

### Johann Lodewyk Marais

Johann Lodewyk Marais is a writer, literary critic and historian. He is a research fellow in the Unit for Academic Literacy, University of Pretoria, Pretoria, South Africa.

Email: JLMarais@yahoo.com

## Karen Blixen in the African book and literary tourism market

### Karen Blixen in the African book and literary tourism market

In 1937, the Danish-born writer Karen Blixen published *Out of Africa*, an autobiographical account, in English, of the seventeen years she spent in Africa (from 1914 until 1931). During those years, she forged a permanent bond with Kenya, where she managed a coffee plantation. This bond was immortalised in the book, leading to cult status for both the publication and its author. *Out of Africa* contains a blend of the essay, the sketch and the historical document. A contemporary reading of the book also reveals some offensive and racist passages; footprints, as it were, of the settler society of its day. However, the lyrical, introspective quality of this book has resulted in its becoming one of the great publishing phenomena of the twentieth century, reaching many readers through various reprints, translations and a film version. This article presents the publishing history of *Out of Africa* and gives an overview of its many translations across the globe. It also indicates the extent to which, and the reasons why, the book did (or did not) achieve success in Africa. A comparison is also made between *Out of Africa* and a number of texts by other female writers who wrote about their experiences particularly in African landscapes and/or places. **Keywords:** Book history, female writers, Karen Blixen, Kenya, literary tourism.

### Introduction

Over the years, a corpus of books situated in various regions of Africa has been written (in many different languages) by a number of female writers. As these books conveyed those authors' views to a broad international readership, a number of names have become synonymous with the landscape, the people, the animals and the politics of the vast African continent: Olive Schreiner, Karen Blixen, Elspeth Huxley, Bessie Head, Doris Lessing, Nadine Gordimer, Elsa Joubert, Wilma Stockenström, Lieve Joris and Antjie Krog. Every one of these authors has written at least one book that is treasured for its unique perspective on the lives and times of people in Africa; even though, in hindsight, one might feel that the perspective could (or should) have been more critical.

Amongst Africa's many female writers—some famous, but many known to only a small number of readers or now even completely overlooked—the name of Karen Blixen (1885–1962) still commands respect. Blixen was born in Rungstedlund in Denmark, where she spend most of her youth until 1914 when she went to Africa and married her Swedish half cousin, Baron Bror von Blixen-Fineke, at the port of

Mombasa. After the couple had separated in 1921, she continued to manage the coffee plantation and the Karen Coffee Co. they had started. For many years, Blixen had a relationship with the adventurer Denys Finch-Hatton, who was killed at the age of 44 in an airplane crash in Kenya. After experiencing financial hardship for several years, the family company sold the farm, and in 1931, Blixen returned to Denmark to reside in the house of her birth. For the rest of her life, she pursued a writing career (see Lasson). Blixen used various pseudonyms, in particular “Isak Dinesen”, which, according to Judith Thurman (2), was “that idea of herself and her origins which the child carried with her into old age. It expressed what she considered essential in her life: the relation to her father [Adolph Wilhelm Dinesen], to his family, to a sense that they were a tribe—a *stamme*, in Danish—a rootstock” (original italics).

Of the eleven titles that comprise Blixen’s relatively small oeuvre of eleven books, only three deal solely with Africa. They are *Out of Africa* (1937), *Shadows on the Grass* (1960) and the posthumously published *Letters from Africa, 1914–1931* (1981). Of these, the highly canonised *Out of Africa* became a classic<sup>1</sup> about life in colonial Kenya during the first decades of the twentieth century. Today, it remains Blixen’s most appreciated book,<sup>2</sup> bearing testimony to an era in which unrestricted hunting was (still) rife and in which, most importantly, European immigrants settled in Kenya, exploited its agricultural potential, and transported their produce to the port of Mombasa by means of the 965 kilometres long railway line, built between 1896 and 1901, that connected Mombasa to Kisumu on Lake Victoria (see Amin, Willetts and Matheson). Since 1963, and especially 1985 when the film *Out of Africa* was released, the house in which Blixen lived on the farm where she had her coffee plantation has become a popular site to visit, attracting both locals and foreigners.

Both Blixen’s autobiographical account of her years in Africa and her unwavering bond with the continent withstood the test of time, affording the writer and the book cult status. In Denmark, *Out of Africa* was received positively by critics and the intelligentsia (Thurman 318). The international public firstly and foremostly hails Blixen as the author of *Out of Africa*, which was catapulted into global fame by director Sydney Pollack’s seven Academy Award winning film of 1985 with the same name. In Kenya, where the events took place, the legacy of the book and its author is strong and contributes to the flow of tourists from all over the world to this popular East African destination. As Francesca Marciano puts it in *Rules of the Wild* (43), a popular love story about white people living in modern-day Kenya, “Baroness Blixen has become Nairobi’s Statue of Liberty”.

In the tourist industry in Kenya, Blixen has acquired a more important position than any other white female writer from the era who treats similar themes. In this regard, she may be compared to Beryl Markham (1902–86) and Elspeth Huxley (1907–97), who also spent many years in Kenya and wrote autobiographical accounts of their experiences.

*West with the Night* (1942) tells the story of Markham's early years and her adventures as a female pilot in Kenya, the Sudan, Tanganyika (later Tanzania) and North and South Rhodesia (later Zambia and Zimbabwe). Between 1931 and 1936, she transported mail, passengers and supplies to these countries. In September 1936, she undertook the first successful solo flight from east to west over the North Atlantic Ocean. Robert Viking O'Brien (1996) raised questions whether Markham actually wrote *West with the Night* herself, while from a tourist point of view, there seems to be no specific place associated with her that could attract tourists.

Huxley's most famous book is her lyrical memoir *The Flame Trees of Thika* (1959) about her youth on the farm Kitimuru near the town with the same name north of Nairobi. However, according to C. S. Nicholls (2), her biographer, Huxley in fact wrote a work of fiction about her youth, although some of the incidents in the book are based on real events. Huxley also dedicated several books in her variegated oeuvre to different aspects of her experience and travels in Kenya, but none of her locations seemed to have the same appeal as Blixen's farm and residence despite Nicholls (xiii) earlier calling *The Flame Trees of Thika* as "delightful and evocative a story as Karen Blixen's *Out of Africa*".

What knowledge can we gain today, when looking at the vicissitudes of *Out of Africa* and its many translations? Was Blixen just a foreign writer writing about Africa, or did she also manage to gain status and credibility in the country where she spent seventeen important years of her life? What is the significance of the story, and what can we learn from this example when we consider the broader picture? Is the book really unique, or are there similar books that have, for various reasons, not become equally well known? Does *Out of Africa* present an example that opens up a better perspective on those less(er) known books? As a reader who lives on the southern tip of Africa, my perspective will be an African one, and to some extent my own views will be central to my argumentation.

### ***Out of Africa*—the book**

As mentioned before, *Out of Africa* tells the story of Karen Blixen's residence in Kenya; especially her fourteen-year stay on a 6 000 acre farm "at the foot of the Ngong Hills" (13), some nineteen kilometres from the Kenyan capital Nairobi. Apart from the 600 acres of land Blixen had planted with coffee, the rest of the farm was pristine grassland. Before taking over the management of the farm, Blixen was "keen on shooting and had been out on many safaris" (22). Living in Africa for almost two decades and managing the 800 workers in her employ afforded Blixen the opportunity to get to know the native people, for whom she "felt a great affection" (25). Amongst them were a young Kikuyu boy called Kamante and a Somali man called Farah Aden, whom she vividly portrayed in the book. In the book she also refers to her contact with the

Church of Scotland Mission and the French Roman Catholic Mission, and tells of her relationship with various European people in Kenya, including her husband, Baron Bror von Blixen-Fineke, whom she later divorced, and, especially, of her profound relationship with Finch-Hatton, an intellectually stimulating adventurer who, *inter alia*, took Blixen on spectacular flying trips over Kenya (204–10). The moving description of his death in the plane crash and his burial in the Ngong Hills clearly indicate that he was, and would remain, the love of Blixen's life (293–308).

Blixen lived in the farmhouse, which she called Mbogani (meaning "in the woods") after she had learned that the Africans called it by this name (Thurman 161). There she endeavoured to cook "good food" (41) by experimenting "with many curious recipes out of old cookery books, and worked to make European flowers grow in [her] garden" (179). It became a house of the four winds, visited by people from all walks of life and many nationalities. Blixen was an avid reader; she wanted to translate Aesop's fables for "the benefit of the Natives" (37) and her copy of the *Odyssey* "was [...] displayed" (52). Between safaris, Finch-Hatton "kept his books and his gramophone" (193) in her house. He "taught [her] Latin, and to read the Bible, and the Greek poets" (195) and she found conversations with him very inspiring. It was in this house where Blixen began "to write stories, fairy-tales, and romances, that would take [her] mind a long way off, to other countries and times" (47). These stories she told to Finch-Hatton when he came to the farm. Blixen had "an evening school for the people of the farm, with a Native schoolmaster to teach them" (37), and could proclaim that "[t]he world of the written was opened to the Native of Africa at the time when I lived out there" (110). When Blixen was forced to leave the farm and sell her Danish furniture to the McMillan Memorial of Nairobi, she kept her books:

My own books I packed up in cases and sat on them, or dined on them. Books in a colony play a different part in your existence from what they do in Europe; there is a whole side of your life which they alone take charge of; and on this account, according to their quality, you feel more grateful to them, or more indignant with them, than you will ever do in civilized countries. (309)

As books and the telling of stories were so important to her in Kenya it did not come as a surprise that after leaving Africa permanently, Blixen had to write a book that "would give her past a finality and resolve her doubts about its meaning" (Thurman 306). *Out of Africa* was written since 1931. At that time she was back again on the family estate Rungstedlund near Rungsted, north of Copenhagen, in Denmark. When she began writing the book she was aware of the distance that already existed between her and the country she was writing about: "The colony is changing and has already changed since I lived there. When I write down as accurately as possible my experiences on the farm, with the country and with some of the inhabitants of the plains and woods, it may have a sort of historical interest." (28)

*Out of Africa* was not Blixen's first book. *Seven Gothic Tales* was published in 1934 in the United States and received very favourable reviews. In fact, she began writing this book (and probably also the posthumously published *On Modern Marriage and Other Observations*, 1977) while she was still on the farm and on the verge of losing it, and did so to help her survive her circumstances. There are moving descriptions of how she started writing her first stories: stories that would launch her career as a writer of international acclaim:

I used to sit and write in the dining-room, with papers spread all over the dinner table [...]. My houseboys asked me what I was doing; when I told them I was trying to write a book, they looked upon it as a last attempt to save the farm through the hard times, and took an interest in it. (48)

What did Blixen write and what was the nature of *Out of Africa*? There are various opinions, including Thurman's opinion (311) that Blixen wrote "a collection of dinner-party anecdotes, of 'short, quite truthful' autobiographical sketches, of travel writing; of perceptive but romantic amateur anthropology, became *Out of Africa*". The book is certainly not a documentary account of Blixen's stay in Kenya, but rather what Hennie Aucamp (*Timboektoe* 121) has called a "major rural 'poem'".

#### ***Out of Africa*—the publication history**

*Out of Africa*, which was written in English "out of loyalty to her dead lover's language" (Arendt in Dinesen vii), was first published in 1937 in Britain by the London publisher Putnam. In 1938, its publication by Random House in New York deepened her close bond with the United States where, four years earlier, Blixen's debut, *Seven Gothic Tales*, was published. "America took me in when I could not even make the publishers in Europe look at my book, and the American reading public received me with such generosity and open-mindedness as I shall never forget," Blixen (in Thurman 317) would later say. Since its first publication, the English version has seen a number of reprints (including luxury editions) by various publishers on both sides of the Atlantic.

With regard to translations, the book first appeared in Blixen's own Danish version as *Den afrikanske Farm*, published on 6 October 1937 by Gyldendal of Copenhagen. Shortly afterwards, a Swedish translation followed. Countries with a lively translation industry, such as The Netherlands, Germany and Portugal, soon followed suit. Although Blixen's work has now been translated into 28 languages, making her the second most translated Danish writer next to Hans Christian Andersen, it has not been translated into any of the major African languages supported by a substantial publishing industry, although leading South African short-story writer Hennie Aucamp translated the three-page description of the flight that Finch-Hatton and Blixen made over the salt lake with its thousands of flamingos (see Aucamp *Timboektoe*

316–18).<sup>3</sup> Having been translated into the major languages of the world clearly does not imply that this book is accessible to readers all over the world.

### ***Out of Africa*—its legacy and its influence**

Although *Out of Africa* attracted interest since it was first published, it was the 1985 film version that brought it to the attention of an audience of millions of cinema-goers. The film script was loosely based on Blixen's *Out of Africa* and *Shadows on the Grass*, as well as Errol Trzebinski's (*Silence* 1977) and Judith Thurman's (1984) biographies of Blixen.<sup>4</sup> The film was shot on location in Kenya, although all kinds of adaptations were made with regard to both the setting and the story in the book. For example: owing to insufficient light, the film was not shot in the house in which Blixen had lived since 1917, but in the house (close to the museum) in which she and her husband had first lived. However, a number of positive spin-offs inadvertently resulted from the making of the film. Universal Pictures attempted to recover the original household furniture that Blixen had been forced to sell (see Hussein 13). The company succeeded in tracing and buying a number of pieces, and afterwards donated those, together with similar furniture, books, et cetera, to The Karen Blixen House Museum. The house itself had been bought by the Danish government in 1963 and "presented [...] to the newly independent government of Kenya as a gift" (Hussein 13). In the early 1980s, a group of Danes who then lived in Kenya worked through The National Museums of Kenya "to preserve the house and history of Karen Blixen" (Hussein 14).

The Karen Blixen House Museum is situated in the upper market suburb of Karen in the south-western outskirts of Nairobi, relatively near the David Sheldrick Elephant Orphan Sanctuary, the Giraffe Centre, the Giraffe Manor and the popular Carnivore Restaurant, which are all often also visited by tourists from abroad. Apart from this house, there are therefore also a number of other tourist attractions in the vicinity.

The meticulously renovated house in which Karen Blixen lived was favourably received by the Kenyan government, and today the people of the area still seem to be positive about Blixen and her legacy, as I experienced during my visits to Kenya in October 2007 and December 2009 in which *Out of Africa* formed the "narrative text" the guide followed during the visit (Marais "Huise" 34). The literary merit of *Out of Africa* alone was no proof that the book and the legacy of its author would eventually survive in Kenya. However, the sincere and caring relations that Blixen had upheld with her many workers and continued to uphold with a few of them, whom she even remembered generously in her will, seem to have made a lasting impression. Blixen's social sensitivity towards the community had been exemplary and had resulted in making her into a visionary of some kind. Today The Karen Blixen House Museum generates (together with the other museums of Kenya) a substantial income in foreign

revenue, as many international tourists visit the museum. According to my own observations, the site is popular with local Kenyans and the house is an asset to the country and its people. It is significant that the “more than 46,000 visitors from all of the five continents of the world” who annually visit the museum (Farah in Hussein vii) also include Kenyans, who might have been prejudiced owing to the country’s colonial past. Substantially lower entrance fees are also charged for residents and children of Kenya (for example KSh. 1 000 and KSh 500 respectively) compared to the rates for non-residents (KSh 2 000). Local visitors can benefit from this initiative from The National Museums of Kenya to attract Kenyans to The Karen Blixen House Museum (The Karen Blixen Museum).

To my knowledge, *Out of Africa* has not been translated into African languages (except for the short description that has been translated into Afrikaans). This vicissitude has also been experienced with regard to other texts mentioned in this article. Although this neglect can be seen as unfortunate, the exclusion of Blixen from intra-African translation is part of a wider phenomenon, limiting all these books to be read by communities who are not well conversant in any of the European languages.

The fact that it had not been translated into any African language does not imply that *Out of Africa* could not exert an influence in Africa. The English version of this book is available in the Nairobi bookshops, probably mainly with a view to tourists who have been lured to Kenya by, *inter alia*, the literary accounts of writers such as Ernest Hemingway, Karen Blixen, Elspeth Huxley, Joy Adamson, Peter Beard, Peter Matthiessen, Wilfred Thesiger and Kuki Gallmann, whose books are also widely available.<sup>5</sup> However, *Out of Africa* is not at a top of the list of books that are prescribed in African countries. It is prescribed less often than William Shakespeare’s plays, Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*, George Orwell’s *Animal Farm* and Paul Gallico’s *The Snow Goose* (all written by Western writers). In Kenya (and the rest of Africa) Blixen remains a foreign writer—the Kenyan writer Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o (19) described her as a writer belonging to the “tradition of great racists”.<sup>6</sup> Many travel guides (and books) list the house and the farm of the writer of *Out of Africa* as one of the country’s main tourist attractions, though (see Camerapix 121; Richards and Richards 38–39; Shales 50–53; Trillo 163; Briggs and Williams 168). *Out of Africa* probably also acted as inspiration for the writing of a number of similar books that were later published in Africa; an argument that I shall now put forth.

#### ***Out of Africa*—the ‘peers’**

When reading *Out of Africa* I wondered what other books it could be compared with? Obvious examples would indeed be some of the books about Africa by Schreiner, Blixen, Huxley, Head, Lessing, Gordimer, Joubert, Stockenström, Joris and Krog. In each writer’s body of works one would be able to come across books that one can

compare it with, but one also has to stress that there will be both similarities and differences. One of the obvious differences is that Schreiner, Gordimer and Stockenström have written novels whereas *Out of Africa* is in fact neither a novel nor an autobiography. Joubert and Joris, on the other hand, are included in this little row because they have written travel books about Africa, whereas *Out of Africa* is not in essence a travel book, but rather “a book about a prolonged stay in a place that is not theirs” (in Afrikaans it is called a *verblyfboek*). It is, however, not my intention to focus on these well-known writers, whose work, especially in the case of Schreiner, has already been compared with Blixen.

*Out of Africa* can favourably be compared with a number of South(ern) African books by female writers in which the country, the African farm and the landscape are a dominant presence. In this regard I can mention Pauline Smith’s *The Beadle* (1926), Doris Lessing’s *The Grass is Singing* (1950) and Nadine Gordimer’s *The Conservationist* (1974). According to Stephen Gray (77) “[l]andscape, in South African realist fiction, never merely sustains and magnifies man; it dwarfs and overwhelms, it remains unyielding and destructive”. Some of these books are famous in their own right and two of the authors were awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature.

There are other writers in whose work an awareness of the immensity and harshness of the African landscape play an important role and that may be more appropriate examples to compare *Out of Africa* with. In all the cases it will be extremely difficult to make out a case for any direct influence from the Danish writer’s work and it is not really what I intend to do. However, it is interesting to note that simultaneous or shortly after the publication of *Out of Africa* more than one book was published that one can easily regard as texts that elaborate on similar preoccupations. A few of these books were written by female writers who were journalists, and in whose work a journalist element and (a blend of) the essay, the sketch and the historical document were present.

To elaborate on this, I will briefly refer to the work of three well-known Afrikaans authors from different generations, namely M. E. R., Alba Bouwer (1920–2010) and Audrey Blignault (1916–2008). M. E. R. (pseudonym for Maria Elizabeth Rothmann), who was born in 1875 was the most senior of these writers and died in 1975 at the age of 100. The work of M. E. R. and writers “from the school of M. E. R.”, including *inter alia* Bouwer and Blignault, is characterised by the “essayist, philosophical way of the texts [...], humor, talent for the description of human, animal and environment, but also for *storytelling*” (Botha in Cloete 328; original italics). M. E. R. published her first book, *Onweershoogte en Ander Verhale* (“Onweershoogte and Other Stories”), in 1927. In 1972, at the age of 97, she published her bestseller autobiography *My Beskeie Deel: ’n Outobiografiese Vertelling* (“My Humble Part: An Autobiographic Narrative”).

M. E. R. was all her life a professional woman and was *inter alia* as a journalist for *Die Burger*, a daily newspaper, their female editor. In the 1930s she also participated in



the important “Carnegie-Verslag” (“Carnegie Report”) known as *Die Armblanke-Vraagstuk in Suid-Afrika* (“The Poor Whites’ Dilemma in South Africa”, 1932) that looked into the socio-economic position of poor white people in South Africa. She wrote the fifth part of the report on *Die Moeder en die Dogter van die Arm Gesin* (“The Mother and Daughter of the Poor Family”). The work on this report inspired M. E. R. to write creative work such as “Die Susters” (“The Sisters”) in *Drie Vertellings* (“Three Narratives”, 1944) that was based on the observations that she made during her research. M. E. R.’s work does certainly not have the fantasy element that is so characteristic of Blixen’s work, but her preoccupation with Swellendam, the town where she spent many years of her life is also a testimony of a very special place in her life.

*Out of Africa* reports on the pioneer existence of the European people who came to Kenya around the first decades of the twentieth century. The settlers on the so-called “White Highlands” were some of the factors that since the 1920s lead to resistance of the local population against the role and in particular land use of white people in British controlled Kenya. Eventually the strongest manifestation of the resistance would be the emergence of Mau Mau amongst the Kikuyu, who found the pace of change of the colonial government too slow. Read against this background Blixen’s book is an important document of the time. The same can be said about the books of M. E. R., Alba Bouwer and Audrey Blignault in which a rural way of life is portrayed. In M. E. R.’s work it is, as I have said, Swellendam, in the Southern Cape, in Alba Bouwer’s (youth novels such as the classic *Stories van Rivierplaas* (“Stories about Rivierplaas”, 1955) and *Nuwe Stories van Rivierplaas* (“New Stories about Rivierplaas”, 1956) farms in the Free State and in Audrey Blignault’s many essays it is the Overberg, also in the Southern Cape. In her work Bouwer captures the farming culture on a Free State farm, as well as the girl Alie’s discovery of people of another race and culture.

Apart from the titles that have been mentioned here that show certain similarities with *Out of Africa*, more texts can be pointed out that may reinstate Blixen from being read purely as a European writer. In this endeavour, the South African-born Bessie Head (1937–86), who moved to Botswana where she settled in the large village of Serowe, may be an appropriate example. Head wrote novels, shorts stories and non-fiction that are set in Serowe. In her book on the history of the village, *Serowe: Village of the Rain Wind* (1981), Head demonstrates her understanding of and value of the village life to which she has been exposed. Her work shows strong commitment to feminist views and from a genre perspective challenges the critic about the nature of the text that she wrote, ensuring continued scholarly interest in her work and the ideological point of view from which she wrote.

Multicultural relation is the subject of the work of a few female writers after they have spent some time in Kenya. Catherine Oddie (1929–) wrote *Enkop Ai: My Life with the Maasai* (1994) about her travel on horseback in Southern Kenya where she had a

relationship with a Masai warrior. She moved into his Masai *manyatta* and learnt to know the history, language and culture of the Masai people. In recent years, the work of the German writer Corinne Hofmann (1960–) who wrote *Die weiße Massai* (“The White Maasai”, 1999) about her four-year-long relationship with a Masai man and her stay in ‘n *manyatta* attracted wide attention in Europe. Fourteen years after Hofmann had fled with her baby daughter from Kenya to escape the challenging conditions, she returned with her daughter to the town of Barsaloi to meet her former husband. This experience formed the theme of her next book *Wiedersehen in Barsaloi* (“Revisiting Barsaloi”, 2005). Amongst others, Hofmann’s work has been translated into English and well publicised. A similar story like that of Hofmann was written by the American Robin Wiszowaty (1981–) in *My Maasai Life: From Suburbia to Savannah* (2009).

By mentioning these writers, I want to make the audience out of Africa aware that there are also books in other African languages that deserve to be read and studied. The fact that some of these books were not written in the dominant languages of the world does not mean that they are not important. Therefore, my plea is not necessarily a plea that is applicable only to the language(s) I have singled out. It is equally applicable to African languages with substantial literatures whose writers do not always get the exposure they may deserve. There are undoubtedly a handful of books that deserve to get more exposure and that could be read with writers such as Head, Oddie, Hofmann and Wiszowaty, who have written in major European languages but who are also not automatically well known in the villages where they acquired their experience. Karen Blixen understood the importance of the local language, because in Kenya she learned Kiswahili and Kikuyu and later translated *Out of Africa* from English into Danish. It was an important gesture of coming home.

### Conclusion

A 2007 opinion poll in Denmark listed Karen Blixen as “one of the most representative personalities in Danish history” (Anonymous 1). In Africa, as I have tried to prove, she is undoubtedly a writer who still deserves to be read and remembered. Another major twentieth century writer, Ernest Hemingway, who had a close relationship with Africa had a high opinion of *Out of Africa* and Blixen’s writing in general,<sup>7</sup> while the role similar books has played to create a certain perspective for the international reading public of the African landscape, its people, animals and politics cannot be underestimated. A contemporary reading of many of these books reveals some passages that can indeed be regarded as footprints, as it were, of the settler society of its day. However, to ignore these books completely would be to lose one’s historical memory.

To me *Out of Africa* is still very special for the sheer beauty of the text, its sensitivity for human relations in an improbable era, magnificent portrayal of the landscape and the abundance of animals Blixen saw in it. In many ways she is very Kenyan because

she identified so closely with the country and its people, after her departure longed to go back at least one more time and has since Kenya's independence in 1963 managed to be regarded as an asset to at least the country's tourism industry. The book also reminds us of the importance of certain tensions in an African community and gives us the opportunity to face them in a context where decisions about many issues have to be made all the time. *Out of Africa* is a moving testimony of one person's identification with and longing for another place—both identification and longing are strong driving forces in today's tourism hunger. It is time that *Out of Africa* stimulates the discovery and rediscovery of other similar books from and about Africa.

#### Notes

1. According to J. M. Coetzee (11) a classic is, *inter alia*, "that which is not time-bound, which retains meaning for succeeding ages, which 'lives'".
2. To illustrate the thematic similarity between *Out of Africa* and *Shadows on the Grass*, both Penguin in Harmondsworth, Middlesex, and Random House and Vintage Books in New York published them in a single volume in 1985.
3. Aucamp also included a poem ("Befaaamde baldakyn" from *Hiermaals*, 1992) by Lina Spies on the flamingos of Lake Nakuru. Karen Blixen is also the subject of the Afrikaans poem "Isak Dinesen" by Martjie Bosman in *Landelik* (2002).
4. The movie received 28 film awards, including seven Academy Awards (Best Picture, Director, Adapted Screenplay, Cinematography, Original Score, Art Direction, Sound) and three Golden Globes (Best Picture, Supporting Actor, Original Score) (Halliwell 769). The film was adapted by Kurt Luedtke and directed by Sydney Pollack. It starred Meryl Streep (as Karen Blixen), Robert Redford (as Denys Finch-Hatton), Klaus Maria Brandauer (as Baron Bror von Blixen-Finecke), Michael Kitchen (as Berkeley Cole), Malick Bowens (as Farah), Stephen Kinyanjui (as Chief), Michael Gough (as Delamare), Suzanna Hamilton (as Felicity, who is based on famous aviatrix Beryl Markham), and supermodel Iman (in a cameo role as Mariammo) (*Out of Africa*).
5. It is interesting to make a list of these books that are popular with tourists who visit Kenya and that certainly contribute to the image that is created of the country. Kenyan booksellers clearly are keen to have these books in stock, very often in a special section or on a special shelf in the shop. In his thesis on international travel literature on Kenya since 1963, Johannes Lodewyk Marais ("Reisliteratuur") discussed several of these texts.
6. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (17–18) is especially critical of the way in which she "protests her love for natives and animals in the same breath [...]. In all her descriptions of African characters she resorts to animal imagery. The African was really part of the woods and animals, part of Hegel's unconscious nature." Trzebinski ("Debate") responded to Ngũgĩ's criticism with a pro-Blixen view accusing him of racism.
7. On 10 November 1954, shortly after winning the Nobel Prize for Literature, Hemingway wrote to General Charles T. Lanham "Blixie's wife (Dinesen) is a damn sight better writer than any Swede they ever gave it to and Blixie (Baron Bror Von Blixen-Finecke) is in hell and he would be pleased if I spoke well of his wife" (Baker 839). According to Jeffrey Meyers (170) "The only contemporary books he [Hemingway] disinterestedly praise were Cumming's *The Enormous Room* [...], Dinesen's *Out of Africa* and Orwell's *Homage to Catalonia*".

#### Works cited

- Aiken, Susan Hardy. *Isak Dinesen and the Engendering of Narrative*. Chicago and London: The U of Chicago P, 1990.
- Amin, Mohamed; Duncan Willetts; and Alastair Matheson. *Railway Across the Equator: The Story of the East African Line*. London: The Bodley Head, 1986.

- Anonymous. "Karen Blixen–Isak Dinesen Information Site." 2008. 13 May 2013. <<http://www.karenblixen.com>>.
- Arendt, Hannah. "Foreword: Isak Dinesen, 1885–1962." Isak Dinesen. *Daguerreotypes and Other Essays*. Chicago: The U of Chicago P, 1979. vii–xxv.
- Aucamp, Hennie. "Flaminke." Samest. Hennie Aucamp. *Wys my waar is Timboektoe: 'n Persoonlike Reis deur Afrika*. Cape Town: Tafelberg, 1997.
- . *Beeltenis Verbode: Bespiegeling oor Egodokumente en Biografieë*. Cape Town, Pretoria & Johannesburg: Human & Rousseau, 1998.
- . *Wys my waar is Timboektoe: 'n Persoonlike Reis deur Afrika*. Cape Town: Tafelberg, 1997.
- Baker, Carlos, ed. *Ernest Hemingway: Selected Letters, 1917–1961*. London, Toronto, Sydney and New York: Granada, 1981.
- Beard, Peter Hill. *The End of the Game*. Text and photographs by Peter Hill Beard. New York: Viking Press, 1965.
- Blixen, Karen. *Den afrikanske Farm*. Trans. Karen Blixen into Danish. 1937. Copenhagen: Gyldensalske Boghandel, Nordisk Forlag, 1937.
- . *Out of Africa*. 1937. London: Penguin, 1954.
- . *A fazenda Africana*. Trans. Per Johns into Portuguese. 1937. Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira (Brazil), 1979.
- . *Out of Africa and Shadows on the Grass*. Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1985.
- Bosman, Martjie. *Landelik*. Pretoria: Protea Boekhuis, 2002.
- Botha, Elize. "Prosa." *Die Afrikaanse Literatuur Sedert Sestig*. Ed. T. T. Cloete, Goodwood: Nasou, 1980: 319–559.
- Bouwer, Alba. *Stories van Rivierplaas*. Cape Town: Nasionale Boekhandel, 1955.
- . *Nuwe Stories van Rivierplaas*. Cape Town: Nasionale Boekhandel, 1956.
- Briggs, Philip and Lizzie Williams, contribs. *Eyewitness Travel Kenya*. London, 2009.
- Camerapix, comp. and ed. *Spectrum Guide to Kenya*. Nairobi: Westlands Sundries, 1989.
- Cloete, T. T., ed. *Die Afrikaanse Literatuur Sedert Sestig*. Goodwood: Nasou, 1980.
- Coetzee, J. M. *Stranger Shores: Essays 1986–1999*. London: Vintage, 2002.
- Dinesen, Isak. *Seven Gothic Tales*. London: Putnam, 1934.
- . *Out of Africa*. With an introduction by Bernardine Kiely. New York: The Modern Library, 1952.
- . *Out of Africa*. With a new introduction by Alan Moorehead. New York: Time Incorporated, 1963.
- . *Letters from Africa, 1914–1931*. Ed. for the Rungstedlund Foundation by Frans Lasson. Trans. Anne Born. 1978. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981.
- . *On Modern Marriage and Other Observations*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986 (1977).
- . *Daguerreotypes and Other Essays*. Trans. P. M. Mitchell and W. D. Paden. Chicago: The U of Chicago P, 1979.
- Donelson, Linda. *Out of Isak Dinesen in Africa: The Untold Story*. Iowa City, Iowa: Coulsong List, 1995.
- Farah, Idle Omar. "Message from the director." Ed. Tove Hussein. 2005. *The Karen Blixen Museum: Nairobi*. Reprint. S.I., 2007.
- Gordimer, Nadine. *The Conservationist*. 1974. New York: Penguin, 1978.
- Gray, Stephen. *South African Literature: An Introduction*. Cape Town: David Philip, 1979.
- Halliwell, Leslie. *Halliwell's Film Guide*. 7th ed. 1977. London: Paladin, 1989.
- Head, Bessie. *Serowe: Village of the Rain Wind*. London: Heinemann African Writer Series.
- Hofmann, Corinne. *Die weiße Massai*. Munich: A1 Verlag, 1999.
- . *Wiederssehen in Barsaloi*. Munich: AI Verlag, 2005.
- Hussein, Tove, ed. *The Karen Blixen Museum: Nairobi*. 2005. Reprint. S.I., 2007.
- Huxley, Elspeth. *The Flame Trees of Thika*. 1959. London: Penguin, 1962.
- The Karen Blixen Museum. 2014. 30 April 2014. <<http://www.museums.or.ke/cotent/blogcategory/13/19>>.
- Lasson, Frans. *Karen Blixen/Isak Dinesen: A Chronology*. Trans. Jørgen Christian Hansen and David Stoner. S.I.: The Karen Blixen Museum, 1997.
- Lessing, Doris. *The Grass is Singing*. London: Heinemann Educational, 1973.

- . *A Small Personal Voice, Essays, Reviews, Interviews*. Ed. And intro. Paul Schlueter. New York: Knopf, 1974.
- Marciano, Francesca. *Rules of the Wild*. London: Vintage, 1998.
- Marais, Johann Lodewyk. "Karen Blixen: Twee Huise, Een Hart." *Boeke-Insig* 7 (Herfs 2009): 33–35.
- . "Internasionale reisliteratuur oor Kenia met spesifieke verwysing na die tydperk sedert onafhanklikheid in 1963". D.Phil. thesis, U Pretoria, 2013.
- Markham, Beryl. *West with the Night*. 1942. San Francisco: North Point Press, 1983.
- M. E. R. *Onweershoogte en Ander Verhale*. Cape Town: Nasionale Pers, 1998.
- . *Die Vertellings*. Cape Town, Bloemfontein en Port Elizabeth: Nasionale Pers, 1944.
- . *My Beskeie Deel: 'n Outobiografiese Vertelling*. Cape Town: Tafelberg, 1972.
- Meyers, Jeffrey. *Hemingway: A Biography*. 1985. London: De Capo Press, 1999.
- Ngũgĩ wa Thiongo. *Writers in Politics: Essays*. London, Ibadan and Nairobi: Heinemann, 1981.
- The National Museums of Kenya. "Rates." 2014. 30 April 2014. ><http://www.museums.or.ke/content/view/88/79/>>.
- Nicholls, C. S. *Elspeth Huxley: A Biography*. London: HarperCollins, 2002.
- O'Brien, Robert Viking. "Author and Hero in *West with the Night*." *The Journal of African Travel-Writing* 1 (September 1996): 14–23.
- Out of Africa*. Dir. Sydney Pollack. Video. Universal Pictures, 1985.
- Richards, Dave and Val Richards. *Kenya*. Globetrotter Travel Guide. London, Cape Town and Sydney: New Holland, 1994.
- Rothmann, M. E. *Die Moeder en die Dogter van die Arm Gesin: Die Armblanke-Vraagstuk in Suid-Afrika, V. Verslag van die Carnegie-Kommissie*. Stellenbosch: Carnegie Korporasie, 1932.
- Shales, Melissa. *Travellers Kenya*. 2nd ed. 2003. Peterborough: Thomas Cook, 2006.
- Smith, Pauline. *The Beadle*. London: Jonathan Cape, 1926.
- Spies, Lina. *Hiermaals*. Cape Town, Johannesburg: Human & Rousseau, 1992.
- Thurman, Judith. *Isak Dinesen: The Life of Karen Blixen*. 1982. Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1984.
- Trillo, Richard. *The Rough Guide to Kenya*. 8th ed. 1987. New York, London and Delhi: Rough Guides, 2006.
- Trzebinski, Errol. *Silence Will Speak*. London: Heinemann, 1977.
- . "The Karen Blixen Debate: Ngugi's Racist Attitudes." (June 1981): 21, 23.