As a result, rather than apologize for or condemn Livingstone, we believe that a more productive approach lies in confronting these materials head on, acknowledging their problematic nature, and then reading them within the unvarnished context of the original 1870 Field Diary.

Put more simply, because of its reflective, fairly unrevised nature the 1870 Field Diary embodies a process narrative, one in which Livingstone himself cycles through the complexities of the Central African situation and does not always succeed in making sense of them.

Such an encounter with unresolved complexities represents the experience of the field in Central Africa in 1870.

To engage these complexities, Livingstone develops a new kind of narrative style, as far as his last journey is concerned.

The narrative style juxtaposes a broad and heterogenous set of ideas and observations.

The style, particularly its rapid transitions between themes and events, enables Livingstone to alternate theories of the Nile River system, with first-hand observations on local African cultural practices and social dynamics, reflections on his own travels and delays, complaints about his attendants, narratives of observations gathered from his informants, notes on the evolving state of his health, discussion of personal grudges against individual back home and in East Africa, and much, much more.

In other words, the entries cumulatively take an elaborate stream-of-consciousness form where local priorities and concerns become layered upon Livingstone’s experiences and motivations.