

## ***Boswell/Johnson, and Boorman/McGregor, and the exciting Memories of Travel***

*Eva Opperman*  
INDEPENDENT SCHOLAR

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### **Keywords**

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### **Abstract**

In this contribution, I investigate how James Boswell manages to depart from the concept of the travelogue familiar in his day in order to introduce new concepts to the genre: exciting tales from flashbulb memories and elements of the traveller's special, subjective experiences. This development was supported by the influence of Sterne's *Sentimental Journey* (1768) and Locke's and Rousseau's concepts of subjectivity. According to Voßkamp's (1977) Haller's (1993), and Botor's (1999) standards, these new concepts of the travelogue made Boswell's *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides* (1785) a prototype for the contemporary travel report. This will be shown through a comparison with *Long Way Down* (2007) by Charley Boorman and Ewan McGregor and examples from other travelogues by, for example, Paul Theroux, Bill Bryson, and Christina Dodwell.

## Boswell/Johnson, and Boorman/McGregor, and the exciting Memories of Travel

*I sought trains; I found passengers.*  
(Paul Theroux)

*We were approaching the southern tip of Africa and I  
realised that it wasn't just Ewan and I travelling;  
we had every fan, every reader, every biker who  
followed our trail, all on the back of the bikes with us.*  
(Charley Boorman)

### Introduction

Tales of journeys are nearly as old as mankind (Hulme and Youngs 2), however, it seems that nothing new can be discovered on Earth in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Information about every area, if not every village, on this planet can easily be obtained from books, radio, television, and the Internet. Nevertheless, travelogues are still produced and read with interest, so they must provide some additionally valuable reading experience (Korte 2000, 142-3). According to Fussell (1987, 21), the pleasure of modern travel writing consists in “the hazards and joys, the ironies and delights of seeing [what can be seen]”. Batten (96, 117) localizes a change in the 1760s and 1770s travelogues, when many places on Earth had already been described, and people, in addition to the regions travelled, came into travellers’ focus. One example of this new approach is James Boswell’s *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides* (1785). In this contribution, I investigate how the *Tour* influenced the travelogue genre and helped maintain its readability and, doing so, prepared the contemporary travel report. To explain the high appeal the *Tour* has even nowadays, I use the psychological concept of flashbulb memories, which provide suitable material to create exciting travel stories. In addition, I apply Botor’s (1999) approach about the prototype status of *The Life of Samuel Johnson* (1795) to the *Tour*. I also compare the *Tour* to the contemporary *Long Way Down* (2007) by Charley Boorman and Ewan McGregor about a motorbike ride from John O’Groats in Scotland to Cape Agulhas in South Africa, which is, to my knowledge, the only travelogue which was written by two travelers together. “He who travels furthest travels alone, to be sure, but he who travels best travels with a companion” (Fussell 1980, 117). Although Boswell and Johnson did not publish the accounts of their journey in one work like Boorman and McGregor, both works have been printed in one volume, and

one rarely finds scholarly work on one which does not consider the other. Furthermore, both the *Tour* and *Long Way* comment on the travelling party and the sights encountered. This makes both works especially suitable for comparison. Apart from these two central texts, I include other travelogues when appropriate.

Defining the term travelogue seems easier than it is because the travelogue is closely connected with many other genres. One consequence of this heterogeneity and hybridity is that it is often hard to define where “travel writing” ends and other genres begin, such as autobiography [...]” (Thompson 12). Therefore, I will refer to what Thompson calls the “*modern or literary travel book*” (17, emphasis original), which is “the first-person narrative of travel which claims to be a true record of the author’s own experience” (Thompson 27). This includes the notion that the author must sign what Philippe Lejeune has called *le pacte autobiographique*, according to which the narrator, who speaks in the first-person singular, has the same name as the author identified on the title page of the work in question (29–30). According to Lejeune, in an autobiographical text, the author and narrator are, exceptionally, identical.

Korte (2000, 180) emphasizes that an authentic journey is the travelogue’s narrative core. This is not the place to prove that the travelogues I use are based on genuine experiences; it may suffice to accept their authors’ words in a willing suspension of disbelief. “[A] reader’s sense of reality only lies in his or her *assumption* that the text is based on a travel fact, on an authentic journey, and this assumption can only be tested beyond the text itself” (Korte 2000, 10, emphasis original)<sup>1</sup>. Nevertheless, one can assume that the law of perseverance (Stanzel 66) can be transferred to travelogues: Once a reader has achieved a certain attitude towards a genre, this attitude will be preserved until an obvious signal in a text forces a change.

### After Rousseau and Sterne: The Introduction of Subjectivity

According to Fussell, “[t]ravel books are a sub-species of memoir in which the autobiographic narrative arises from the speaker’s encounter with distant or unfamiliar data” (1980, 203). However, in contrast to exploring parties, who presented their “unfamiliar data” for the first time, Boswell belongs to a new generation of writers who had their respective predecessors: Boswell’s *Tour* had Johnson’s *Journal to the Western Isles of Scotland* (1775)

<sup>1</sup> Since “[m]uch contemporary travel writing has been written by journalists who have a deep investment in maintaining their credibility” (Hulme and Youngs 10, see also Korte 1994, 364), a report or a TV programme accompanying the book will prove its validity.

and Pennant's *Tour in Scotland* (1771, publ. 1774) as its predecessors (see Possin 90 and Martin 303). This liberated him from the need to introduce Scottish landscapes and typical Scottish qualities to his readers.

Similarly, Boorman/McGregor could rely on their readers having seen photos of, if not visited themselves, the Egyptian pyramids or something similar to the Roman ruins in Libya. Therefore, both could concentrate on other aspects of their journey and, like their contemporary successors, narrate their adventures rather than describe their discoveries:

The development from a merely factual towards a subjective approach to reality became apparent in mid-18<sup>th</sup> century English travelogues. [...] This movement of meaning from collecting factual data to subjective experience is part of a process which generally happened in English literature in the middle of the century. It was meant to support the investigation and emphasis of individuality. (Kuczinsky 35)<sup>2</sup>

In the traveling genre(s), this trend has continued until today:

The contemporary travelogue is characterized by [...] devaluing description in favour of characteristics of autobiographical and fictional literature. Nowadays, travelogues have no descriptive ambition; rather, they reconstruct past events as impressive happenings and countries travelled as literary landscapes which are especially expressive even though the journey was experienced as chaotic and governed by chance. (Kohl 150)<sup>3</sup>

The fact that the individual narrative points of view of recent travel events have to be re-created in written retrospective gives the authors enormous literary flexibility for creating these literary landscapes. With regard to the interview form of *Life*, Botor emphasizes "Conversational biographies [like Boswell's] are literary works addressed to a broad range of readers; therefore,

<sup>2</sup> Der Wechsel von rein sachbezogener zu subjektbezogener Aneignung von Wirklichkeit begann sich in der englischen Reiseliteratur um die Mitte des 18. Jahrhunderts abzuzeichnen. [...] Die Verschiebung des Gewichts von der reinen Faktensammlung auf das subjektive Erlebnis ist als Teil eines Prozesses zu sehen, der sich in der englischen Literatur und Ästhetik um die Jahrhundertmitte allgemein vollzog. Er richtete sich auf die Erkundung und Beförderung von Individualität.

<sup>3</sup> Was den *travelogue* der heutigen Zeit auszeichnet, ist eine ihm eigene Relation [...], die das Deskriptive abwertet und die den Kennzeichen von autobiographischer und fiktionaler Literatur größere Prägekraft einräumt. Zeitgenössische Travelogues haben keinen deskriptiven Ehrgeiz, vielmehr rekonstruieren sie vergangene Begebenheiten zu prägnanten Erlebnissen und durchreiste Welten zu literarischen Landschaften mit besonderer Aussagekraft, auch wenn die tatsächlichen Erfahrungen der Reise als chaotisch und zufallsbestimmt erlebt werden.

they had to be composed in a reader-friendly manner” (36).<sup>4</sup> This, according to Botor, necessarily leads to “a subjective transformation by the author [...] to guarantee the contents being transmitted understandably” (36, 39)<sup>5</sup>. In the travelogue, this mainly becomes apparent by the ordering effect, which Kohl mentions, and by the way the single episodes are constructed.

Furthermore, Boswell’s *Tour* corresponds to Rousseau’s concept of memory, which was based on Locke’s and Hume’s characterization of the Self through remembering: memories kept in the mind are meaningful and vividly relived, and, in combination with the imagination, they provide access to the narrators’ inner thoughts and assist them in structuring their life experience (Whitehead 66, see also Huisman 155). Therefore, while hard facts such as date, place and acquaintances may be given correctly, personal emotions or perceptions leave room for later interpretation. In addition, Sterne’s *Sentimental Journey* (1768), though not a travel report according to the definition I use,<sup>6</sup> introduces personal emotions and opinions to the travelogue, which had previously been concerned with empirical facts or practical information. In this context, Forster’s confession of subjectivity is important: “[T]wo travellers seldom saw the same object in the same manner, and each reported the fact differently, according to his sensations, and his peculiar mode of thinking” (Forster 9, see also Korte 2000, 61). Subjectivity, in combination with the Sterne-like emotional involvement of the traveller/narrator, reduces the didactical element of travel reports and increases readers’ participation. The story of an adventure is much more engaging than the description of a landscape, no matter how beautiful it may be. Boswell, who very likely knew both Sterne’s and Forster’s works, was certainly influenced by them, even though

<sup>4</sup> „dass es sich bei Gesprächswerken [wie Boswells] um literarische Werke [handelt], die sich an einen breiteren Leserkreis wenden wollen und dementsprechend ihre Gesprächswiedergaben lektürefreundlich gestalten müssen” Botor refers to Eckermann’s book here; the transfer of the statement to Boswell’s work was authorized by him in a phone call on May 7<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

<sup>5</sup> „eine[r] subjektive[n] Überformung durch den Autor”, which, however, is not meant to falsify but „um eine inhaltlich verständliche Wiedergabe zu gewährleisten“

<sup>6</sup> While Sterne’s influence on travel writing cannot possibly be denied, I am reluctant to subsume the *Sentimental Journey* under my definition of travel writing. Sterne, who deliberately calls his narrator “Mr Yorik”, not “Mr. Sterne”, and who does not give the exact details of the dates of his journey, cannot argue for the accuracy of a journalistic travelogue as I define it. Furthermore, Sterne does not sign Lejeune’s autobiographical pact (see esp. 19–35), which is one condition on which I base my concept of a travel report. Neither was this Sterne’s interest; his “fictional travelogue” (Goring xi; see also Cuddon 65) was primarily meant to satirize Smollett’s travelogue (Goring xviii–ix). Rather than the works discussed here, Bruce Chatwin’s *In Patagonia* (1977) can claim to be a true succession of Sterne’s work.

he does not admit this.<sup>7</sup> In addition, subjectivity can be regarded as the reason for smaller discrepancies between two narrators' different perceptions of events during the same journey. For example, Johnson concentrates on what he perceives "in an accepted, almost classical form" (Levi 13); choosing his personal perspective to judge what he sees (Kalb 82). In contrast, Boswell, who is interested in both Johnson and in Scotland, describes both the country and Johnson's reactions to it:

At our inn [in Montrose] we did not find a reception such as we thought proportionate to the commercial opulence of the place; but Mr Boswell desired me to observe that the innkeeper was an Englishman, and I defended him as well as I could. (Johnson 41)

About eleven at night we arrived at Montrose. We found but a sorry inn, where I myself saw another waiter put a lump of sugar with his fingers into Dr Johnson's lemonade, for which he called him "Rascal!" It put me in great glee that our landlord was an Englishman. I rallied the Doctor upon this, and he grew quiet. (Boswell 195)

With Johnson's arrival at Edinburgh in mind, Boswell has a chance to pay Johnson back for his ill opinion of Scottish cleanliness. Similarly, Boorman is an expert in off-road riding while McGregor does not like it. Therefore, he suffers from the "fesh fesh"<sup>8</sup> (McGregor 163) in Sudan and regards some parts of the journey much less pleasurable than Boorman does. Indeed, such preferences enable readers to come across different views about the same journey whenever there are two or more companions travelling: "Sometimes it suffices just to lock two authors together, given that they are sufficiently different" (Esch 412).<sup>9</sup> The resulting different reports need not be regarded as contradictions but, rather, as completions of each other, so that the image of the journey becomes even richer.

### Flashbulb Memories and the Exciting Story of Travel

Subjectivity also influences the material from which travel reports are created. The narrators report their encounters from memory and claim validity because they vividly remember what happened. Vivid memories thrown

<sup>7</sup> Botor (36-7, 95) investigates Eckermann's confession of subjectivity in his "Vorrede" [preface], which discusses this even further. Although Boswell does not yet subscribe to this point of view, it is valid for his work as well.

<sup>8</sup> This is sand, which is "like red talcum powder, so loose it was almost like riding on liquid" (Boorman 239).

<sup>9</sup> „Es genügt bisweilen, nur zwei Autoren zusammenzusperrern, wenn sie nur verschieden genug sind“.

into relief by temporal distance often correspond to so-called “flashbulb memories”, defined as:

virtually literal representations of the what, how, and where of the original event. In theory, when an event of great emotional impact and importance occurs, the system immediately encodes it as it occurred with great detail and vividness. The implication of this [...] is that the flashbulb memories created will be subjectively strong. (Schwartz 206)

The principal two determinants appear to be a high level of surprise, a high level of consequentiality, or perhaps emotional arousal [...] If they do attain high levels, they seem, most directly, to affect the frequency of rehearsal, covert and overt, which, in turn, affects the degree of elaboration in the narrative of the memory that can be elicited experimentally. (Brown and Kulik 73)

Although flashbulb memories tend to be subjected to the same processes of future distortion as other memories, “there is, indeed, a higher degree of accuracy for flashbulb memories than normal memories if one looks [...] at the specific memories *of personal context*” (Schwartz 203, emphasis added). One can assume that for both Boswell/Johnson and Boorman/McGregor, the journeys were highly emotionally charged, so it is very likely that they produced many flashbulb memories.

It can only be expected that flashbulb memories remain present in the travellers’ memories, and it is obvious that these will likely be elaborated to a greater extent in the narration: “You remember the events vividly, and you feel strongly that your memories are accurate” (Schwartz 202). Vivid remembering and emotional arousal make flashbulbs excellent material for stories to tell those who have stayed at home: “he or she who travelled has stories to tell,” as the German proverb says<sup>10</sup>.

An anecdote from Christina Dodwell’s *A Traveller in China* may serve as an example:

The public security bureau was on my list of places to find, in order to apply for a special permit. When I located it I parked my bicycle at the end of a row of policemen’s bikes. Unfortunately, my bike fell over and hit the bike next to it, which hit another and another; I watched with dismay as slowly the motion rippled along knocking every bike flat into the dust. I didn’t get my permit. Decided to try again the following day. ( 23)

This game of bicycle-domino may not be a disaster of biblical proportions, but for Dodwell it meant the loss of the much-desired permit, at least for the moment. Furthermore, as generally is the case with accidents, one can

<sup>10</sup> “Wenn einer eine Reise tut, dann kann er was erzählen!”

assume that she was surprised by the event as well as frightened of possible damage to the policemen's bikes. Therefore, all three levels—surprise, consequentiality and emotional arousal—were high for Dodwell. It is not likely that such an experience is easily forgotten. Nevertheless, after her return from China (and after having received her special permit!) the presence of this event in Dodwell's mind made an anecdote worthy of inclusion in her report. With the actual arousal of an experience of the past, she may have even enjoyed recreating the event, emotional tension included, for her readers.

Even though some details of flashbulbs may decay like other memories, both travelling parties had records of hard facts as evidence to check against the workings of their brains. Boswell had both Johnson's *Journey* and his own journal, Boorman and McGregor had both the filmed material and their travel logs. So, one can assume that most descriptions are reasonably accurate, while the emotions expressed may be both part of the memory and products of later reflection. "A[nother] explanation of the high accuracy level [...] can be given in terms of rehearsal: people who narrowly escape drowning or are present at a major earthquake are likely to have told the story of their experiences many times" (Neisser and Libby 318), or as Aleida Assmann says, "[w]e remember many things according to the number of chances which we have to talk about them" (103)<sup>11</sup>.

"Specific colourful phrases may escape some of [the usual] limitations [of memory]" (Neisser and Libby 320), so do phrases with "high interactional content" (ibid). Therefore, many of Johnson's statements, especially such catchphrases as his "I smell you in the dark!" (Boswell 167), as well as McGregor's "I mean; what have the Romans ever done for us?" (first section of photos; n. pag.) can be accepted as accurate.

One other event that is likely to create flashbulb memories, which is not mentioned in my sources, however, is recognition: when one gains an explanation of a phenomenon one has long wondered about or realizes that, for example, a building is not really as grand as it always appears in photographs, this recognition can be emotional enough to create a flashbulb memory. The newly gained knowledge will likely become part of the story constructed from the memory.

Written in retrospect, with the whole journey in mind, single memories, including flashbulb memories of especially exciting events such as meeting famous or particularly interesting people, are set in a continuous order and retold as lively anecdotes. Such reports not only correspond to the narrative methods used by Boswell but also to those of the contemporary travel report.

<sup>11</sup> "Wir erinnern uns an vieles in dem Maße, wie wir Anlässe finden, davon zu erzählen." See also Bruner, and Erll and Nünning, 18.



## Boswell's Flashbulb Tales as the Prototype of the Contemporary Travel Report

Boswell's modernity has often been commented on. Brody's (549) statement may be one of the most succinct:

In several ways Boswell closely resembles a celebrated modern writer. Like Boswell this writer is much concerned with his public image; like *Boswell* he is a superb journalist; and both disport themselves in newsprint as naturally as fish in the sea. (emphasis added)

Ogu also speaks of "the new type of biography Boswell was writing" (59), and Kalb considers Boswell's *Tour* to be a "literary travelogue in the genre's first phase" (13)<sup>12</sup>.

To turn a flashbulb memory into part of an entertaining as well as informative travelogue, it must be verbalized, and the single flashbulbs of one journey must be ordered. In this respect, Boswell introduces new, journalistic strategies to the established genre. According to Botor (95), his confirmation that he is describing objective reality in his *Life* (for which the *Tour* is often considered to be a predecessor) was extremely convincing. To prove that Boswell's *Life of Samuel Johnson* is a literary prototype, Botor claims qualities which link it to products of modern journalism, specifically the interview and the documentary. Botor refers to Voßkamp's definition of a literary prototype:

A historic investigation into the matter shows that the history of genres, on the one hand, is determined by norm-creating works (prototypes) and, on the other hand, is formed by the complementary forces of *reader expectations* and *literary responses*. (Oppermann 613, emphasis original)<sup>13</sup>

By saying that "Boswell's [*Tour*] takes a rather original form", Levi (13), like Ogu, Brody and Kalb, recognizes that Boswell deviates from the norm of travel literature, however, a sub-genre to which the *Tour* may belong has not yet been identified. Boswell's *Tour* exceeds *Life* because it makes use of even more journalistic qualities than *Life*, which focuses on the interview (Botor 33-37). Therefore, I should like to continue Botor's line of thought by exploring how Boswell's *Tour* may be regarded as prototypical text of another journalistic genre, the report or, more exactly, the travel report.

<sup>12</sup> "ein literarischer Reisebericht in seiner ersten Phase

<sup>13</sup> Der historische Befund literarischer Gattungen zeigt, daß ihre Geschichte einerseits entscheidend bestimmt wird durch normbildende Werke (Prototypen) und andererseits geprägt ist durch die wechselseitige Komplementarität von *Gattungserwartungen* und *Werkantworten*. (Voßkamp 30, emphasis original)

In his *Handbook for Journalists*, Michael Haller comments on the report that it

is a form of representation closely connected with contemporary journalism, the core of which is the report of an eye-witness. If “report” means a certain *form of communication*, however, then it represents an ancient genre of narration – and for a culture of listening (which sometimes is missed in our days). The audience of readers or listeners necessarily closely connected with the narrator. (14)<sup>14</sup>

Haller sees the travelogue as the *fundamentum* on which the contemporary report was built. The term is based on the meaning of the Latin verb *reportare*, “to bring together/to carry back”. Haller defines the report’s task as follows: “The narrator had left home, discovered and adopted things abroad, and now he presents them to the eyes and ears of those at home” (Haller 19)<sup>15</sup>.

His interest makes the reader wish to participate; he becomes curious. [...] the narrator tells his story so that the listeners, while listening, can follow the events encountered in their imagination; as if they were travelling now. The past should be made present for them, by immediacy of language and the sensuality of description. (Haller 20, emphasis original)<sup>16</sup>

Thus, Haller develops the following criteria as characteristics of a contemporary report:

kind of topic	authentic, singular happenings at the scene
kind of text	descriptive, narrative, reporting
effort of transfer	social and/or local distances, and institutional and/or psychological barriers are overcome, so that...

<sup>14</sup> ist eine mit dem modernen Journalismus verbundene und durch ihn verbreitete Darstellungsform, deren Kern der Augenzeugenbericht ausmacht. Meint man aber mit „Reportage“ eine bestimmte *Kommunikationsform*, dann steht sie für ein uraltes literarisches Genre des Erzählens – und so auch für eine (in unseren Tagen schon manchmal vermißte) Kultur des Zuhörens. Denn zum Erzähler gehört das Publikum der Hörer bzw. Leser. (emphasis original)

<sup>15</sup> „Der Erzähler war ausgezogen von zuhause, hatte in der Fremde Dinge entdeckt und aufgenommen, hatte sie mitgebracht – und jetzt breitet er sie vor den Augen und Ohren der Daheimgebliebenen aus.“

<sup>16</sup> Mit dem Interesse tritt beim Zuhörer [...] auch der Wunsch hervor, mit dabei zu sein, also seine *Neugier*. [...] Der Erzähler [...] erzählt so, daß die Zuhörer im Augenblick des Zu- und Hinhörens die Erlebnisse in ihrer Vorstellung nachvollziehen können, so, wie wenn sie erst jetzt auf Reisen gingen. Das Vergangene soll für sie gegenwärtig werden, durch die Unmittelbarkeit der Sprache und die Sinnlichkeit der Schilderung.

main function ... the reading audience is invited to participate  
(Haller 35, 93)<sup>17</sup>.

The only difference between the report and the travelogue is that reporters do not necessarily travel while they investigate the subject of their future work. In general, they remain static once they have reached the subject's location and concentrate on that subject during their stay. Therefore, concerning the journalistic craft, Dokumentation [factuality; meaning research], Authentizität [sic!] [authenticity; meaning that the narrator is an eye-witness], Glaubwürdigkeit [credibility; meaning that the facts given can be verified], Unmittelbarkeit [immediacy; meaning the reporter's sensual, direct perception], und Redlichkeit [honesty; meaning that the narrator is less important than the situation] are required (Haller 26). Furthermore, Haller (20) emphasizes that reports are written in the present tense.

Deeg (163) defines one central question at the base of travel writing as follows: "How can I, as an author, show the worlds abroad to a reader who shares my culture, my point of view, my tradition and my norms?"<sup>18</sup> The world image so constructed must necessarily be that of *their* world: "A traveller's perception can never be objective; it is always subject to certain conditions" (Deeg 166)<sup>19</sup>. Not only do these requirements correspond to Haller's description of the report, they also fit well into the flashbulb memory concept discussed previously. The narrator's eye-witness status and setting his experience above his importance as witness suit especially well here.

With regard to its narrative tense and the marginal position of the reporter, however, the travelogue diverges from Haller's norm. Whereas a genuine report is concerned mainly with the subject of its investigation and, therefore, concentrates rather on this subject than its author's experience, in the travel report, this author's experience *is* the subject of the report, so that travel report authors can only step back from the centre of interest to a limited degree. One can describe the interior of a hut or a tent or create the image of a train station in the early hours without reference to oneself, one can

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<sup>17</sup> Art des Themas: authentische und einmalige Ereignisse und Erlebnisse vor Ort

Art des Textes: schildernd, erzählend, beschreibend

Vermittlungsleistung: Soziale und/oder räumliche Distanzen sowie institutionelle und/oder psychologische Barrieren überwinden, um...

Hauptfunktion: ...die Leserschaft teilhaben zu lassen.

<sup>18</sup> „Wie kann ich als Autor dem Leser, der meinem Kulturkreis angehört und mein Weltbild, meine Normen und Traditionen teilt, die fremde Welt vermitteln?“

<sup>19</sup> „Die Wahrnehmung des Reisenden kann nie objektiv sein, ist immer gewissen Bedingungen unterworfen.“

give certain facts about places, buildings or people, but otherwise, the travel reporter's subjective experiences remains central.

For the same reason, the use of the present tense in a travel report is problematic because its topics are events which may have a commonly valid character but were experienced only once, before they are narrated. Thus, the past is the genre's commonly accepted tense. In this respect, the travelogue reveals its close relationship to the memoir, which, in the German tradition<sup>20</sup>, serves to connect a person's life to the socio-political situation at the time rather than solely constructing this person's personal development. In contrast to this, reporters' lives are not necessarily present in their works, although their status as eye-witnesses necessitates this. Therefore, one could say that contemporary (travel) reports connect the journalistic genre to the autobiographical by intermingling points of view.

In this respect, Boswell's work corresponds to all points made by Haller: Boswell tells his *Tour* in an entertaining, vivid and sensual manner which engages his readers even after more than 200 years. He was an eye-witness to all the situations he recalls, and the information which he gives is embedded in the situation—and, therefore, necessary—and it is often based on his and Johnson's experiences. It is, however, not didactical in the sense that Boswell wants to teach his new discoveries or insights to his readers. Rather, his descriptions are *exempla*, which allow the readers to recognize the general situation. Nevertheless, the readers are intrigued by such adventures, even if these are only second-hand.

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<sup>20</sup> For this statement, I have compared Schwalm's definition in the *Metzler Literatur Lexikon* (2007), which is the most important literary dictionary in Germany, to the one in Cuddon's *Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory* (1999), which has a corresponding position in English-speaking academia. Whereas Cuddon's definition of memoir only refers to "autobiograph[ies]" and "Diaries and Journals" (504, see also 63-7 and 220-2, Schwalm emphasizes the differences and

[d]ie Einordnung der individuellen Lebensgeschichte in größere Zusammenhänge von öffentlicher oder geschichtlicher Tragweite; es geht um die Darstellung der Teilhabe eines Einzelnen [...] an solchen Ereignissen, nicht um die Rekonstruktion einer individuellen Entwicklungsgeschichte. (Schwalm 489)

[the location of an individual biography within the greater context of public and historical meaning; memories are about a person's participation in corresponding events, not about reconstructing an individual's development].

Furthermore, according to Schwalm, a memoir could be written by another person (ibid).

Therefore, this genre is closer to the requirements of the journalistic genres than the autobiographical genres are in general.

Encounters with locals may serve as an example. Boswell and Johnson visit an old Highland lady at her home:

When we had advanced a good way by the side of Lochness, I perceived a little hut, with an old looking woman at the door of it. [...] It was a wretched little hovel of earth only, I think, and for a window only had a small hole [...] In the middle of the room [...] was a fire of peat, the smoke going out at a hole in the roof. She had a pot upon it, with goat's flesh, boiling. [...]

Dr Johnson was curious where she slept [but] would not hurt her delicacy [...] I [...] went into the place where the bed was. There was a little partition of wicker [...], and close by the wall was a kind of bedstead of wood with heath upon it [...] The woman's name was Fraser [...] They had five children, the eldest only thirteen [ sixty goats and] a few foals. We were informed that they lived all spring without meal, upon milk and curds and whey alone. What they *get* for their goats, kids, and fowls, *maintains* them during the rest of the year. (Boswell 231-2, emphasis added)

The information which Boswell gives about the Fraser family is, in part, in the present tense, and what appears as past tense can also be read as reported speech. Although Boswell acts in the scene, the Fraser family is central, so that this passage fulfils the requirements of Haller's description. Their way of life is reported for the middle- and upper-class members of literary London's and Edinburgh's circles; hence, the travelogues' function of overcoming social and local barriers by transferring knowledge is also fulfilled. The anecdote is lively; Dr Johnson's being taken for a scoundrel (very likely one of Boswell's flashbulb memories) adds to this effect.

Having entered the travellers' focus in the pre-Romantic 1760s, a process in which Sterne's *Sentimental Journey* certainly had its share (see Bell 153), accounts of people met along the way are an essential part of travelogues, even nowadays. The locals are approached by the travellers, and these meetings are generally unique. Boswell tells his readers what he and Johnson, specifically, met with, and what impression they received from what they saw. The descriptions no longer serve to collect data methodically, but as *exempla* to reveal to the readers, for example, what kinds of habitation the travellers visited. "Boswell [...] was a connoisseur of situations. Here was the prospect of a whole series of situations of hitherto undreamed-of picturesqueness" (Krutch 413). Furthermore, the information given is meant to inspire the imagination. Boswell manages to transport his genteel London and Edinburgh readers to a small Highland family dwelling. Therefore, he writes according to principles now established in modern reports. Surprisingly, this connection of a sentimental journey to contemporary journalism is hardly alluded to in literary studies on the subject.

Boorman and McGregor work similarly:

We wanted to see where the kids lived and came across [...] a cluster of huts [...] these were pole-walled, the gaps filled with wattle and daub and the roofs thatched. [Ruby's] family invited us for breakfast. There were two women, [...] and a guy in a blue jacket, wellies and a scarf. [...] There was a little fire going, the circular room dark, though with the door open and the windows there was enough light to make out a zigzag pattern on the walls and hand prints made by the children. Shelves had been cut and held various pots. [...]

The tea was superb, [...] with the bread and spicy paste it was a good breakfast. A family in Ethiopia: this was why we were here, to meet the people, see how they lived and share a meal with them. (McGregor 197-8)

Again, the hut, the family's invitation, and the breakfast serve as *exempla* of the typical African hospitality the team encountered. Dodwell's descriptions of Kirghiz and Kazakh yurts (Dodwell 35-6, 102-3) resemble descriptions by Boswell and McGregor, so one can say that such descriptions have become a well-established element of contemporary travelogues. Likewise, the different persons presented in the Boorman's reports and McGregor's UNICEF visits mention all the people involved in the visit. In this respect, Boswell has set a Voßkamp prototype to which Boorman and McGregor react. Similar examples may be found in the works of Paul Theroux (e.g. 178, 321-3), Bill Bryson (150-1) and Christina Dodwell (e.g. 31, 66, 79-80, 91-2). Here is another example from the *Traveller in China*:

My walks were also the only opportunities I got for washing my face and hands, a custom that my hosts didn't seem to use. I could see why Wang [who had given me a lift] had said that Tibetans are dirty people. The cold is not the only reason why they seldom wash. Some believe that not washing saves them from being turned into fishes after their death, or that spring water contains evil spirits because it comes from inside the earth where the female principle rules. The water only becomes good if it is exposed to sun and air, part of the male upper world. There's probably a logical reason for this belief. Actually the problem of smell is not so bad in winter when the weather freezes and the rancid butterfat [sic] in their clothes helps to keep the people warm. (Dodwell 105).

Dodwell first narrates her personal experience and then adds an explanatory comment which serves to transform her personal experience into general knowledge and to transport some of her newly acquired knowledge to her readers. As a journalist, Dodwell is more aware of this generic requirement than Boorman and McGregor are; we must not forget that they most likely intended to write an adventure tale rather than compose an educational report. With Boswell one can assume that the difference between a Scottish

peasant family and an English one was not so great that he had to overcome high levels of newness with his descriptions and anecdotes.

Theroux follows the same principle as Dodwell, which is, however, not so obvious:

The trains in any country contain the essential paraphernalia of the culture: Thai trains have the shower jar with the glazed dragon on its side, Ceylonese ones the car reserved for Buddhist monks, Indian ones a vegetarian kitchen and six classes, Iranian ones prayer mats, Malaysian ones a noodle stall, Vietnamese ones bulletproof glass on the locomotive, and on every carriage of a Russian train there is a samowar. The railway bazaar, with its gadgets and passengers, represented the society so completely that to board it was to be challenged by the national character. (Theroux 209).

Theroux experienced the unique peculiarities of the trains in every country he visited because he used these trains. Therefore he, too, generalizes from his own experience, but, because his generalization is taken out of the context of the actual travelling experience, the information-carrying character of this passage loses its connection to the events experienced.

## Conclusion

With the freedom that comes with being able to choose which information to give, both Boswell and Boorman/McGregor had the opportunity to create emotional impressions. Be it “[t]o see Dr Samuel Johnson, the great champion of the English Tories, salute Miss Flora Macdonald in the isle of Sky” (Boswell 265) or “Charley Boorman [on his motorbike] and behind him a fucking pyramid” (McGregor 129); the readers are impressed to be witnesses to such improbabilities. However, although both authors may have been aware of this, they still had to concentrate on the situation. Neither could Boswell drop out of the conversation with reverence nor could McGregor risk a road accident. Therefore, these reports were likely reformed during the writing process with the use of memories thrown into relief by the temporal distance to the original scene. This does not only correspond to what the authors experienced as true while writing, but it also increases the readers’ excitement while they imagine being there with the travellers.

To sum up, the results of my investigation are the following: Boswell’s *Tour* was composed on the foundation of three factors which are necessary conditions for the travelogue to transform into the contemporary travel report: First; with descriptive predecessors available, a focus on the events of the actual journey was possible; Second, Locke’s, Hume’s, and especially Rousseau’s Romantic concepts of memory increased the importance of memories

as structuring elements; and third, Sterne's *Sentimental Journey* introduced both subjectivity and emotional involvement to the travelogue. Boswell uses techniques which have become typical of contemporary journalistic travelogues, such as interviews with locals, the inclusion of descriptions only to highlight the situation being described, references to the journey as such, the mood among companions, accommodation, food, means of travel, etc. These techniques correspond to Haller's requirements for a journalistic report, from which the travelogue only diverges by its use of the past tense and the reporter's more central position. This makes Boswell's *Tour* a prototype for later travelogues such as *The Great Railway Bazaar*, *A Traveller in China*, *Down Under* or *Long Way Down*.

Furthermore, many events described in these travelogues owe their vividness and suitability for narration to flashbulb memories, which are transformed into sentimental journeys with their highly emotional impact and strong recollection. These characteristics make flashbulb memories excellent material for exciting stories which, in accordance with the (reading) audience of the report, enable Boswell's and Boorman/McGregor's readers to mentally (intellectually and emotionally) participate in the journey about which they read.

Another influence on the narration of these events is that they have likely been recorded once (diary, voice recorder, film, etc.), and are often repeated orally, so that they are rehearsed into a verbal pattern even before they are written down for publication. Because travel accounts are based on respective journeys it is relatively easy to guarantee a certain accuracy as to the narratives' when, who, and where. Moreover, the travellers' subjective memory, albeit often tending towards accuracy, can – and should – not be questioned in terms of truth; because they are often highly emotional for the narrators, subjective memories have a certain truth value as experiences of the journey.

Even Assmann (107) cannot answer unambiguously whether personal memories are true or not. On the one hand, given the psychological results discussed, we can assume that they have a truth value, which is, nevertheless, subjective. On the other hand, one may question if such travelogues need to be completely accurate, with information so easily obtainable from somewhere else. As long as there are entertaining stories and they contain no gross errors in terms of geography, ethnicity, etc., one should accept travel reports at face value. This includes strong propositions like Boorman's concerning the supposed dangers in Africa and the warnings they had received in advance: "All that is bullshit". (McGregor 234, Boorman 320). Such statements are based on experience, and this should suffice as proof of their truth.



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