington DC 3000 specimens of African Game. The expedition was sponsored by the Smithsonian Museum, Roosevelt himself, and Andrew Carnegie. The cost was equivalent to 1.8 million dollars in 2005. See also Roosevelt, Theodore (1910).

¹³ According to Mayer, in Haggard’s novel, Quatermain is a trader, “a cautious man, indeed a timid one” a man who negotiates his relation with *wilderness* more than fighting it out, a gentleman set on establishing a benign and utopian empire in the wilderness. By contrast,

Hollywood versions of *King Solomon's Mines* (1950, 1985, and 2004) instituted the action-adventure hero with the hunter's manhood attributes of coolness, bravery, and expertise in front of the dangerous wild. (Mayer, 2002, p. 30-40). I think that both Haggard's novel and Hollywood versions are equally taking elements from Selous' constructed identity through his books and Roosevelt's books, as a gentleman, hunter, cool individual but also someone very smart in negotiations with Africans.

¹⁴ Kenya established the Kenya Tourism Development Corporation (KTDC) in 1965 and the Ministry of Tourism and Wildlife (MTW) in 1966.

¹⁵ In South Africa, Paul Kruger officially set aside 250,000 hectares of land in the 'Lowveld' as a 'government reserve' on 26 March 1898. The reserve became known as the Sabi Game Reserve which, after some changes in legislation, became the Kruger National Park (on 31 May 1926 with the promulgation of the National Parks Act). In Kenya, under similar legislation, were established the following reserves-national parks: Amboseli (1947), Tsavo (1948) and Mt. Kenya (1949).

¹⁶ The complete name of the company is *Taga Safaris. Trans African Game Adventures*.

¹⁷ "Remember, we actually live in Africa and get to go on safari every 3 or 4 weeks to inspect the lodges and camps giving us hands-on experience on a regular basis. We also film these safaris for you to watch." From Taga Safaris web site.

¹⁸ This expression alludes to the white canvas tents characteristic of colonial safari and figuratively suggests the safety of this kind of tourism.

¹⁹ Image retrieved July 2006 from <http://www.tagasafaris.co.za/expeditions-safaris.htm>.

²⁰ Bush homes are small, exclusive camps or the actual private homesteads and ranches of individuals who settled in Kenya, often generations ago, and now open their homes and extraordinary way of life to a limited number of guests. (Micato Safaris).