

Journeys – an introduction

According to Giambattista Vico, inventive and creative thinking involves the ability to actively combine conditions in new ways and the ability to constantly observe the diverse circumstances through new perspectives. With this idealistic axiom in mind the call for *Journeys* was aiming at a multifarious approach across the academic disciplines trying to accommodate space in-between the specialized and at times restricted disciplines.

Based on this broad condition the call for this issue of *Academic Quarter* invited contributions about journeys in very general terms – “across the humanistic disciplines”, “from Homer to the present.” The ambition was to focus “on the journey as a focal point and the human element in its centre” – not in a narrow sense of the word, but including “related categories and sub-categories such as literary forms/genres comprising everything from scientific or religious traveling to famous movie site tourism or colonially motivated mobility or subjects that involve cultural aspects, images of identity/identification and imaginary encounters that are mediated through journeys.” Journeys direct attention to the exchange of cultural relationships, but also to those not characterized through regular conventions. “In this sense identity or identification could be seen as something that is intimately connected to mobility, whether it is journeys of reality or imaginary.”

Reflecting on the etymological starting point, the journey is, according to *Douglas Harper Etymological Dictionary*, “traveling from one place to another”. That naturally gives the distance or room between “one place to another” endless possibilities. The call has thus not been formulated with the intention of defining the concept of journeys, but rather to shed light on the multidimensional meanings and understandings of the operative room in-between places. The methodical emphasis or the choice of theories will also connect *the room* to new interesting combinations. The attempt to investigate and isolate different characteristics in the traveler’s ontology is determined not only by the characteristics of the traveler *per se*, but equally on the premises for why and how the distance between “one place to another” is accomplished.

The journey as a medium for getting from one point to another is in clear contrast to what the Italian photographer and traveler Matteo Vegetti has characterized as the “The Art of Getting Lost”. Vegetti writes “Getting lost allowed me to live extraordinary situations and meet incredible people I would have never experienced, had I followed a map or a guidebook.” (Vegetti, 2011) Sigmund Freud would apply a different interpretation claiming that the strongest motivation for traveling “lies in the fulfilment of these early wishes to escape the family and especially the father.” (cited in Fussell, 1980)

In Vegetti’s assumption there is a clear distancing from mass traveling i.e. what is generally termed mass tourism. Mass tourism is in short a combination of mass-accessibility and mass-attendance making it an absolute requisite that the necessary transportation is available and that it can accommodate the masses. Another point could be made that the journey is more about the experience between “one place to another” whereas “Tourism takes place when people – hosts and guests – perform tourist places (...)”. (Bærenholdt, 2007) In other words the tourist and the travel pattern connected to this category, is more engaged in the place and thus passive compared to the active traveler. This antithesis between traveler and tourist has reminiscences back to an old 17th and 18th century conflict where the journey amongst others was related to action, danger, courage and heroism. In this period the traveler was the empirical link between society and the unknown. Thus, scientists (and traders) were instructed to keep detailed reports of their whereabouts in order to facilitate other potential

travelers' navigation. In this engagement the traveler was meant to fill in the blank points in the geographical knowledge that was "strange to us". (Sherman, 2002) The blank points also included updates on "figures and shapes of men and women in their apparel as also their manner... in every place as you shall find them differing [from us]". (Sherman, 2002)

The heroism and fame that was associated with traveling triggered a massive production of travel books. Within this production, it is necessary to distinguish between different literary forms though a common motivation across the different types of genres seems based on the relationship between curiosity and observation. Out of this elementary condition a general travel activity arises, whose function serves two main purposes: On the one hand, the account is a source of new and informative insights about the unfamiliar, mediated through the contact between different societies, in order to obtain empirical information about other societies as the basis for knowledge and orientation. On the other hand, the discovery could lead to a transformation of the traveler's self-understanding and his place in nature. Man's place in nature – biology and religion as the two key factors – thus justified and motivated a great deal of journeys and the subsequent production of travel accounts. (Stagl, 1995) Hence travel literature is used as a broad term for accounts, whether you can determine them as a historical or fictional.

Within this margin of fiction and non-fiction a diverging travel-art took form – the imaginary journey – a genre that gave the writer's plot a limitless range of performance. This genre is in many ways peculiar, as it "often produces a highly developed "sixth sense" of the human aspect" that could generate great contemporary effect. One of the most successful imaginary travel writers and a model example of this phenomenon, is the German Karl May (1842-1912), who began his career as a writer while he was serving jail-time for minor theft. May's conceptual universe and geographical frame included both America and Asia without him having actually been there. (May was in America, but it was after the publication of the American accounts.) May wrote under the synonyms as Capitan Ramon Diaz de la Escosura, Prinz Muhamel Lautréamont and Ernst von Linden, just to name a few. May's books have sold more than 200 million copies and translated into over 30 languages including Hebrew and Esperanto. Additionally, his books on the

Indian Winnetou were made into film being the indirect cause of the spaghetti-western genre. (Frayling, 1998)

This issue reflects the broad definition of journeys in the call, in our opinion in a positive way. Although the contributions to this issue of *Academic Quarter* share a common theme, the articles altogether demonstrate the varieties of approaches to the theme: Journeys can be discussed and explored in many ways and in a number of academic disciplines – from tourism to experimental theatre, from literature to digital role-playing games. We have tried to create some system – or order – by organizing the articles in sections – tourist travels and travel literature, journeys in history, journeys in literature, film and theatre, digital journeys and spiritual journeys. Some articles could have been categorized in more than one of these sections: Arthur Conan Doyle's deep interest in spiritualism is one of the themes in Jørgen Riber Christensen's literary article "Arthur Conan Doyle's Quest Journey to The Land of Mist". Thomas Halloran's article on travel literature is at the same time a contribution to a specific literary genre and to the discussion of post-colonial Africa.

Two articles deal with tourists' travels from different perspectives: the first discusses the relation between tourism and identity, in particular the variations in tourist travels as elements of identity construction (Bodil S. Blichfeldt & Karina M. Smed); the second takes the reader back to the age of Victorian England and early popular tourism and argues that the guide book and museums of the Victorian age did not only introduce the objects of tourists' travels but also presented institutionalized interpretations of them (Rune Andersen).

A related, still different approach can be found in the travel literature which is analyzed by Thomas F. Halloran in his discussion of the American perception of lack of modernity in the postcolonial Africa; and by John S. Vassar who introduces the world of James Herriot – in an attempt of "a rereading" of his popular stories as works of travel literature. Travel literature is a genre in its own right.

The theme – identity – remains in focus when we move from tourism to spiritual travels; or to be precise: The "Identification-of-self" – is the theme in Patrick J. Holladay and Lauren M. Ponder's article about yoga-spirit-travels.

History as a study is, per se, a journey in time, and journeys in history/historical journeys cover a broad range of topics and ap-

proaches; in the present volume the historical approach is represented by four articles, the first based upon accounts of colonial journeys to the New World (North America) in the 17th century addressing issues such as sovereignty, government and authority (Johan Heinsen); the second about journeys of conquest in colonial Nigeria in the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Nwankwo T. Nwaezeigwe). Two articles deal with journeys in the Middle East. Eivind Heldaas Seland writes about overland travelling between the Mediterranean and the Persian Gulf in the 18th and early 19th century. Leonardo Gregoratti takes us back to the 1st century AD and the Chinese expansion westwards in an attempt to establish contacts and economic relationships with the Roman Empire. Gregoratti tells the story of a mission led by a Chinese dignitary Gan Ying around 97 AD that had to stop at the borders of the Parthian kingdom; returning to China, he wrote a report about his meeting with the Parthians, which Gregoratti presents in the article. Altogether the four articles on historical journeys point to a variety of motivations for traveling – as mentioned above: People have traveled in order to explore new worlds, others have traveled to escape from dangers of various sorts, human, ecological etc.; some have traveled for political purposes, others for economic gains and profits, for ideological or religious reasons. A few of these are presented in this issue.

The majority of contributions to this issue of *Academic Quarter* investigate the many facets of journeys in literature and the arts, film, and theatre. This section includes articles about famous writers such as Arthur Conan Doyle (Jørgen Riber Christensen), Ernest Callenbach (Kim Toft Hansen), Henri Michaux and Nicolas Bouvier (Lénia Marques), Jack Kerouac (Bent Sørensen), D. H. Lawrence (Minjeong Kim), Herman Melville (Rasmus Grøn) and Douglas Coupland (Mikkel Jensen). There are contributions on modern directors and film-makers, experimental theatre and movies – articles that investigate the worlds of “ecotopia” (Kim Toft Hansen), the dangerous travels of the illegal immigration from Mexico to USA (Pablo Cristoffanini), theatrical performances from the point of view of the spectators (Elsa Belhomme), and the issue of mobility in artist’s cinema in a context of globalization and of cultural transnationalism (Miro Soares)

The authors investigate a great variety of issues related to journeys or discussed by metaphors of the journey. Jørgen Riber Chris-

tensen's article describes how the territorial journey of the quest was used narratologically by Conan Doyle in his Challenger novels to explore the contradictory realm of applying a scientific approach to the subject of spiritualism. Kim Toft Hansen illustrates traveling as a means of becoming aware of man's problematic handling of nature. In his analysis of the American filmmaker Cary Fukunagy's *Sin Nombre* Pablo Rolando Cristoffanini argues for a contextual interpretation of the film as a contribution to a discussion of serious conflicts in Mexico in a utopian and ideological manner. Lénia Marques demonstrates the role of imagination in the writing of Michaux and Bouvier, two travelers in the 20th century, who wrote about their experiences between the real and the imaginary; memory played the main role, but imagination had a role too. Minjeong Kim examines D.H. Lawrence's novel *The Lost Girl* (1920) as a Bildungsroman, in which a journey to southern Italy is described as emancipation from patriarchal dominance and at the same time a cultural encounter between English (European) civilization and "unrestrained primitivism". Bent Sørensen argues that the journeys in Jack Kerouac's 1957 novel *On the Road* are used as a metaphor for socially triggered psychological travails. Journeys both express an urge for constant motion and at the same time require stability and order. Mikkel Jensen in his analysis of a Douglas Coupland short story depicts the journey as representing two parallel narratives of human development (father and son) and a drive from urban center to the Canadian countryside. Rasmus Grøn analyses the journey – in *Moby Dick* – as both a cultural project and an individual, subjective project. The many meanings of the journey as a metaphor directing our attention towards mobility, uncertainties and the unknown territory between the starting point and the end cannot be missed when surveying the literary contributions to this issue.

The perspective is changed in the two articles on experimental film and theatre by Miro Soares and Elsa Belhomme. Analyzing two plays Belhomme shows how the spectators must undertake "an intro-directed journey and renegotiate their own sense of being in the theatre." It is "a process similar to that of the traveler", she claims. Miro Soares is elaborating an initial notion of voluntary uprooting as a creative process; uprooting is "responsible for breaking the time and space instances of the daily existence". The perspective is

changed, but the themes and associated concepts related to traveling are the same.

Closing this section is an essay, not on journeys in literature, rather the opposite, traveling literature so to speak: the mobile library. (Pirkko Raudaskoski & Thessa Jensen) The argument is that mobility creates conditions for new forms of sociability, and that the rationale, according to the two authors, is that the library constitutes a basis for democracy; access to knowledge and information is a condition for democracy. It is the purpose of the article to discuss the mobile library on a theoretical as well as an empirical level.

Journeys in the digital world is discussed by Nick Webber in his article on travel as a theme in online roleplaying games. Travel constitutes a significant activity in many online roleplaying games, “whether players are pursuing quests, trading, adventuring or simply exploring”, as Nick Webber writes in the introduction to his article. Nick Webber’s approach is from the perspective of the games as well as the gamers. It is quite a different sort of digital journey that is explored by Thessa Jensen and Peter Vistisen in their article about the BBC’s “Sherlock” – a modernization of “Sherlock Holmes” for the TV media. BBC transferred the well-known story of Sherlock Holmes from the 19th to the 21st century, and the article follows the transfer of “Sherlock” from television to the social media – from BBC’s homepages to Twitter, Tumblr, Omegle.com and more; it is a digital journey which also transformed the meanings and functions of the original series.

Altogether, the articles leave the impression that across academic disciplines, the reader of fiction or historical literature, the spectator in theatres or cinemas, the traveler in search of the unfamiliar or the tourist who wants an instruction to the unfamiliar, all share that of crossing the territories of time and space and trying to make sense of the unfamiliar.

The articles investigate that area (the unfamiliar) in various ways and at the same time make it clear that other ways might have been possible and perhaps fruitful. In preparing this issue of *Academic Quarter* it was our hope that new insights might be gained by discussing journeys in a broad context, including “the mutual relationship between real and imaginary as co-producers in the constitution of the self and the other” – as we wrote in the call, No doubt, the articles in this issue demonstrate that it is one of the key element of

“journeys” – as a pattern of human mobility – to challenge the familiar and conventional codes of conduct and perception.

The question: What makes a journey? Cannot be answered unequivocal, but in our view the contributions to this issue of *Academic Quarter* have nevertheless successfully captured Vico’s multifarious angle and combined mobility and the art of travel in new ways.

References

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