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»I Am a Hottentot«

Africanist Mimicry and Green Xenophilia
in Hans Paasche and Karen Blixen

1.

Claims that industrialized western countries must reform their environmental practices have often been made with reference to less-developed non-western societies living in greater »harmony« or »balance« with the natural world. Examples of what I call green xenophilia (from the Greek »xenos«, meaning strange, unknown or foreign, and »philia«, meaning love or attraction), are myriad, wide-ranging and culturally dispersed. They range from the appearance of the iconic »crying Indian« in anti-pollution TV and newspaper spots in the months leading up to the first Earth Day on April 22 1970 to numerous environmentalist individuals' and groups' use of the fabricated »Chief Seattle's Speech« as an authoritative touchstone of ecological consciousness, and from the British Schumacher College's endorsement of India as a source of simplicity, holism, humility, vegetarianism etc. to leading deep ecologists' advocacy of East Asian religions (especially Buddhism, Jainism and Taoism) as »biocentric« alternatives to »anthropocentric« Christianity (Rolston 1987; Dunaway 2008; Krupat 2011; Corrywright 2010). Invocations of non-western cultures, identities and worldviews have proved potent heuristic devices, enabling greens both to critique the status quo and to gesture (however schematically) towards the possibility of alternatives. Pervasive media-borne ideas and images like »the Green Tibet« (Huber 1997) and »the ecological Indian« (Krech 1999) have given environmentalist ideas about the good life physical incarnation, making them seem less remote and abstract. Yet the prevalence of xenophile discourse has also made environmentalism vulnerable to recurrent accusations of romantic primitivism, orientalism and exoticism, as western greens have sometimes (though not always) appeared to buttress traditional socio-cultural norms in the very act of challenging them (Guha 1989; Lohmann 1993; Bartholomeusz 1998).

What is gained and what is risked when western greens speak about, with, for or as »the other«? In this essay I engage with two early-twentieth-century North European writers, the German Hans Paasche (1881-1921) and the Dane Karen Blixen (1885-1962), whose works bring this question to the forefront. Critical of European industrialization, and awkwardly positioned vis-à-vis their upper-class social milieu, Paasche and Blixen wrote as self-made »Africans«, testing the limits between colonialism, anti-colonialism and emergent forms of environmentalism and »green« lifestyle reform. More precisely, Paasche in *Die Forschungsreise des Afrikaners Lukanga Kukara ins Innerste Deutschland* (*The African Lukanga Mukara's Research Journey into the Innermost of Germany* (1912-1913) and Blixen in *Out of Africa* (1937) deploy the ambiguous form of mimicry that Susan Gubar labels »racechange«, impersonating or appropriating culturally other voices and perspectives on animals, food, physical embodiment and human-natural relations (Gubar 1997). Paasche and Blixen, I argue, used their con-

siderable intercultural insight to construct images of Africa that they hoped would stand in redemptive contrast to the humanly and environmentally ruinous beliefs and practices of European modernity. I am interested in the acts of ethnic and textual self-alienation that these writers perform because they highlight the discursive, ethical and political ambiguities of green xenophilia – ambiguities that can be explored from different positions within the developing field of ecocritical studies.

2.

In the autumn of 1905 the young naval lieutenant Hans Paasche was posted to Tanganyika in German East Africa (present-day Tanzania). Paasche's assignment coincided with the eruption of the Maji-Maji uprising, whose brutal suppression over the next two years would claim the lives of between 75,000 and 300,000 Africans (Speitkamp 2005, 135). Paasche's experiences in the »Schutztruppe« catalyzed what he described as a remarkable »Metanoia« or »Umdenken« (Paasche 1992, 169). Interweaving feminism, vegetarianism, anti-alcoholism, anti-colonialism, anti-vaccinationism, pacifism, nature conservation and wildlife protection in his increasingly dissident journalism and fiction, Paasche in the years leading up to his murder by right-wing paramilitary troops in May 1920 emerged as a powerful voice in Wilhelmine Germany's left-intellectual circles and a figure subsequently hailed as »ein Prophet der heutigen ökologischen Bewegungen« (Nothnagle 1997, 774).

In a commemorative essay on Paasche, the naval doctor Otto Buchinger reminisced about his late friend's fondness and aptitude for cross-racial masquerade and role play:

Es war in Daressalaam, im »Hafen des Friedens«, im Jahre 1905. Da lagen unsere beiden Kreuzer »Hertha« und »Bussard« friedlich nebeneinander. Nachmittags hatten wir uns auf Landurlaub getroffen und sahen vereint einer Ngoma zu, dem kreisförmigen Reigentanz der Suaheli-Neger [...]. Plötzlich, mit einem charakteristischen Ruck, warf Paasche Tropenhut und Uniformjacke seinem Nebenmann in den Arm, sprang in den Kreis und tanzte die Ngoma mit, aber so naturecht, so überwältigend ernst-komisch, dass sowohl weiße wie schwarze Zuschauer die reine Lach-Ngoma tanzten, und alte Afrikaner versicherten, da fehle aber auch kein Zug an der »Echtheit«. [...] Er war ein echter Künstler, ein Genie im Einfühlen in die Seele, den Rhythmus, die Haltung, das »Drum und Dran« primitiver Menschen. (Paasche 2008, 47)

Paasche's discomfort with his own identity and his wish to remake himself in the image of the »other« finds their best-known expression in *Die Forschungsreise des Afrikaners Lukanga Kukara ins Innerste Deutschland*, which was published anonymously to great acclaim (and some confusion) in the pacifist journal *Der Vortrupp* in 1912 and 1913. Consisting of nine letters prefaced by Paasche himself, *Lukanga Kukara* is an exercise in cross-racial ventriloquism that purports to be written by a young inhabitant of »Kitara« (Rwanda) relating his 18-month journey among the »Wasungu« (Germans) to his king Omukama and commenting on German topography, economics, industry, agriculture, work, hygiene, transportation, education, dress, diet and family and gender relations. Influenced by Baron de Montesquieu's *Lettres persanes* (1721), Paasche in this text employs a form of »double-voiced discourse« (Bakhtin 1982, 324) that works on several levels and accomplishes several ends at once. For one thing, the use of

blackface minstrelsy allows Paasche to figure his own sense of exile, alienation and impropriety following his resignation from the imperial navy, his secession from polite Prussian society and his break with his wealthy industrialist father Hermann Paasche. At the same time, the »Negerbriefe« draw attention to, and ridicule, Germany's imperialist ambitions, by parodying popular colonialist discovery narratives à la Henry Morton Stanley's *Through the Dark Continent* (1878) and Adolf Friedrich zu Mecklenburg's *Ins innere Afrika* (1909). In Paasche's reverse-colonization scenario, a solitary African man penetrates the »seltsam« country of »Innerdeutschland«, wrestling with the »Eingeborenen-sprache« and shedding light on »Sitten« and »Denken« that appear »allzu unsinnig« (Paasche 1925, 12, 22, 29).

The voice of Lukanga Mukara functions as a distancing device, enabling a critically estranged perspective on industrial society. Gothicized imagery pervades the imaginary African's mock-travelogue, which opens by depicting a country drenched in smoke and fire:

In Deutschland ist sehr viel Rauch. Aber das ist kein Rauch, der eines Wanderers Augen auf sich zieht, der die Schritte beschleunigt oder das Herz höher schlagen läßt. Es ist kein Rauch in frischer Luft; es ist Rauch im Dunst, ja Rauch im Rauch. In langen, steinernen Röhren wird er zum Himmel geleitet. Aber der Himmel will ihn nicht, und so liegt er wie ein Frühnebel über der Erde. Und wenn er, als eine dicke, atemraubende Masse überallhin fließt, wie soll man irgendwohin eilen, sich seines Ursprungs zu freuen! [...] unerträglich ist die Luft, die die Wasungu sich gewöhnen einzuatmen. Sie lieben es, zur Arbeit, zum Vergnügen, zum Unterricht, ja zum Gottesdienst in geschlossenen Räumen beisammen zu sein. Stundenlang. Jeder atmet Luft, die schon ein anderer geatmet hat. Dahinein mischt sich Rauch, Dunst und Essensergeruch. (Paasche 1925, 16)

»Schmutz«, »Krankheit«, »Sucht«, »Fluch«, »Gift« and especially »Rauch« become recurrent leitmotifs within *Lukanga Mukara's* contribution to »toxic discourse« (Buell 2005, 30-54). Germans contaminate themselves with tobacco and alcohol, just as they poison the water with noxious effluvia and the air with smoke from industrial smokestacks. Mapping the eco-dystopia of late-imperial Germany, Mukara observes how processes of environmental and cultural degradation consistently reinforce each other, bringing both ecosystems and the human body close to collapse.

Most importantly for my present purposes, *Lukanga Mukara* allows Paasche to impersonate and advertise what he understood as Africa's more environmentally enlightened perspectives, attitudes and behaviors. In the years around World War I, as Paasche's disenchantment with the achievement of western civilization deepened, his appreciation of »primitive« societies grew correspondingly. Writing about his safari to the sources of the Nile with his teetotaling wife Ellen in 1909-1910, for example, Paasche depicts African life as materially and technologically simple but offering rich rewards both in the form of sublime wildlife experiences and of sensible practical habits and behaviors:

Die Negerin, die das Korn stampft, hat eine gesunde Körperübung regelmäßig zu verrichten und wird sie nie vergessen, weil der Magen mahnt und ohnedem kein Essen zubereitet werden kann. Aber noch etwas ist wichtig: das Reiskorn, das erst an dem Tage, an dem es gekocht werden soll, von seiner Hülse befreit wird, ist für die Ernährung des Menschen wertvoller als das tote, seiner schützenden Hülle seit Tagen, Wochen und Monaten beraubte, ausgetrockene Korn [...] Die Reismühlen bedeuten also eine große Gefahr für die Gesundheit der Eingeborenen, und ein weitschauendes Kolonialvolk wird

den Eingeborenen die althergebrachte und erprobte häusliche Bearbeitung des Kornes lassen. (Paasche 1992, 162)

Germans have little or no business showing Africans how to live, Paasche concludes, for Africans already possess an angle on the problem of »die natürliche Lebensweise« that has only recently begun to preoccupy Europeans (Paasche 1992, 119).

Throughout *Lukanga Mukara*, the eponymous African traveler emerges not only as critic of urban-industrial civilization, but also as exemplary representative of nature-oriented mentalities and practices. Racist ideology held Africans to be biologically inferior to Europeans, but Mukara demonstrates his ethical superiority through his close attention to animals, his fondness for rural solitude and his preference for Germany's remaining undeveloped landscapes, whose non-quantifiable aesthetic and ecological value the African »Naturkind« (68) appreciates far better than the numbers-obsessed »Wasungu« themselves:

Ich bin an einem Platze, der einsam ist. Hügel mit Büschen umgeben mich. Ein See liegt zwischen hohen Bäumen, im Schilf seiner Ufer schwimmen Enten. Im flachen Wasser stehen Kraniche, und hoch in der Luft fliegen zwei Störche, die jetzt gerade aus Kitara herübergekommen sind, wo sie die Zeit zubrachten, in der es hier bitter kalt ist und Schnee und Eis mannshoch auf dem Lande liegen, wie Du es kennst von dem Gipfel des Karissimbi. Das wilde Getriebe der Städte dringt nicht hierher, und ich könnte mir denken, ich sei in Kitara, am Ufer des Ruhiga, an den weiten Buchten des Urigi, wo der Schrei der Kronenkraniche weithin ertönt, wenn sie mit langsamem Flügelschlag über die reifen Kornfelder dahinfliegen. (Paasche 1925, 15)

»Natur« and »natürlich« are complex and overdetermined words in Paasche's vocabulary, conveying concern for animals, plants, landscapes and ecosystems, but also registering as key concepts in the text's proposed reorganization of everyday human routines, practices and desires. Mukara lives and dresses simply, takes care »seinen Körper zu verbessern«, avoids a diet based on overcooked and overspiced »Leichenteile« for vegetarian foods replete with »Sonnenkraft« and »Sonnengeschmack«, prefers water to intoxicating »Pombe« (beer), and fills his lungs with »frische Luft« rather than the fetid smoke inhaled through »Rauchrollen« (cigarettes) (Paasche 1925, 20, 35, 39, 49, 36, 64). Defying local codes of prudery, Mukara goes barefoot whenever he can and practices the non-sexual nudism whose therapeutic and beautifying effects Paasche had witnessed and admired in Africa:

So gehe auch ich hier jetzt unbekleidet im Sande umher, wo mich keine Eingeborenen sehen. Wenn sie mich nackt sähen, würden sie mich verfolgen. Auch ich muß in diesem Lande Kleider tragen, wenn ich das Volk nicht aufreizen will. Es ist eine Qual für Deinen freien Diener, ein Schmerz und eine Gefahr, die er nur auf sich nimmt um der Forschung willen und für die Wissenschaft Kitaras. (Paasche 1925, 19)

Whereas light-skinned Germans huddle »in geschlossenen Räumen«, the black African seeks out the vitalizing powers of »die Sonne, die meinen Rücken mit ihren Strahlen erwärmt« (Paasche 1925, 17). Letting his »gebildeter Neger« satirize the naïve discourse of »Entwicklung« (Paasche 1925, 38), Paasche xenophilically establishes African culture not only as paradigm of non-exploitative nature appreciation, but also as source and inspiration of concrete nature- and human-friendly practices concerning diet, dress, habitus and consumption. Africans, Paasche proposes, can help Germans

understand both how to value the non-human world and how to live their lives in a more »natural« way.

3.

Paasche left Africa for the last time in August 1910, a good three years before Karen Blixen first arrived in Kenya, where she would spend the next 17 years managing her family's coffee farm outside Nairobi. Though there is no evidence of personal acquaintance, many parallels of life and sensibility link these two writers. Less familiar as a »green« figure than Paasche, Blixen possessed a gift for aesthetic self-dramatization and enjoyed presenting herself in ways that flaunted her affinity for »primitive people« (Blixen 2001, 46). In a 1958 radio address, Blixen associated herself with her father Wilhelm Dinesen, who »turned away from Europe and its civilization and lived for three years among Indians in North America without seeing another white man« (Hannah 1971, 13). A well-known photo from Blixen's 1959 lecture tour of the USA shows her spectacularly draped in the skin of a leopard killed at her own hand. And at the end of *Out of Africa*, when asked by a little boy to reveal her identity, Blixen claims that »I am not English [...] I am a Hottentot« (Blixen 2001, 254).

Out of Africa, the fictionalized memoir of her Kenyan years that Blixen wrote in English under the penname Isak Dinesen and later rewrote in Danish as *Den afrikanske farm* (1938), has been criticized for its romantic and nostalgic portrait of early twentieth-century colonialism. Blixen accumulates colorful episodes and character sketches from her African years, but her carefully orchestrated vignettes mystify key historical factors concerning the socio-racial tensions of British East Africa and the difficulties of the colonial coffee trade, just as they confound biographical issues including Blixen's bouts with syphilis, her estrangement and divorce from her Swedish husband Baron Bror von Blixen-Finecke and her affair with the bisexual English adventurer Denys Finch Hatton (Thurman 1982, 122-179). Although she notes her outsider status among the British colonial elite, who ostracized her for her »pro-native« views (Blixen 1965, 99), Blixen nowhere explicitly questions her right to ownership of »her« 6000-acre farm; declaring her love for Africa, and asserting that »[h]ere I am, where I ought to be«, she never systematically interrogates the socio-economic system that made her presence possible in the first place (Blixen 2001, 14).

Among the possible titles for her memoir that Blixen bandied about with her American publisher Robert Haas was *African Pastoral*, which eventually became its title in the Swedish market, and Robert Langbaum has labeled *Out of Africa* »an authentic pastoral, perhaps the best prose pastoral of our time« (Langbaum 1964, 119). Recent ecocritical debates about pastoral gauge the genre's potential for biocentric critique against its tendency to sidestep or gloss over more specific social and historical conflicts (Gifford 1999; Garrard 2004, 33-58). While *Out of Africa* stops short of explicit post-colonial (self-)scrutiny, it powerfully satirizes the nature-estrangement and -hostility underpinning what Blixen in a 1933 letter called »our mechanical and mercenary civilization« (Blixen 1996, 100). More specifically, in distancing herself from »our industrial age« and »man's conquest of nature« (Blixen 2001, 186, 268), Blixen anticipates the eco-theorist Lynn White Jr., who in a famous essay identified Christianity and technology as interrelated causes of »our ecologic crisis« (White 1967). According to White, Christianity created a framework of understanding that located the truth

of human beings in a non-organic spiritual realm, and medieval monks spearheaded the development of de-contextualizing technologies making people feel »superior to nature, contemptuous of it, willing to use it for our slightest whim« (White 1967, 1206). That Blixen similarly associates Christian monasticism, anthropocentric transcendentalism and modern technology is evident throughout *Out of Africa*, and especially when she comments on a group of French Roman-Catholic missionaries whose hospital adjourns Blixen's estate:

But while they were so interested in the life of the colony, they were all the time in their own French way exiles, patient and cheerful obeisants to some higher orders of a mysterious nature. If it had not been for the unknown authority that kept them in the place, you felt they would not be there, neither would the church of grey stone with the tall bell-tower, nor the arcades, the school, or any other part of their neat plantation and mission station. For when the word of relief had been given, all of these would leave the affairs of the colony to themselves and take a beeline back to Paris. [...] The French Fathers sometimes rode on their motor-bicycles to the farm and lunched there. (Blixen 2001, 34–35)

Blixen commends the missionaries' healing efforts and counts them among her »best friends« (Blixen 2001, 33). Yet the French fathers bring an array of new technologies – prayer, cars, motorcycles, tractors, airplanes, clock time, literacy, modern medicine – designed to loosen Africans' ties to the »soil and seasons, the vegetation and the wild animals, the winds and smells« (Blixen 2001, 304) and help them realize that their »citizenship is in heaven« (White 1967, 1205).

With *Out of Africa*, Blixen celebrates the nature-connectedness of traditional African culture and society, even as she wistfully (but obliquely) concedes her own complicity in the project of bringing Africans »from the stone age to the age of the motor-cars« (Blixen 2001, 15). In typical pastoral fashion, Blixen downplays the presence and significance of the new urbanized Africa – dismissed with reference to »grasping tradesmen« and »young Nairobi shop-people [who] ran out into the hills on Sundays, on their motor-cycles, and shot at anything they saw« – in favor of traditional hunter, shepherd and farmer societies (Blixen 2001, 15, 22):

We ourselves, in boots, and in our constant great hurry, often jar with the landscape. The Natives are in accordance with it, and when the tall, slim, dark, and dark-eyed people travel, – always one by one, so that even the great Native veins of traffic are narrow footpaths, – or work the soil, or herd their cattle, or hold their big dances, or tell you a tale, it is Africa wandering, dancing and entertaining you. (Blixen 2001, 28)

All the native groups whose welfare preoccupies Blixen share a mode of life that is this-worldly, earth-bound and entirely oriented towards their organic coexistence with other living creatures. Having »no religion whatever, nor the slightest interest in anything above this earth«, the warlike Masai have fashioned a migratory shepherding lifestyle perfectly adapted to the dry climate (Blixen 2001, 133). Somalis figure as commercially astute, strong-tempered, and fiercely erotic men and women, possessing the keen aesthetic sensibility and strong taste for life's sensuous pleasures that Blixen calls »chic« (Blixen 2001, 122). Blixen, however, reserves special affection for the Kikuyu, an agrarian people closely tied to their land and their livestock, who »know of no code« and »know nothing of luxury«, but who radiate a »vitality« and »joy of life«

that »seemed not only highly respectable, but glorious and bewitching« (Blixen 2001, 101, 116, 325, 326).

For African »natives«, Blixen writes, »the umbilical cord of nature has [...] not been quite cut through« (Blixen 2001, 145). The traditional African »*modus vivendi*«, or what remains of it, offers a rejoinder to western beliefs in »man's superiority over the dumb world« (Blixen 2001, 40, 257), showing that it is possible not only to live *with* nature but in some sense to live *as* nature. Towards the end of the narrative, when Blixen is preparing to return to Denmark, conflict erupts over the death and burial of Kinanjui, a Kikuyu chief who is hospitalized against his will and given a Christian burial at the behest of colonial authorities and westernized family members characterized as »converted Natives, sacerdotally attired, [...] fat young Kikuyus with spectacles and folded hands, who looked like ungenial eunuchs« (Blixen 2001, 292). In this controversy, however, Blixen characteristically sides with pagan African burial customs:

The Kikuyu, when left to themselves, do not bury their dead, but leave them above ground for the hyenas and vultures to deal with. The custom had always appealed to me, I thought that it would be a pleasant thing to be laid out to the sun and the stars, and to be so promptly, neatly and openly picked and cleansed; to be made one with Nature and become a common component of a landscape. At the time when we had the Spanish flu on the farm, I heard the hyenas round the shambas all night, and often, after those days, I would find a brown smooth skull in the long grass of the forest, like a nut dropped down under a tree, or on the plain. But the practice does not go with the conditions of civilized life. The government had taken much trouble to make the Kikuyu change their ways, and to teach them to lay their dead in the ground, but they still did not like the idea at all. (Blixen 2001, 291)

Unlike westerners, Africans conceive of no spirit-body dualism and nourish no hopes of a better world, or afterworld, beyond the vicissitudes of organic existence. Embedded, embodied and emplaced, Africans exist »within their own element [...] like fishes in the deep water which for the life of them cannot understand our fear of drowning« (Blixen 2001, 27). Knowing »that God and the Devil are one, the majesty coeternal« (Blixen 2001, 27), they encounter industrial technology and Christian transcendentalism with equal degrees of skepticism, preferring to dwell amidst the »green world« and confront the risks and uncertainties of life head-on (Blixen 2001, 111).

4.

Ecocritics of the so-called »second wave« have devoted themselves to self-critically examining the conceptual underpinnings of environmentalist thought and practice, assuming that only a green movement resting on solid intellectual and political ground can hope to address the challenges of the future (Buell 2011, 91-97). In a recent article, for example, Ursula Heise and Allison Carruth situate today's ecocritics at the site of »a double struggle«, pitted both against »the concepts and stories that have enabled environmental degradation in the past« and against »partial (and imperfect) ideas about nature in environmental thought and writing itself« (Heise and Carruth 2010, 3).

We should acknowledge that Paasche and Blixen were in many ways far ahead of their time, discerning problems and establishing connections that eluded most commentators in early twentieth-century Europe. Then, too, we should recognize

that western countercultural greens' imaginative investment in subaltern cultures and identities, while sometimes fanciful and self-absorbed, is a powerful device that can be deployed in various ways and has sometimes yielded palpable political results (Smith 2012, 1-17). Even so, *Lukanga Mukara* and *Out of Africa* foreground some of the more dubious aspects of environmentalist xenophilia. Not only do Paasche and Blixen's writings tap into, and reinforce, the *négritude* that became fashionable in European art, literature and popular culture in the years following Pablo Picasso's Afrocentric *Les demoiselles d'Avignon* (1907) (Rubin 1988). Donning African masks, these writers breathe new life into older romantic ideas about the »ecologically noble savage« and the »equilibrium« or »homeostasis« intrinsic to »primitive« cultures – ideas that have been firmly disputed by contemporary anthropologists and social scientists (Ellen 1986; Lewis 1993, 41–83; Hames 2007).

Readers informed by the recent rapprochement of environmental criticism and postcolonial critique will take specific issue with the appropriative, ventriloquistic, instrumentalist and essentializing logic that informs *Lukanga Mukara* and *Out of Africa*. In other words, while Paasche and Blixen were figured (and figured themselves) as liberal critics or even opponents of Europe's colonial project, it is abundantly clear that both only partially manage to divest themselves from the colonialist discourse whose destructive consequences they recognize. Despite her aptitude for highly individualized portraiture, for example, Blixen retains a problematic affinity for stereotypical generalizations, claiming for example that »[t]he Natives were Africa in flesh and blood« and that »[a]ll Natives have a strong sense for dramatic effects« (Blixen 2001, 28, 36). Similarly, it is telling that Paasche lets *Lukanga Mukara* end up communing with German »Lebensreformer«, »Wandervögel« and »Jugendbewegte«: young men and women who wear neither »Leibgerüst« nor »Zwangsschuhe« nor »Steißfedern wilder Tiere auf dem Kopfe«, but who dance »mit nackten Füßen, wie wir es tun in Kitara« (Paasche 1925, 82–83). With this ending Paasche, having granted the African a voice, seems to strip it away again by suggesting that African and European environmentalisms are fundamentally of a piece, and that one cultural perspective can seamlessly be subsumed under the other.

Being-in-touch eludes Europeans, who live »out of touch with the moves of the moon and almost in ignorance of them« (Blixen 2001, 81–82), while Africans »unberührt« by modernity remain environmentally rooted and attached: »Frei atmet Deine Brust, die Sonne bescheint Deine glatte Haut, und Dein nackter Fuß berührt die fruchtbare Erde« (Paasche 1925, 6, 19). *Lukanga Mukara* and *Out of Africa* highlight culturally tenacious but epistemologically and politically tenuous forms of foundationalism, and reading such texts anew can help us think about more or less productive ways of invoking cultural difference in the discussion of environmental problems and solutions. Valorizations of non-western societies and cultures have played a crucial yet problematic role in the development of environmentalist discourses in the West, but 21st-century global-scale problems like climate change, ocean acidification and biodiversity loss call for ways of thinking that are scientifically grounded and for transnational and transcultural alliances that are based on intercultural respect and acceptance of difference. The fact that xenophilia has deep cultural roots in western discourse and remains in widespread circulation within environmentalist writing should not diminish – in fact it should only strengthen – environmental humanists' interest in submitting such figures to critical scrutiny.

5.

»Second-wave sociocentric ecocriticism« (Buell et al. 2011, 434) helps us understand the problematic legacy and dubious payoffs of romantic environmentalism's naturalizing tropes. At the same time, the critique of green xenophilia that I have just outlined risks inscribing a narrow humanistic bias which is rendered problematic by other developments in ecocriticism, and which fails to do justice to Paasche and Blixen's texts. The task of assessing the environmental significance of rich and complex imaginative works is far from straightforward, and ecocriticism remains an open-ended work-in-progress informed by a plurality of methods and perspectives. In conclusion, I will seek to balance »the hermeneutics of suspicion« with the »hermeneutics of affirmation« (Ricoeur 1970, 32-36), using insights from the burgeoning field of »animal studies« to sketch out what Eve Sedgwick has called a »reparative« reading of Paasche and Blixen (Sedgwick 1997).

Posthumanist ecocritics and others seeking answers to »the question of the animal« (Wolfe 2003) pursue theoretical and literary perspectives that lead to a rethinking of the category of »the human« and especially to a challenging of the »separation of the human «Me» from the exoticized «Not Me» of a static and reified nature« (Westling 2006, 28). In both Paasche and Blixen's writings, Africanist xenophilia coexists with, and is complicated by, a strong questioning of anthropocentric, humanist and »speciesist« codes and conventions.

More work is needed to position Paasche's becoming-African in precise relation to his vegetarianism, anti-vivisectionism and animal rights activism, and to assess those aspects of his writings that resonate suggestively with the contemporary »re-imagining and reconfiguration of the human place in nature« (Huggan and Tiffin 2010, 6). To mention only one example, the third letter of *Lukanga Mukara* includes a provocative discussion linking the colonialist mindset to deeper-lying ideas of human exceptionalism:

Ich erzählte dir schon, daß die Wasungu sich Menschen nennen, und ich weiß, weshalb sie es tun. Es ist ihnen von Riangombe, dem immer Wachen, eingegeben worden, sich als Menschen zu fühlen. Willst auch Du es begreifen, dann breite Du, Leuchtender, das Fell eines Otters am Hain Deiner göttlichen Ahnen aus, setze Dich dort ruhig hin und sieh den Termiten zu, die in ihrem Erdhause leben. Was bist Du diesen kleinen Geschöpfen? Dein Schatten streift sie, wie uns der Schatten einer geballten Wolke. Sie kümmern sich nicht um Dich. Nichts Größeres kennen sie unter der Sonne als sich. »Wir sind die Menschen«, sagen sie, »sind die denkenden Geschöpfe, für deren Empfindung allein die Welt gemacht ist. Um uns dreht sich die ganze Welt.« Die Wanderameisen und alle anderen Ameisen sind nach ihrem Begriff »Wilde« und von den Raupen und Käfern, die sie in ihre Baue schleppen, sagen sie, es seien Geschöpfe niederer Art, ohne Gefühl, ohne Verstand, nur mit Instinkten« begabt. Sie sagen auch von sich, sie allein hätten die richtige Weltanschauung. [...] Es ist mit den Wasungu nicht anders. Auch sie glauben, die Erde sei um ihretwillen gemacht und halten sich für das Beste, was auf dieser Erde hervorgebracht worden ist. (Paasche 1925, 26-27)

The Germans have constructed mental and physical boundaries protecting the special status and privilege of humanity, yet in critical response Lukanga Mukara consistently underscores human Germans' enmeshment in more-than-human relationships. Throughout his faux-naïf commentary, that is, Lukanga Mukara »animalizes« Germa-

ny and the Germans, for example by imaging overweight businessmen as »gemästete Hunde oder [...] Flußpferde von Ukonse«, and by likening corset-wearing women to »aufrechtgehende Schildkröten« (Paasche 1925, 31, 32). The »Wasungu«, it turns out, are considerably less separate from the animal world than they imagine, for while Germans often treat other species with contempt they rely on them in every way. Mukara's non-carnivorous habits enable him to view Germans, all the more clearly, as members of one species feeding on others. Yet the bonds that tie Germans to other species are both material and immaterial, involving symbolic expression as much as physical sustenance. Indeed, »Kultur« can in no way be separated from »Natur«, for when Germans wish to appear beautiful they dress themselves in »Felle, Stoffe, Geflecht, Leder und Federn wilder Tiere«, and when they play music they rub »mit Pferdehaar auf gedrehten Schafdärmen, die über hohles Holz gespannt sind« (Paasche 1925, 31, 32).

I can only gesture at Blixen's career-long and critically neglected involvement in animal welfare and rights issues, which culminated in her then widely publicized early-1950s protest against the use of animal experiments in Danish research and industry (Blixen 1965, 95-117; Bjørnvig 1982). In *Out of Africa*, Blixen registers her qualms about the increasingly commercialized safari industry and notes her gradual transformation from a hunter with a gun, »who could not live till I had killed a specimen of each kind of African game«, to a »hunter with a camera«, who is »not so keen to shoot as to watch the wild animals« (Blixen 2001, 24, 207). *Out of Africa's* constant blending of human and animal has struck some postcolonial critics as a disturbingly dehumanizing gesture (Thiong'o 1980; Singh 1985; Petersen 2008), but in a different reading Blixen's zoomorphism can also instantiate what the posthumanist critic Margot Norris calls »the biocentric imagination« (Norris 1985, 285). Interspecies relations come to the fore already in the first section of *Out of Africa*, entitled »Kamante and Lulu«, where Blixen first provides a sketch of her Kikuyu cook Kamante, who is likened to a »wild creature«, a »dog« and a »bat« (Blixen 2001, 32, 43). Next she turns to another »member of my household«, the half-tame bushbuck gazelle Lulu, who is personified as a »headstrong [...] child« and »a real shameless young coquette«, who »had the so-called devil in her« but »was treated with respect by all« (Blixen 2001, 67-69):

It also seemed to me that the free union between my house and the antelope was a rare, honourable thing. Lulu came in from the wild world to show that we were on good terms with it, and she made my house one with the African landscape, so that nobody could tell where the one stopped and the other began. Lulu knew the place of the Giant Forest-Hog's lair and had seen the Rhino copulate. In Africa there is a cuckoo which sings in the middle of the hot days in the midst of the forest, like the sonorous heartbeat of the world, I had never had the luck to see her, neither had anyone that I knew, for nobody could tell me how she looked. But Lulu had perhaps walked on a narrow green deer path just under the branch on which the cuckoo was sitting. (Blixen 2001, 73-74)

While this paragraph no doubt idealizes what must have been more fraught relationships, it also showcases how Blixen deconstructs the self-possessed and self-enclosed model of human subjectivity established in previous colonial settler narratives exemplified most famously by Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719). Besides characterizing virtually all black and white human characters in terms of animal qualities, and vice versa, Blixen positions her farm as »a site of multiple transgressions« (Brantly 2002, 80), a »heterotopos« (Foucault 1986) where categorical distinctions are crossed, loos-

ened and blurred. Thus, while *Out of Africa* does not document every aspect of colonial relations with scrupulous steadfastness, it opens »the human« towards heterogeneity and underlines the entanglement of people, animals and their shared natural world. To dwell with Blixen on her African farm is to experience with particular intensity the intertwinement of humans and non-human lives, and to begin to understand how members of different species can construct joint identities and, in Donna Haraway's phrase, »become together« (Haraway 2008, 35).

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