These objectives and desires make the 1869-70 period seem like a disaster – a perspective that Livingstone’s biographers have taken up in multiple guises.

Some argue that nothing happens to Livingstone in 1870; others summarize the sequential series of events in his life, such as they are; yet others delve into Livingstone’s geographical fantasies during the period and probe the darker corners of Livingstone’s pyschology.

Reginald Coupland, for instance, notes that “week after week, Livingstone sat idle at Bambarré […] What could he do? […] There was little to record in the journal. He could only read,” etc. Livingstone, Coupland adds, was “depressed,” plagued by “interminable delay,” and subject to “utter lonliness, and longing for home” (1945:83, 90).

Tim Jeal, conversely, enumerates the many impediments Livingstone faced at this time and underscores how Livingstone’s decision to face these “demonstrates the almost superhuman determination of the greatest explorers never to surrender” (2011:253).

Elsewhere, Jeal also devotes a whole chapter of his biography to Livingstone’s “Fantasy in Manyuema” (1973:322ff.) which elaborates in detail Livingstone’s theories of the Central African watershed.

Oliver Ransford takes this approach further by focusing on Livingstone’s “cyclothymic personality” and discussing how in the final seven months in Bambarre (22 July 1870-16 February 1871), Livingstone “escpaed from the reality of lonliness and discouragement into the realms of imagination and visionary transcendentalism” (1978:264, 262).