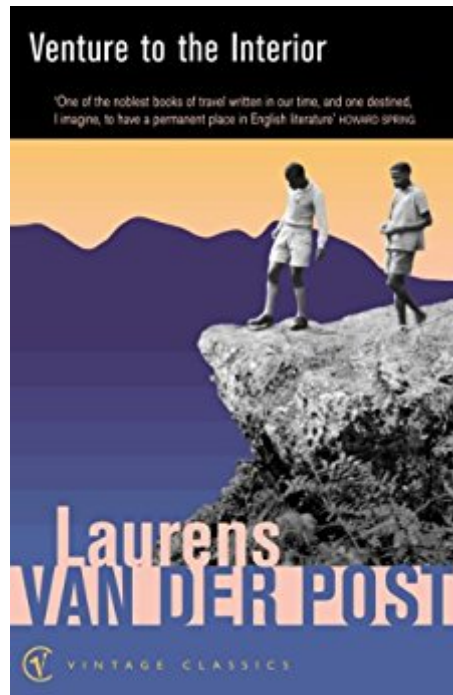




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Venture To The Interior (Vintage Classics)



Synopsis

Summoned to Whitehall in 1949, Laurens van der Post was told that in old British Central Africa there were two large tracts of country that London didn't really know anything about, and could he go in there on foot and take a look, please? *Venture to the Interior* is the account of that journey, a journey filled with adventure and discovery, flying from London across Europe and Africa, and after days in small aircraft, on foot across the mountains to the two lost worlds of central Africa.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This remains one of my favourite books by one of my favourite authors. On the surface this book is about a true, post WWII adventure and exploration -- philosopher Sir Laurens van der Post's incredible and dramatic journey into the interior of Africa to survey certain areas for the colonial British government. However as always with van der Post's writing his meaning is deeper and is woven so beautifully throughout the text. As the title eludes, this is a bold and grand venture into the interior of our human selves. In the Preface he sets up this venture when he refers to 'an unresolved conflict between two fundamental elements in my make-up; conscious and unconscious, male and female, masculine and feminine... On one side, under the heading "Africa", I would group

unconscious, female, feminine, mother; and under "Europe" on the other: conscious, male, masculine, father'. And further in the text he states for example: 'For this unreality starts in an incomplete awareness of ourselves... out of this dark gorge... between the two halves of ourselves, out of this division between the Europe and the Africa in us, unreality rises up to overwhelm us... The human being... is strangled in his own lack of self-awareness.' And again, "The problem is ours; it is in us, in our split and divided hearts... We hate the native in ourselves; we scorn and despise the night in which we have our being ...before we can close our split natures we must forgive ourselves. We must, we must forgive our European selves for what we have done to the Africa within us.' This is a highly-recommended prophetic book prompting much-needed reflection on our human condition; that we do indeed all suffer from this split personality and that a deeper awareness of it is critical to our future. In terms of a solution, van der Post laments in the book '...could there be... some magic somewhere, some medicine that could redeem all?' In other words can our split natures be reconciled?? Is there something out there that can reconcile these depressingly divided 'African' and 'European' selves? Unbelievably, there is. An Australian biologist -- who himself frequently draws upon the work of Sir Laurens van der Post, including 'Venture To the Interior' -- Jeremy Griffith has produced a biological explanation of the human condition that does just that. Our human condition is logically explained in first principle terms and the outcome is truly wondrous and transforming for the entire human race. A breakthrough of monumental significance. See website, [...]

At heart I am a romantic. I went to Africa in 1964 in part because I thought I could recapture the adventures I had read about in *The Swiss Family Robinson*. I had been seduced in college by Frederick Turner's thesis about the loss of the frontier, and I wanted a frontier (I also wanted indoor plumbing). It was not that I wanted a world of ox-carts so much that I thought a nice, log fire could be the center of my universe. When I arrived at my first posting in central Kenya, I discovered Laurens van der Post: "Sometimes there is God so quickly" says Tennessee Williams's Blanche DuBois in another context. I can't remember which book I read first, but *Venture to the Interior* stayed with me a long time, and then *The Lost World of the Kalahari*. This guy was great, his world alluring, I was in deep. I read everything, I bought first editions. Van der Post lived to be 90 and died in 1996. He appeared to be a man for all seasons: writer, anthropologist, Jungian, debonair, diplomat, equally European and African. What did I know? Not as much as David Jones who gathered lingering questions about van der Post's credibility into a book titled; *Storyteller: The Many Lives of Laurens van der Post* published in 2001. This book

documents the fabulist nature of its subject, his failed marriages, his seductions, his desires always to travel first class, his possible plagiarisms. And despite words to the contrary the book has that distasteful feel of intentional discrediting. But I get the point: the world of Laurens van der Post was one of creation, not actual experience; and you cannot continue to print books, appear in film and public, and deliver sermons if your premises are faulty. Laurens delivered "a truth" but far from "the whole truth." In reality his books were very well received, and he was a positive (if paternal) light on parts of Africa, World War II, and Carl Jung for 30 years. Jones acknowledges as much although his statement that he had not made up his mind before beginning the book rings a little disingenuous. I do like, though, the contention that biographers must write about both the light and the shadow of their subjects, and self-promotion in any guise is difficult to take. In the end I think that Laurens van der Post was an Afrikaner James Gatz, the man who became the great Gatsby, the man who would be king because he had a particular vision of the world he wished to live in. A glorious vision with a bad ending.

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