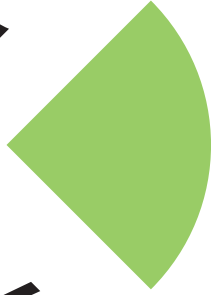


**akademisk**  
academic quarter

Aalborg Universitet



**akvarter**  
tidsskrift for humanistisk forskning

Volume 04 08 • 2012

**Journeys Rejsjer**



Akademisk kvarter  
Tidsskrift for humanistisk forskning

Academic Quarter  
Journal for humanistic research

Redaktører / Issue editors  
Rune Andersen & Knud Knudsen

Ansvarshavende redaktører / Editors in chief  
Jørgen Riber Christensen & Kim Toft Hansen

© Aalborg University / Academic Quarter 2012

Tidsskriftsdesign og layout / Journal design and layout:  
Kirsten Bach Larsen

ISSN 1904-0008

Yderligere information / Further information:  
<http://akademiskkvarter.hum.aau.dk/>

For enkelte illustrationers vedkommende kan det have været umuligt at finde eller komme i kontakt med den retmæssige indehaver af ophavsrettighederne. Såfremt tidsskriftet på denne måde måtte have krænket ophavsretten, er det sket ufrivilligt og utilsigtet. Retmæssige krav i denne forbindelse vil selvfølgelig blive honoreret efter gældende tarif, som havde forlaget indhentet tilladelse i forvejen.

## Indhold

Journeys – an introduction	5
<b>Tourists' travels, travelers and travel literature</b>	
Multiple identiteter	14
Mødet med den systematiserede fremmedhed	28
Middle Class America in Africa	42
All Writings Great and Small	58
<b>Journeys in history/ historical journeys</b>	
The Hammock and the Colonial Journey of Conquest	72
"En disposition, form og orden"	83
Death or taxes	97
The Parthians between Rome and China	109
<b>Literary journeys/ Journeys in literature, film and theatre</b>	
Arthur Conan Doyle's Quest Journey to <i>The Land of Mist</i>	121
Livet ude af balance	133
Sin Nombre	146
Writing the Mists of Memory	162
A Drinking Problem just like Grandpa's	180

The Travails of Sal Paradise	192
Heading South in Search of Female Development	207
The great flood-gates of the wonder-world flung open	222
The trip as a script	237
Spectators' Journeys	253
Travelling Sociability	263
<b>Virtual journeys – digital journeys – journeys on the internet</b>	
Why walk when you can teleport?	276
En opdagelsesrejse ud i de sociale medier	291
<b>Spiritual journeys</b>	
Identification-of-self through a yoga-travel-spirit nexus	308

## 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 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> 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 17<sup>th</sup> century addressing issues such as sovereignty, government and authority (Johan Heinsen); the second about journeys of conquest in colonial Nigeria in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> 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 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Leonardo Gregoratti takes us back to the 1<sup>st</sup> 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 20<sup>th</sup> 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 19<sup>th</sup> to the 21<sup>st</sup> 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

- Bærenholdt, J. O. 2007. *Coping with Distances: Producing Nordic Atlantic Societies*, Oxford: Berghahn Books.
- Frayling, C. 1998. *Spaghetti Westerns*, London: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd.
- Fussell, P. 1980. *Abroad: British literary traveling between the wars*, New York: Oxford University Press.
- Sherman, W. H. 2002. *Stirrings and searchings (1500-1720)*, Cambridge: The Cambridge University Press.
- Stagl, J. 1995. *A history of curiosity: the theory of travel 1550-1800*, Chur: Harwood Academic Publishers.
- Vegetti, M. 2011. *The Art of Getting Lost*, San Francisco: Blurb.

**akademisk**  
academic quarter

Zalburga Universitet

tidsskrift for humanistisk forskning

# Tourists' travels, travelers and travel literature

## Multiple identiteter

### Ferierejsen som identitetskonstruerende

**Bodil Stilling Blichfeldt**

*Bodil Stilling Blichfeldt er lektor ved institut for kultur og globale studier, Aalborg Universitet. Både hendes forskning og undervisning er koncentreret omkring forbrug og forbrugskulturer, branding samt turisme.*

**Karina Madsen Smed**

*Karen Madsen Smed er adjunkt ved institut for kultur og globale studier, Aalborg Universitet. Både hendes forskning og undervisning er koncentreret omkring kultur, identitet og forbrug primært i en turismekontekst. turisme.*

#### Abstrakt

Den identitetsmæssige symbolværdi i moderne forbrug er velkendt. Formålet med artiklen er at bidrage til en nuancering og problematisering af, hvordan *ferierejsen* aktivt anvendes i individets identitetskonstruktioner, når identiteter både er multiple og under evig forandring. På basis af en række kvalitative undersøgelser diskuteres centrale elementer af ferierejsen som identitetskonstruerende. Analysen pointerer kompleksiteten af ferierejsen som identitetsskabende forbrug, idet turisten trækker på multiple, fleksible identiteter som knyttes til forskellige rejser og oplevelser i en stadig mere omfattende 'rejsekarriere'. Igennem turistens rejser bygges oplevelser ovenpå hinanden og bidrager til identitetskonstruktion, der forhandles og iscenesættes i forskellige sociale sammenhænge, og individets turismemæssige forbrug sættes i direkte relation til individet selvopfattelse og ønskelige identiteter i nuet. Forhandlingerne er kommunikative og udspringer af kontekst og signifikante andre, f.eks. igennem sociale medier som benyttes til positionering af selvet i relation til den kontekst det enkelte individ befinder sig i på et givent tidspunkt

**Emneord:** Turisme, rejse, forbrug, identitet.

## Indledning

Identitet er ikke statisk, men *konstrueres* via kontinuerlig forhandling, kommunikation og italesættelser. En måde hvorpå identitet kan forhandles, kommunikeres og italesættes er via forbrug – f.eks. af ferierejser. Men hvad er forholdet mellem identitetskonstruktioner og de rejser, vi foretager? Er ferierejsen virkelig med til både at definere, hvem vi er og hvordan vi kommunikerer til andre, hvem vi er? Og hvis ferierejsen understøtter forbrugers selvopfattelse og identitetskonstruktion i den kontekst, man befinder sig i, hvordan italesætter individet så sine ferierejser? Dette er alle spørgsmål, som denne artikel søger at adressere nærmere.

Turismerelateret forbrug er karakteriseret ved ferierejsens kompleksitet og derved af et væld af potentielle symbolske værdier i tilknytning til dette identitetskonstruerende forbrug. Eksempelvis argumenterer Desforges (2000) for, at ferierejsen giver den enkelte turist mulighed for at konstruere en fortælling baseret på den rolle, som ferierejsen spiller i dennes liv. Dermed kan individet gøre brug af en sådan fortælling(er) til både at iscenesætte og præsentere sig overfor andre mennesker. En fortælling er givetvis en fortælling i nuet, men dog oftest konstrueret af forudgående begivenheder og oplevelser, som alle bidrager til bestemte identitetspositioner. Samtidig kan individet på et givet tidspunkt og i en given kontekst 'spille' på forskellige identiteter. I forhold til identitet som forhandling, kommunikation og italesættelse skriver Giddens følgende:

"Identity can be seen as a story that a person writes and rewrites about him or herself, never reaching the end until they die, and always rewriting the earlier parts, so that the activity of writing becomes itself part of the story"  
(Giddens i Gabriel & Lang, 2006:83)

Ifølge Giddens bygges fortællinger op omkring eksisterende fortællinger, som så udbygges eller afvises via diskursiv gentagelse af, eller afstandstagen fra, eksisterende identitetspositioner. Disse gentagelser (eller afstandstagen) bliver således fundamentale "byggesten" i fortællingen. I konteksten af ferierejser - og de oplevelser ferierejser indeholder – kan man tale om en rejsekarriere bestående af forskellige typer af rejser i tid og sted, som udgør byggesten til en identitetskonstruerende fortælling (Cohen, 1972).

I turismelitteraturen har der været tendens til at klassificere turister som 'enten eller' uafhængigt af hvor i fortællingen man er, eller hvilken kontekst den fortælles i: *Enten* søger turisten det spændende og anderledes *eller* det kendte og ufarlige (Cohen, 1972; Cohen & Avieli, 2004; Hjalager, 2004). Det må dog kunne antages, at netop forskelligheden i turistens oplevelser (både under den enkelte ferie og på tværs af forskellige ferier) kan bidrage aktivt til skabelse, fastholdelse og videreudvikling af en lang række forskellige identitetskonstruktioner, som således sættes i spil på baggrund af forskellige oplevelser og erfaringer (Hogg & Abrams, 1988; Jenkins, 2008). Dermed bliver ethvert forsøg på at forstå, hvem turisten er og hvordan ferierejser bidrager til identitetsskabelse langt mere udfordrende end dét at kategorisere turister. Dermed bliver valget af ferie og hvad vi laver mens vi er på ferie også et spørgsmål om, hvilke af vores identiteter vi ønsker at konstruere, understøtte og/eller fremhæve via netop denne rejse og disse aktiviteter. Hertil bør det understreges, at identitetskonstruktion i udgangspunktet betragtes som en ubevidst handling, og derved betragtes valg og ønsker i forbindelse med ferierejsen som en del af de underliggende og som oftest ubevidste processer, som er med til at konstruere turistens identitet.

Formålet med denne artikel er således at bidrage til en nuancering af, hvordan ferierejsen aktivt anvendes i sådanne identitetskonstruerende processer. Dermed er artiklens formål ikke at bidrage til forståelse af den enkelte ferierejse, men nærmere at udforske relationerne mellem ferierejsen og individets identitetskonstruktioner. At der netop ses på identiteter som mangfoldige og varierende ift. tid og sted er affødt af, at udgangspunktet for denne artikel er et syn på ferierejsen som et kontekstafhængigt, identitetsskabende fænomen. Igennem artiklen illustreres de skiftende sociale konteksters indvirkning på vurdering og italesættelse af ferierejsen via citater fra en række forskellige kvalitative undersøgelser af ferierejser og -motivation. Artiklen redegør derfor ikke på traditionel vis for resultaterne af én undersøgelse. I stedet inddrages løbende resultater fra en række forskellige forskningsprojekter, som forfatterne har arbejdet med igennem de seneste cirka 5 år.

### **Det menings- og identitetsskabende forbrug**

Ifølge Jantzen & Østergaard (2000) er nutidens forbruger fokuseret på nye oplevelser og i stigende grad at skabe 'mening med livet', og



forbrug bliver dermed et spørgsmål om, hvordan individets forsøg på at konstruere et meningsfyldt liv kan understøttes. Herved bliver forbrug i høj grad et spørgsmål om, hvordan man skaber og formidler den ønskede (om end ubevidste) betydning (McCracken, 1988). Forbrug har således skiftet rolle fra at være en (forholdsvis) simpel behovsdækkende adfærd, til at være en integreret del af, hvem vi 'er' og hvem vi ønsker at 'være'. Identitet defineres således via både et internt, psykologisk element og et eksternt, social element (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). I forbindelse med det eksterne element søger individet 'medlemskab' af forskellige grupper eller endog 'stammer' (Maffesoli, 1996), hvorved andre medlemmers anerkendelse opnås via symbolsk værdi indlejret i forbrug (og 'ikke-forbrug') ud fra betragtninger af, hvilke typer af f.eks. ferierejser der har positiv/negativ symbolværdi.

I en turismemæssig kontekst har Pearce og Caltabiano (1983) samt Pearce (1988) beskæftiget sig med 'rejsekarrieren' som et udtryk for at deltagelse i forskellige ferierejser i forskellige livsfasen udgør en 'rejsekarriere'. Oprindeligt var rejsekarriere begrebet inspireret af, og udsat for samme kritik som, Maslows (1970) behovshierarki, og dermed blev teorien især kritiseret for ideen om, at individet over tid 'bevæger sig *opad*' i jagten på stadig mere meningsfulde oplevelser. Denne kritik blev dog imødegået senere, ved eksplicit at tage højde for, at individet, som med tiden bliver en mere erfaren rejsende, kan bevæge sig rundt mellem forskellige ønskede oplevelser og rejsemotivationer (Ryan, 1998). Rejsekarriere begrebet indikerer desuden, at erfaring fra tidligere rejser bringes med ind i nye ferierejser, hvorfor rejser aldrig fungerer i isolation, men bygger ovenpå internaliserede rejseerfaringer (Pearce & Caltabiano, 1983; Pearce & Lee, 2005), hvorved disse indgår i turisme-relaterede identitetskonstruktioner. Dermed bliver den enkelte ferierejse ikke kun betydningsfuld ift. at give oplevelser værdsat i nuet, men også (eller måske især) ift. at kunne bidrage til at konstruere for individet værdifulde identiteter.

### **De identitetskonstruerende ferierejser**

På tværs af de forskellige forskningsprojekter, forfatterne af denne artikel har gennemført gennem de sidste fem år, synes tre elementer af ferierejsen som identitetskonstruktion særligt centrale. Alle tre elementer har for en lang række informanter været cen-

trale for deres identitetskonstruktioner, og disse tre elementer er dermed vigtige i forsøget på at opbygge en forståelse af samspillet mellem den enkelte ferierejse og individets mere langsigtede identitetskonstruktioner. Det første element er *identitetsdynamik*, dvs. hvordan identitet forandres over tid, hvordan turister relaterer til deres tidligere ferier, hvem de 'var' på et specifikt tidspunkt i deres liv, og hvordan tidligere ferier påvirker disse identiteter. Det andet element er *social identitet*, dvs. hvordan 'andre' påvirker individets valg af ferierejser, og hvordan ferierejsen anvendes som 'adgangsbillet' til grupper, som individet gerne vil være, blive eller forblive medlem af. Det tredje element er *anvendelse og sammenhæng af ferierejser i identitetskonstruktioner*, f.eks. hvordan individet – på tværs af forskellige ferierejser og identitetskonstruktioner – forsøger at skabe en sammenhængende konstruktion som afspejler hvem 'jeg' så er. Vi uddyber disse tre elementer i de følgende afsnit.

#### Identitetsdynamik: Den jeg er, den jeg gerne vil være og den jeg var engang

Når turister i vores forskellige empiriske undersøgelser reflekterede over tidligere ferierejser, fortolkedes disse ud fra den livskontekst, der var dominerende på det tidspunkt, hvor informanterne tog på den specifikke ferierejse. Turisters fortællinger om tidligere rejser fungerer således ikke blot som en rejse igennem rejsekarrierer, men også igennem tid, hvor fortælleren redegør for, hvorfor forskellige rejser var vigtige på netop det tidspunkt, de fandt sted, hvorved rejsens identitetskonstruerende karakter italesættes. Et eksempel herpå er fra et interview med Anna (en 38-årig kvinde der venter sit første barn sammen med sin gravide kæreste):

"... og nu vi skal have en lille, så bliver det nok mere et sted, hvor det er okay at vi er der sammen, som forældre med den lille uden at nogen ser skævt til os. Men jeg tror vi kommer til at tænke mere over hvor vi tager hen, fordi vi rejser som en familie, og så er det nemmere at få øje på os. I stedet for bare at være to veninder, så kommer vi til at tage af sted som to forældre med et barn" (Blichfeldt et al, 2012)

Anna relaterer i ovenstående citat fremtidige ferierejser til den større livsændring, hun umiddelbart står overfor, og hvordan det at blive forældre vil gøre det langt lettere for andre at 'spotte' hendes seksualitet – et forhold der får hende til at overveje nye ferietyper og destinationer. For Anna er identitet ikke statisk, tværtimod laver hun 'rum' til hendes nye identitet som forældre – hvilket også forventes at omfatte ændringer i hendes valg af ferierejser. Hvor Anna fokuserer på, hvordan hendes 'nye' identitet vil påvirke hendes *fremtidige* ferierejser, fokuserer Erik (61-årig dansker) på, hvordan hans *tidlige* ferierejser var vigtige dengang han tog på dem:

“... og så var vi med færge og tog fra Harwich til London. Og det var vel tre gange vi gjorde det, og det gjorde det halve Danmark. Det var helt vildt alle de, der rejste. De kæmpe færger var prop fyldt med mennesker, omkring 1500 mennesker. Det var rent Dansker togt på de færges der. Det var virkeligt et hit dengang.” (Smed, 2009)

Senere fortæller Erik, at det på nuværende tidspunkt er 'utænkeligt' for ham at tage på denne type af rejser, omend han også relaterer til disse som 'et stort hit *dengang*'. Erik forholder sig således samtidigt til, at disse ferierejser *dengang* var 'rigtige', og at de *nu* ikke har den samme status. Erik indikerer således, hvordan det der på et tidspunkt er meningsgivende ferierejser, ikke nødvendigvis er meningsgivende på et senere tidspunkt – alt afhængigt af, hvilke interne og eksterne identitetskonstruktioner, der er dominerende på det givne tidspunkt. Eriks udsagn understøtter således, at såvel faktiske som ønskværdige identiteter hverken er stabile eller givne, men i stedet er under konstant forandring. Ken (36-årig dansker) fortæller ligeledes følgende om skolerejser, han var på for cirka 20 år siden:

- I: “De der skoleture – hvad husker du bedst fra dem?”  
K: “Jamen, at få et stempel i passet, når du tog over grænsen, fordi det kunne du vise til de andre bagefter – at du havde været dér”  
I: “Så det med at krydse grænser?”  
K: “Jamen, at komme væk hjemmefra og komme ud, hvor de gamle aldrig har været. Og at komme hjem igen og fortælle om det”

- ...
- I: "Men alt i alt, så lyder det ikke som om de ture var så fede?"
- K: "Det er sgu svært at sige. Men dengang var de, dengang var det det sejeste. Men der sker jo hele tiden noget nyt, du oplever mere og bliver mere erfaren" (Blichfeldt, 2007a)

I bagklogskabens skær giver Ken udtryk for, at skoleturene var noget han 'kom hjem og fortalte om' (eller endog pralede af). Samtidig er han dog meget specifik ift. at selv om disse rejser var 'det sejeste', da han var teenager, så har de på ingen måde en tilsvarende status her 20 år senere. Både Erik og Ken italesætter således, hvordan ferierejser, de var på for mange år siden, relaterede til en tidligere identitet, samtidig med at de er i stand til, både humoristisk og ironiserende, at genfortælle, hvordan disse ferierejser var identitetskonstruerende og –forstærkende tidligere i deres liv. Det vil altså sige, at for informanterne har opfattelsen af, hvem 'jeg' er, ændret sig over tid, og hvor disse ferier fremhævede ønskede identiteter engang, så er det fortællinger, der tages afstand fra p.t. Hermed bliver fortællingerne om ferierejser ikke blot enkeltstående anekdoter, men også fortællinger om, hvem individet er, hvem individet gerne vil være, og hvem individet var *dengang*.

#### Social identitet:

"Du sidder da ikke alene og kigger på dine ferie billeder"

Social identitet relaterer sig til, hvordan individet via valg og selvscenesættelser søger anerkendelse, og dermed hvordan valg af ferierejser påvirkes af antagelser om positiv symbolværdi for individets forskellige medlemskaber. Dermed relaterer ferierejser sig ikke kun til 'hvem jeg er', men også til, 'hvem jeg gerne vil ses som af andre', og dermed bliver kommunikation af ferierejser en essentiel byggesten i identitetskonstruktioner, som understøttes i individets møde og kommunikation med omverdenen. Et eksempel på vigtigheden af andres anerkendelse findes i Blichfeldts 2007a (her diskuteres en årligt tilbagevendende ferieform - deltagelse i en musikfestival) for en familie med en teenagedatter. I denne forbindelse siger den 34-årige far i familien:

“Men i skolen er det også en ‘stor’ ting, at vi tager til den festival. Fordi flere af de andre forældre fortæller, hvordan deres unger plager om også at komme af sted. Og nogle af ungerne har allerede spurgt, om de ikke må komme med næste sommer” (Blichfeldt, 2007a)

For datteren er musikfestivalen noget, der tales om i løbet af skoleåret, og også noget som øjensynligt påvirker hendes status blandt kammeraterne, og som dermed synes at have positiv symbolværdi for hendes umiddelbare gruppemedlemskaber. Det interessante er, at også faderen ved og anerkender, at datteren konstruerer identitet via deres ferievalg, og derved konstruerer han også sig selv som en far med en særlig identitet – i følge ham selv som en ret ‘cool’ far.

En oplevelse er ikke nødvendigvis en oplevelse, *mens* vi oplever, idet oplevelsen i lige så høj grad opstår, når denne genfortælles (Noy, 2004; Vetner & Jantzen, 2007). F.eks. karikeres 70ernes glade masseturist ofte som en person, der gerne udsætter andre for endeløse diasshows fra den veloverståede ferierejse. I en mere nutidig version findes der også talrige eksempler på, at ferierejser tilsyneladende ikke eksisterer før de kommunikeres ud på Facebook eller andre sociale medier (f.eks. Munar, 2011; Hjalager & Jensen, 2012). Med dette perspektiv in mente, bliver selve italesættelsen (både bogstaveligt og billedligt) af vores ferieminder et væsentligt element af den sociale identitetskonstruktion, idet det er dette kommunikative element, der (forhåbentligt) udløser positiv signalværdi. For datteren i ovenstående eksempel er det således ikke *under* ferien, at hun opnår de brugbare værdier, idet dette primært sker *efter* ferien, når kommunikationen til andre medlemmer af samme gruppe forekommer, og den positive symbolværdi konstrueres derfor primært *ex facto* ferien. Derfor kan turistens aktive anvendelse af ferieoplevelser være en essentiel del af identitetskonstruktionerne, eller som Robert og Mark (to briter på 56 og 54) forklarer...:

R: “We got friends coming next weekend and we’ll probably be showing them slides on the computer. But what that shows is the post-holiday experience, I’m still trying to relive it – the slides of Egypt and Cairo, and I still wanted to be there long time after we got back, when Mark was showing them on a slide”

M: "But you don't do that on your own. You don't sit down and look at it alone, you do that in a company" (Smed, 2009)

Robert lægger vægt på, at feriebilderne gør ham i stand til at (gen) opleve ferien, mens Mark supplerer denne betragtning med at forklare, at andres tilstedeværelse og deltagelse er en nødvendig forudsætning for, at man (gen)ser sine feriebilder og dermed (gen) oplever sin ferie. I en eller anden grad forankres disse identitetskonstruktioner dermed i *delingen* af ferieminder. Ligeledes fortæller 47-årige Else, at selv om hun ikke tager på ferie for at 'vise sig' eller 'bevise noget overfor andre', ender hun alligevel med at gøre det:

"På en eller anden måde gør jeg det [viser og beviser overfor andre] jo alligevel så snart jeg begynder at fortælle andre om mine ferier" (Blichfeldt et al, 2012)

Trods informanternes udtalte bevidsthed om, at deres deling af ferieminder og -billeder er mere interessant for dem selv end for modtageren, så synes dette at være en essentiel del af, hvordan disse individer konstruerer social identitet på basis af deres ferierejser. Dvs. at italesættelse af ferieminder giver mening, hvis vi ser det fra den identitetskonstruerende turists synsvinkel. At fremvise sine feriebilder handler således ikke så meget om selve ferien som om individets forsøg på at konstruere, rekonstruere og eventuelt dekonstruere social identitet. Hele ritualet karakteriseres derfor ved en dobbelthed, hvor ritualet har væsentlig værdi for turisten samtidig med at denne er opmærksom på, at ritualet kan være kedeligt, trivielt eller endog uinteressant for modtageren. 61-årige britiske Judy formulerer det således:

"Well, it's really boring isn't it, other people's holiday experiences, especially when they get the photographs out [...] We don't even bother taking a camera now, it's just, ... you know, there's just nothing to photograph that's new or different" (Smed, 2009)

Judy erkender, at 'andres' ferieminder er kedelige, i særdeleshed når de 'finder billederne frem' og samtidig forklarer hun, at hun

ikke længere tager billeder på sine ferier, fordi der ikke er noget, der er 'nyt' eller 'anderledes' nok til at berettige fotografering eller fremvisning. Hermed siger Judy også, omend mere implicit, at det er 'acceptabelt' at tage og vise ferie billeder, hvis de viser noget tilpas nyt og/eller anderledes. Indenfor de sidste år er der sket et markant skifte i, hvordan vi deler vores ferieoplevelser og -billeder med andre. Hvor 70ernes turist fandt diasshowet frem, og hvor 80ernes og 90ernes turister ofte brugte lang tid på at fremkalde, sortere, navngive og strukturere ferie billeder i fysiske fotoalbum, syntes den foretrukne fremgangsmåde nu at være at poste disse fotoalbum på Facebook, rejseblogs eller andre sociale medier – ofte allerede mens man er på ferie (Hjalager & Jensen, 2012).

Sammenlignet med tidligere tiders formidling af ferieminder der (med undtagelse af postkortet) krævede, at modtageren var klar til at modtage informationen, når aftageren ønskede at formidle den, åbner nutidens sociale medier op for en ny form for italesættelse af disse oplevelser, idet modtageren har mulighed for at modtage denne kommunikation, *når og hvor* det ønskes. Sammenlignet med 70ernes diasshows kan identitetskonstruktionen (eller selviscenesættelsen), der sker gennem formidling af ferieminder via sociale medier således ske på modtagerens initiativ og i højere grad på dennes betingelser, hvilket givetvis vil spille en rolle ift. det budskab der ønskes formidlet. Men ligegyldigt om den hjemvendte rejsendes 'showroom' er virtuelt eller ej, påpeger vores informanter, at dette 'rum' er centralt for deres kommunikation til betydende andre om, hvem de er og dermed bliver delingen af ferieminder centralt for deres sociale identitetskonstruktioner.

At anvende og skabe sammenhæng mellem identiteter:  
At 'være mig'

På trods af at ferierejser aktivt kan anvendes til konstruktion af multiple identiteter, er individet dog i udgangspunktet en enkelt og i sig selv fuldstændig og afgrænset enhed. Dette fremgår også at selve oprindelsen af ordet identitet; det latinske *idem*, der løseligt kan oversættes til 'den samme' og som dermed illustrerer, at selv om vi accepterer ideen om, at individet kan have multiple identiteter, så er studiet af identitet forankret i en interesse for dét ved individet, som, om end ikke altid, så dog i høj grad er 'det samme' (Ezzy, 1998; Gabriel & Lang, 2006). Som Giddens (1996) påpeger, er identiteten

ikke givet på forhånd, hvorfor individet kan konstruere, udforske og forme sin identitet (eller rettere identiteter) gennem hele livet, men der er grænser for, hvor mange og hvor forskellige identiteter, der kan sættes i spil for den enkelte uden at der opstår konflikter - eller endog identitetskriser. Men at fastholde at være 'den samme' på tværs af forskellige identiteter og roller *kan* være udfordrende og i det omfang valget af ferierejse er identitetskonstruerende kan det være problematisk at vælge netop dén (eller de) ferier, der korresponderer bedst med såvel personlig identitet som social identitet. Et eksempel på, hvordan overvejelser om forskellige identitetskonstruktioner kan komplicere det 'at være turist', er Ed (62-årig brite):

"In fact we find that it's good to have less and less information about places, because otherwise you get such a strong sense of the place almost before you're there and then you're either disappointed or they are different, and you lose any sense of surprise and that's an important part of it [...] Obviously, we wouldn't want to just go somewhere and do something silly and you come back and people will go, ohh didn't you go do such and such or didn't you go there ..." (Smed, 2009)

På basis af mangfoldige erfaringer med det at 'være turist', har Ed gradvis reduceret omfanget af hans informationsøgning – primært fordi det at vide meget, før man tager af sted (a) forøger forventningerne i en sådan grad, at de faktiske oplevelser har svært ved at indfri disse forventninger og (b) leder til konstruktion af mentale billeder af stedet, som ikke nødvendigvis korresponderer med, hvad stedet faktisk er. Men som det fremgår af den sidste del af citatet, så er Ed opmærksom på, at det at vælge at vide mindre (eller intet) om feriedestinationen, kan være i modstrid med, hvad der 'forventes' af en turist, og at han dermed risikerer både at gøre noget, der er 'dumt' og ikke få set, 'det man burde' – som defineret af ens medlemskaber af diverse grupper. Der er således normer forbundet med turistrollen som både vedrører, hvor man tager hen og hvad man ser (og især bør se). Udover disse sociale normer er der også en fare for, at valget af en bestemt ferierejse kan appellere til nogle identitetskonstruktioner samtidig med at det er i direkte modstrid med andre. Et eksempel på en ferierejse, som appellerer til den personlige



identitet samtidig med at den kolliderer med den sociale identitet er Linda (som er lesbisk) og de overvejelser hun giver udtryk for ift. at tage til Lesbos:

”Men jeg syntes lidt: Jeg tager bare aldrig til Lesbos, fordi så kan alle jo, ..., rode rundt i dét. Det er sgu da en kliche, hvis jeg tager til Lesbos, ikke?” (Blichfeldt et al, 2012)

Selvom Linda har et dybfølt ønske om at opleve Lesbos og samhørigheden med de andre gæster på denne ‘gay destination’, har hun konsekvent fravalgt netop denne rejse, fordi det vil være en ‘kliche’ at tage til Lesbos. Belk (1982:523) argumenterer for, at forbrugsvalg er så *“rich in implied and inferred meaning about the consumer making these choices”*, at netop disse meninger kan blive mere styrende for forbrugsvalget end hvad vi som forbrugere egentligt har mest lyst til. For Linda betyder dette, at hun fravælger at tage til Lesbos, fordi hun via dette forbrugsvalg risikerer negativ symbolværdi. Den kontinuerede (re)konstruktion af identitet som valg af ferierejser er forankret i bliver således også et spørgsmål om at undgå ferier der sender negative signaler til omverdenen – f.eks. når det er vigtigere for Linda ikke at fremstå som en ‘kliche’ end at tage på ferie der, hvor hun helst vil.

### Konklusion

Som eksemplificeret ovenfor, indeholder identitetskonstruerende forbrug af ferierejser en række elementer, som alle på forskellig vis bidrager til fortællingen om turisten. Turisten navigerer imellem multiple identiteter og trækker i den forbindelse på forskellige elementer relateret til konteksten, indenfor hvilken hver enkelt fortælling udspilles. Således spiller dynamik (så som ændrede opfattelser af selv, andre og ikke mindst den ferierejse, der italesættes) og sociale relationer (i form af anerkendelse fra betydende andre) en rolle i turistens fortællinger og de identitetskonstruktioner, som disse fortællinger relaterer sig til. Samtidigt forhandles identitet kontinuert i et forsøg på at skabe forståelse og sammenhæng i det store hele, om end dette tegner et kompleks billede af turistisk forbrug som identitetskonstruerende i en langt mere udbredt grad end hvad der ofte refereres til i turismelitteraturen.

## Referencer

- Belk, R., Mayer R. and Bahn K. (1982): "The eye of the beholder: Individual differences in perceptions of consumption symbolism", in *Consumer Research*, 9(1): 523-530
- Blichfeldt, B. S. (2007a): "A Nice Vacation: Variations in Experience Aspirations and Travel Careers", in *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, 13(2):149-164
- Blichfeldt, B. S., J. Chor, A. Therkelsen & N. B. Milan (2012): "I'm very straight in my gay life': A study of lesbian tourists". Manuscript not yet published
- Cohen E. (1972): "Towards a Sociology of International Tourism", in *Social Research*, 39:164-182
- Cohen, Eric (1979): A Phenomenology of Tourist Experiences. *Sociology*, 13(2), 179-201
- Cohen E. And N. Avieli (2004): "Food in Tourism – Attraction and Impediment", in *Annals of Tourism Research*, 31(4): 755-778
- Desforges, Luke (2000): "Traveling the World - Identity and Travel Biography" in *Annals of Tourism Research*, Vol. 27
- Ezzy, Douglas (1998): Theorizing narrative identity. *The Sociological Quarterly*, 39(2), 239-252
- Gabriel, Yiannis & Lang, Tim (2006): *The Unmanageable Consumer*. Second edition, Sage Publications Ltd., London
- Giddens, A. (1996): *Modernitet og selvidentitet*. Copenhagen: Hans Reitzel
- Hjalager, A.-M. (2004). "What do tourists eat and why?", in *Tourism*, 52(2):195-201
- Hjalager, Anne-Mette & Jan Møller Jensen (2012): A Typology of Travellers based on their Propensity to go Online before, during and after the Trip. I Fuchs, M., F. Ricci & L. Cantoni (Reds.): *Information and Communication Technologies in Tourism 2012*. Wien: Springer Verlag
- Hogg, M. & Abrams D. (1988): *Social Identifications: A Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations and Group Processes*. London: Routledge
- Jantzen C. & Østergaard P. (2000): "Shifting Perspectives in Consumer Research: From Buyer Behaviour to Consumption Studies", in Beckmann, Suzanne C. and Richard H. Elliott (editors). *Interpretive Consumer Research. Paradigms, Methodologies & Applications*, Handelshøjskolens Forlag, Copenhagen Business School Press

- Jenkins, R. (2008): *Social Identity*. Third Edition. London: Routledge
- Maffesoli, Michel (1996): *The Time of the Tribes. The Decline of Individualism in Mass Society*. Sage Publications
- Maslow, A. (1970): *Motivation and Personality*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. New York: Harper and Row
- McCracken, G. (1988): *Culture & Consumption*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press
- Munar, Ana Maria (2011): Tourist-created content: Rethinking destination branding. *International Journal of Culture, Tourism and Hospitality Research*, 5(3), 291-305
- Noy, Chaim (2004): "This trip really changed me - Backpackers' Narratives of Self-Change", in *Annals of Tourism Research*, vol. 31, No. 1
- Pearce, Philip L. & Calabiano, M. L. (1983): "Inferring Travel Motivation from Travellers' Experiences" in *Journal of Travel Research*, Vol. 22(2)
- Pearce, Philip L. (1988): *The Ulysses Factor: Evaluation Visitors in Tourist Settings*. New York, Springer Verlag
- Pearce, Philip L. & Lee, Uk-II (2005) : "Developing the travel Career Approach to Tourist Motivation" in *Journal of Travel Research*, Vol. 43
- Smed, Karina M. (2009): *Tourism & Identity - Accumulated tourist experience and travel career narratives in tourists' identity construction*, SPIRIT PhD Series, No. 23
- Ryan, C. (1998): The Travel Career Ladder: An Appraisal. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 25(4), 936-957
- Tajfel, Henri; Turner, John (1979): "An Integrative Theory of Intergroup Conflict", in Austin, William G.; Worchel, Stephen. *The Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations*, Monterey, CA: Brooks-Cole
- Vetner, Mikael & Jantzen, Christian (2007) "Oplevelsen som identitetsmæssig konstituent. Oplevelsens socialpsykologiske struktur" in Jantzen, Christian & Rasmussen, Tove Arendt (editors). *Oplevelsesøkonomi: vinkler på forbrug*. Aalborg: Aalborg Universitetsforlag

## Mødet med den systematiserede fremmedhed

En undersøgelse af guidebøgernes og museets gensidige formidlingsstruktur i den victorianske periode

*Rune Andersen*

*(f. 1974), ph.d. Center for Mellemøststudier ved Syddansk Universitet Odense. Har publiceret indenfor forskningsområderne 'epistemology and philosophy of tourism'. I øjeblikket involveret i et projekt om turismens topiklære. Er gæsterektor på dette nr. af Akademisk Kvarter.*

### Abstract

Artiklen undersøger formidlingsligheden mellem guidebog og det naturhistoriske museum i den victorianske periode. Det er argumentet at der i begge 'videns-institutioners' formidlingsstil ikke blot ligger en fremstilling, men også en fortolkning af 'det fremmede'. Dette argument knyttes til den svenske botaniker Carl Linné og hans taksonomisystem som metode for naturens forudsigelighed. Artiklen indeholder således også en kort skitsering af Linné og videnskabsrejsen som en historisk forudsætning for guidebogen og det naturhistoriske museum.

Forholdet mellem det, der almindeligvis benævnes 'den moderne guidebog' og naturmuseet, har nogle påfaldende strukturelle formidlingsligheder i den victorianske periode, og er i denne sammenhæng interessante ved deres latente ambition om at formidle ting, steder og information. I det følgende er det hensigten at påpege nogle af disse formidlingsligheder, dvs. hvordan guidebogen og museet som 'formidlingsinstitutioner' "taler" til modtageren og hvordan selve fremstillingsformen eller organiseringen af viden, både kan indebære en anvisning til og en fortolkning af det fremmede. Fremstillingsformen kædes sammen med den victorianske periodes videnskabelige orientering mod kulturel systematik med

udgangspunkt i Carl Linnés videnskabstaksonomi. Konkret centeres undersøgelsen om henholdsvis den britiske museumstradition og de første 'moderne guidebøger' til Egypten udgivet af publikationshusene Murray, Baedeker og Cook i årene mellem 1847 og 1897. Egypten var i midten af det 19. århundrede et af de første lande uden for Europa, som bl.a. i kraft af de koloniale interesser i landet muliggjorde, at en turistindustri kunne etableres. Med det udgangspunkt repræsenterer Egypten som turistdestination en markant anderledes og ny indsigtsskilde til fremmed kultur. Dog skal det pointeres at Egypten som geografisk afsæt ikke er afgørende for artiklens argument, da det er guidebogen som formidlingsidé, der sammen med museet er artiklens omdrejningspunkt. Artiklens idé formes ud fra argumentet om, at den pointerede formidlingslighed indgår i guidebøgerne og det naturhistoriske museum som en tilsyneladende passiv realisering, der som automatik konstituerer en underliggende resonansbund for erkendelsens forhold mellem det kendte og det ukendte. Hvor den guidelitterære formidling tekstuel assisterer turisten med henblik på stedlig og tidlig instruering, har det naturhistoriske museum en organisatorisk realisering, der rækker ud over tekstens beskrivende funktion. Det er argumentet, at begge institutioner tilstræber tidens videnskabelige standarder for objektiv vidensformidling, men at de indeholder en struktur, hvori fremstillingsformen får konsekvenser for mødet med det fremmede.

Det er en forudsætning for denne artikel, at guidebog og museum behandles som idéhistoriske konstruktioner, og dermed ikke omfatter empirinære sammenstillinger. Således har de 3 forskellige guidebøger små variationer i indhold (de kopierede hinanden ganske betragteligt), men med en næsten identisk fremstilling, fremhævelse og anvisning til den egyptiske fremmedhed. Guidebøgerne vil med udgangspunkt i artiklens specifikke ærinde blive behandlet som én 'videns-institution'.

### **Guidebogen – mellem videnskab og dannelse**

Indflydelsen fra rejselitteraturen har til alle tider været en betydelig kilde til information om det fremmede, og helt op i det 20. århundrede har rejserelateret litteratur hørt til den mest læste i Storbritannien (Waller, S.L.: Vol. 14. The Victorian Age, Part Two). Selve den victorianske periode markerer blandt briterne et naturvidenskabeligt og

imperialt højdepunkt, der basalt set var et resultat af en lang tradition af opdagelsesrejsende og videnskabs ekspeditioner. Herunder havde videnskabsrejsende kæmpet om retten til de store empiriske spørgsmål og bidraget betydeligt til den metafysiske ambition om at underlægge naturen gennem videnskaberne. De rejsende fik status af erfaringsvidenskaberens førstepersoner og bidrog dermed både til den nødvendige videnskabelige empiri og udfyldte samtidig de kartografiske tomrum.

Forholdet mellem rejse og videnskab får stor betydning for guidebøgerne i det 19. århundrede. Tidens største publikationshuse Murray, Beadeker og Cook benyttede og refererede til videnskabelige kendsgerninger og integrerede disse som en del af guidebøgerne informative og instruktive vejledninger. Guidebøgerne repræsenterer i denne periode et for publikationshusene seriøst forsøg på at præsentere et litterært anvisningsformat, i tråd med tidens videnskabelige dogmer. Dette rejse-/videnskabsforhold har forbindelser til oplysningstidens imperativ om, at vidensopnåelse skulle foregå i ufravigelig relation til rationalisme og natur. Blandt videnskaberne allerstørste overbevisninger havde den svenske læge og botaniker Carl Linné (1707-1778) udarbejdet en videnskabelig metode som revolutionerede videnskaberne fremefter. Metoden havde udgangspunkt i et deskriptivt klassifikationssystem, hvori alle verdens planter kunne karakteriseres i overensstemmelse med deres reproduktive ophav. Klassifikationssystemet der blot behøvede to navne, et slægtsnavn og et artsnavn, blev hurtigt målestok for alle levende væsner og gav dermed videnskaberne nye muligheder for at inkludere og ekskludere objekterne. Linné blev en af de mest citerede videnskabsmænd i Viktoriatiden og formulerede dermed grundlaget for hvordan viden skulle klassificeres og registreres i systemet af kendsgerninger. (Barber, 1980: s. 47) Den systematiserede viden og fremstillingen af det fremmede hang tæt sammen med den victorianske periodes videnskabsideal, der med Linnés taksonomiske metode havde åbnet for nye måder at organisere verden på. Forud for den Linnéske taksonomi var teoretisk botanik en kompliceret og uoverskuelig opgave. Der var udviklede navne til selv de mest almindelige arter, og kriterierne for at klassificere dem var en videnskab i sig selv.<sup>1</sup> Konkret havde Linnés kunststykke baggrund i samtidens sociale hierarki med dets kongeriger, provinser, sogne og landsbyer. Han indpassede planter og dyr i en ramme, der

bestod af fem hovedkategorier – rige, klasse, orden, slægt, art. Denne revolutionerende metodik og beherskelse af naturens tidligere så abstrakte og ubændige omfang blev kendt som det binomiale nomenklatursystem. (Warne, 2007: s. 105-111)

I det rejselitterære domæne fik videnskabsklassificering særlig indvirkning ved overgangen til oplysningstiden, hvor rejselitteraturen gennemgik en paradigmatisk forvandling fra maritim rejselitteratur, herunder eventyr og overlevelseslitteratur som det primære oplevelsesmoment, til en orientering mod en rejselitterær videnskabsdisciplin til forklaring af det europæiske menneskes væren i verden.<sup>2</sup> Oplysningstidens tendens til øget generering og ikke mindst øget organisering af viden havde bidraget til at omgærde indsamlingen af viden om det fremmede med øget respekt – i hvert fald så længe, at denne blev foretaget af folk med den rette socio-kulturelle pondus, og så længe den blev fremstillet i overensstemmelse med tidens præference for videnskabelig organisering. Enhver rejselitterær ytring var med andre ord en ytring i en bestemt rejsediskurs påhæftet bestemte genremæssige regler for acceptabilitet.

Turisten som den nye type af rejsende, blev en konkurrent til de tidligere så stolte rejsetraditioner og forrykkede rejsens grundlæggende idé om at være en original og dannelsesmæssig disciplin. Guidebogen var først og fremmest en del af turismens revolutionerende idé om at individuelle rejsende kunne orientere og navigere uden lokale guides (dragomen) og tjenestefolk. Den 'moderne guidebog' blev forenklet sagt den 'moderne turismes' instruktive vejledning, som indeholdte taksonomisk ordnede oplysninger om ting, steder og mennesker i overensstemmelsen mellem turistens præferencer og guidebogens oplysninger og anvisninger til opnåelse af disse præferencer. Med det udgangspunkt blev guidebogen, med sin oplysnings- og anvisningslogik, en betydelig autoritet i hvad, hvor og hvordan turisten systematisk så og oplevede destinationen.

### **Guidebogen til det fremmede**

Egypten (og til dels Palæstina) blev for den europæiske turist den første organiserede turistdestination uden for Europa (Brendon, 1991: s. 120), hvorunder de historiske og litterære forudsætninger som sagt havde deres oprindelse og tekstlige baggrund i rejsetra-

ditioner som videnskabsrejsen og The Grand Tour i mellem det 17. og 19. århundrede. Ud af disse traditioner fik især tre publikationshuse<sup>3</sup> – John Murray and Sons, Thomas Cook Ltd, og Karl Baedeker – helt afgørende indflydelse på guidebogslitteraturen om Egypten og den moderne turisme i det hele taget. På den baggrund grundlagdes turismen som ny rejseform i Egypten, og guidebogslitteraturen som dennes tekstuelle ytringsform udbredtes i Egypten i årene mellem 1847 og 1897. (Hazbun, 2008: s. 3, Towner, 1985: s. 297-333, Black, 2003: s. 7-11) Havde man med andre ord muligheden for at rejse til Egypten i denne periode, ville det være en selvfølge at søge sine informationer om landet i enten en John Murray's *Handbook for Travellers in Egypt*, en Cook's *tourists' handbook for Egypt*, eller en Baedeker *Egypt*. Denne selvfølge involverede og begrundedes i en helt ny økonomisk, politisk og teknologisk kontekst for social og kulturel mobilitet. I britisk sammenhæng medførte den industrielle revolution, at en ny middelklasse kunne finde både midlerne og fritiden til at rejse, og dermed bryde med tidligere tiders rejsetraditioner som en beskæftigelse kun forbeholdt videnskabsfolk og aristokrati. Skiftet fra en britisk rejsetradition forbeholdt de få til en demokratisering i rejseformen betød ligeledes et litterært og diskursivt skifte fra individuel narrativ til guidebog. Til forskel fra tidligere tiders rejsenarrativer henvendte den nye litteraturform sig til læseren med et imperativ om oplevelses- og erfaringsimitering. Heri lå en formidlingsstil, der navigerede mellem detaljerede oplysninger og anvisninger med henblik på et publikum, der ville se og gøre det samme som forfatteren. Formidlingen indbefattede med andre ord en i guidebogen særegen stilistisk karakter, der forudsatte eftergørelse på baggrund af allerede etablerede forestillinger og praksisformer.

Det repræsentative fællesskab mellem museum og guidebog ligger derfor også i den fælles tanke om bevarelse eller opretholdelse af nogle bestemte og forventede tegn-, typer-, fortællinger- og racegenkendeligheder. Et gennemgående træk ved guidebøgerne var det omfangsrige og detaljerede kapitel om Egyptens mennesketyper, præsenteret under overskriften *Manners and Customs*, der dækkede over en taksonomisk inddeling af de forskellige folkeslags karakteristika. Taksonomien inkluderede både fysiske og historiske sammenstillinger samt forklaringer af moralske og eksotiske særpræg understøttet af videnskabelige referencer eller udtalelser fra



tidens forskningsetablisement. Under *Manners and customs* overskriften fokuserede Cook eksempelvis på en blanding af moralske og civilisatoriske karaktertræk:

“The Towárahs earn a scanty livelihood by burning charcoal for the Cairo market, and the Alewi feed a few flocks of sheep or goats, and cultivate small patches of ground, but both are alike ignorant and careless of the advantages of civilized life. Yet they are apparently a cheerful, contented race, very much like the American Negroes in their simplicity, thoughtlessness, and good humour. Their bread is a coarse, dark, barley cake; their dwellings are simple, low tents made of goats’ hair, which shelter from rain, but in other respects are quite uncomfortable; hence, in cold weather, they resort, if possible, to caves.”(Cook, 1897: s. 303)

Mens Baedeker fremhævede en historisk taksonomi til pointering af folkeslagenes fysiske udvikling. Her eksempelvis egypteren med en historisk uændret natur.

“We start with the cardinal fact, that, although the country has been at various periods overrun by Hyksos, Ethiopians, Assyrians, (...) the Egyptians have for thousands of years retained the same unvarying physical types (...)”

Murrays guidebog anvendte *manners and customs* kategorien til at fremhæve og kombinere racernes taksonomi med samtidige repræsentationer af egyptisk hverdagsliv:

Nubiene “keep up a warlike spirit”. Tyrkere “(...) are as a rule handsome and dignified in appearance, and courteous in their manner to strangers, though haughty (...)” Armenterne “(...) are chiefly engaged in commerce and trades, especially as goldsmiths and jewellers and overbearing to the natives.” Jøderne blev beskrevet som “(...) remarkable in Egypt for their fair hair, blue eyes, and white skin, just as in Europe they are generally to be distinguished by opposite characteristics. The street money changers (*serdf*) in

the towns are Jews, and there are many wealthy merchants and shopkeepers, though the Jews' quarter is a poor, miserable-looking one, and they themselves are said to be dirty in person and unclean in their habits." Og europærene "(...) are an important and ever-increasing section of the population (...)" (Murray, 1888: s. 32-34)

Med den taksonomiske metode kunne guidebøgerne formidle komplekse geografiske og kulturelle problemstillinger i differentierede og let overskuelige kategorier. Overskueligheden medførte også at guidebøgerne til de forskellige kategorier og indeholdte karaktertræk kunne anvise turistene i, hvorledes denne skulle forholde sig til typerne. Cooks opfordrede således turistene til at være opmærksom på misforholdet mellem den forvrængede forestilling om beduinen og den virkelige oplevelse af beduinens sande karakter

"The people who live in the desert have always been a favorite subject of romance and poetry, but a very short experience is sufficient to dissipate youthful delusions. The Bedouins, at least such of them as are found between Egypt and Palestine, are of a very prosaic character; rude, ignorant, lazy, and greedy, they offer no points of attraction (...)" (Cook, 1897: s. 303-304)

Guidebogen virkede dermed som den rejsende amatørs primære tilgang til meningsfuld (og tidsforpligtet) navigering i og forståelsesramme til de fremmede kulturer. Guidebøgernes fornemmelse for at maksimere oplevelserne i tæt relation til den begrænsede fritid kombineret med de lavpraktiske vejledninger gjorde, at turistene kunne overskue og "beherske" mødet med destinationen både før og under rejsen. Det betød, at turistene gennem guidebogens anvisning til ruten og den herunder udspecificerede og sekvenserede tid kunne planlægge en indledende sortering af oplevelsernes og stedernes muligheder. Det var afgørende for guidebøgerne ikke at afvige fra tidens tilstræbte videnskabelige standarder, hvorunder viden både skulle fremstilles i en overskuelig og sammenlignelig taksonomi, samt formidles i en distanceret og passiv tone med respekt for videnskabens objektivitet. Talepositionen er vigtig i denne sammenhæng, da både guidebog og museum benytter en

formidlingsstil, der ikke umiddelbart refererer til et fortællersubjekt, men fremstår som neutrale formidlere, der har en implicit institutionel reference

Den guidelitterære udtryksform, i modsætning til rejselitteraturens, konstrueredes som en metode, hvori udsagn og ytringspositioner almindeligvis var adskilt fra hinanden, hvilket betød en diversificering i ytringsfunktioner. Det vil sige, at hvor rejselitteraturen havde et forfattersubjekt, der under normale omstændigheder fremstod som udgiver, var det for guidebogen selve udgiveren, der figurerede som producent og indholdsansvarlig. Selv i tilfælde hvor navnet på redaktøren var nævnt, blev dennes udsagn udtrykkeligt efterfulgt af udsagn, der adskilte ham fra tekstens samlede helhed. I modsætning til rejseberetningernes forenende funktion, der som regel blev udgjort af en første-person fortæller, var de ytringsmæssige kvaliteter præsenteret i guidebogen forbundet med en spredning af det talende subjekt (Behdad, 1994 : s. 40). Guidebogen indeholdt eller udgjorde, ud fra dette rationale, en diskurs, der ikke havde en centraliseret eller ensartet ytringsposition. (Behdad, 1994 : s. 41)

### Museet og den neutrale formidling

Som en del af det erkendelsesrum, det 19. århundredes turister navigerede i, var naturhistoriske museer og udstillinger en betydelig del af vinduet til det fremmede og det, som umiddelbart lå udenfor virkelighedens erkendelsesmuligheder. Museet som idé-mæssig institution til formidling af kendsgerninger om verden var således tæt forbundet til ideen om neutralitet og uberørt fremstilling eller konservering. Ideen indbefatter på den baggrund museet som et vindue for offentligheden til et sagligt indblik i det umiddelbart fremmede.

Et klassisk udgangspunkt for museumstraditionen indledes ofte med Medici familien, der var en af Europas rigeste familier mellem det 15. og 18. århundrede, og som regnes for at have været foregangsmand for det 16. århundredes undringskabinet/kuriositetskabinet (ty. *Wunderkammer* eng. *cabinet of curiosities*), der fungerede som et mikrokosmos eller erindringsteater over verden. Dette opstillede mikrokosmos kunne ligeledes formidle ejerens symbolske og magt over verden (Hunter, 2001: s. 217-229). Tanken bag den repræsenterede og organiserede "virkelighed" fuldendtes i 1671 med det første offentlige museum i Europa<sup>4</sup> – Amerbach

kabinetet – i Basel. Nu kunne man skabe overskuelige mikrouniverser og fremstille og formidle det, der almindeligvis lå uden for den almindelige borgers erkendelsesmuligheder. Herunder de zoologiske haver som geografisk organiserede steder, hvor fremmede dyr og planter fungerede som repræsentationer på de fremmede kulturer. I britisk sammenhæng blev The British Museum det første konkrete eksempel på et moderne offentligt museum, der afløste traditionen af kuriositetskabinetter som eksempelvis John Tradescants (1577-1638) The Ark og The Ashmolean Museum (1678-1683). The British Museum blev etableret i 1753 af videnskabsmanden Sir Hans Sloane og blev ifølge Museet selv "one of the finest in existence, spanning two million years of human history." ([www.britishmuseum.org](http://www.britishmuseum.org)) I parallel udvikling med briternes koloniale ekspansion oprettedes The Natural History Museum (etableret i 1881), der fungerede som én afdeling af The British Museum. Museet skulle omfatte de i tiden fem vigtigste områder: botanik, entomologi, mineralogi, palæontologi og zoologi og således disponere over de vigtigste grene af naturstudiet med speciale i Linnés taksonomi, identifikation og konservering. (Barber, 1980: s. 47-55) Den taksonomiske metode betød således, at det såkaldte kuriositetskabinet, hvor oplevelsens omdrejningspunkt primært var rettet mod den bizarre og eksorbitante del af udstillingen, nu blev afløst af en videnskabelig og stringent fremstilling orienteret mod genstandens naturhistoriske værdi. For videnskaben og den herefter følgende litteratur, indebar det en transformering i måden at organisere viden og dennes bearbejdning. Med baggrund i Linnés modus operandi fik det moderne museum den videnskabelige lødighed, der var afgørende for, at viden kunne organiseres og formidles uden synlig subjektivisme.

Den rejsende og museets organisering af viden skulle således heller ikke figurere eksplicit i museumsoplevelsen, men lade oplevelsen tale uforstyrret for sig selv gennem passiv formidling og implicit saglighed. Dermed intenderede oplevelsens konstruktion at diktere de indeholdte fakta i form af begivenheder, strukturer m.m., der forekom såvel plausible som relevante, og at disse blev bundet sammen af en fremstilling, der virkede neutral, men også overbevisende. Fremstillingsformen autoriserede således indholdets vægt og fylde ved at omgrænse det i sin overbevisende forklaringsmodel af 'fakta der taler for sig selv'. Fælles for disse ideer

var, at de ligesom guidebøgerne hvilede på den dobbelte betragtning, der på den ene side skulle tilgodese en overensstemmende og intim kontakt med det fremmede og eksotiske, og på den anden side en distanceret overskuelse og (be)gribelse af verden fremstillet som mikrokosmos. (Mitchell, 1991: s. 9) I denne formidlingsform transskriberedes museumsgængernes kunstneriske oplevelser som et kulturelt indblik i fremmede kulturers artefakter og historie indsat i en bestemt organisatorisk kontekstgenkendelse, som derved lod genkendelsen være afhængig af museets organisering og fremstilling af genstandens kontekstuelle modalitet. "Museums do not just gather valuable objects but make objects valuable by gathering them. The museum is able to produce cultural knowledge by organizing how the materials it authorizes are seen – by controlling the Gaze." (Casey, 2003: s. 2).

Med det rationale indebar organiseringen og fremstillingen en erkendelsesmæssig forvaltning, der med genstandens iboende henvisning til en original tilstand eller situation, repræsenterede en tankeproces mellem genstand og original henvisning, som transformerede et kulturelt rum til bevidsthed (Byrnes, 1994: s. 209). I denne henvisning – hvori det kulturelle rum besegledes med erkendelsens forbindelse til verden – struktureredes blikkets præindlejrede og imaginære normativitet, der kunne efterlade verden som genstand for genoplevelse. Museets organisering af det fremmede skulle fremstå som desubjektiveret forvalter af den indlysende sandhed og virkelighed, som syntes at være det uundgåelige resultat af de rejsendes tilbundsgående og lødige afdækning af et område. Med videnskabsidealet på den ene side og ideen om at skildre og formidle kontakten med det fremmede på den anden side, var det afgørende både at imødesæ behovet for distanceret objektivitet og at skabe intim interaktion med emnet. "Such shows were celebrated in their own day as substitutes for travel that might be even better than actually going to the place depicted." (Kirschenblatt-Gimblett, 1998: s. 133). De scenariske detaljer skulle dermed lanceres gennem dobbeltbehovet for både (be)gribelsen hvorigennem det repræsenterede skulle have en så tæt lighed med originalen, at publikum kunne fornemme den nærgående virkelighed, men samtidig imødegås af *overskuelsen* således at publikum kunne beherske indfangelsens distance til den perciperede kontekst.

### Den a posterioriske fremmedhed

Det fremmede som a posteriorisk erfaring er øjensynligt et syntaktisk og erkendelsesmæssigt paradoks, da det fremmede repræsenterer det ukendte og dermed ikke kan være erfaringsmæssigt genkendeligt. Denne paradoksale forudsætning er ikke desto mindre et oplevelses- og erfaringsvilkår i mødet med det "ukendte" (destinationen/museet). Mødet med det "ukendte" erkendes a posteriorisk, dvs. (Kantiansk inspireret) ikke direkte gennem sanserne, men indirekte, ved at turistene drager slutninger af sanseindtrykkene ud fra sine almene begreber og viden (Kant, 1770: Paragraf 10,12 og 13). Her udspilles turistens perception af den æstetiske og kulturelle oplevelse inden for et taksonomisk mulighedsspektrum understøttet af en apriorisk struktur. (Bundgård, 2004: s. 29) Fremmedheden er dermed anlagt og udlagt imellem en tekstuel og organisatorisk iscenesættelse af det turistiske sted og rum, taksonomiseret og organiseret efter et hierarki af kulturel betydning (Duncan et al., 1999: s. 116). Hermed antydes en forklaringsramme, hvor guidebogen og museet som tekstuel og organisatorisk omdrejningspunkt konstruerer et særligt kulturelt blik, der henter deres fremstillings- og anvisningslogik i den samme erkendelsesmæssige struktur. Denne struktur tilkendes gives i de etablerede forestillinger og praksisformer, der både har en stilistisk implicithed i guidebogens informative og instruktive dialektik og fremmedheden i sin musealiserede form, der leder til den antagede og forventede forestilling fra turistens side om den i teksten etablerede fremmedhed. Der bliver med andre ord en organisatorisk medbestemmelse på turistens og museumsgængerens præindlejrede mulighedsspektrum og derved en erkendelsesmæssig afgrænsning, der rummer en "kulturel normalisering". Figuren eller genstanden er meningsgivende, når fortolkningen af det visuelle sanseindtryk er organiseret i forhold til den taksonomiske genkendelighed, som indeholdes i guidebogens og museets formidlingsstruktur. Det vil sige, at det ukendte genkendes eller identificeres med en kendt struktur; kausaliteten er i ledtog med en før-prædikativ givethed der både forholder sig til det vi kender på forhånd, men også lader de fremadskuende typologiske forbindelser, være erindringens givethed (Frye, 1982: s. 141). Maffesoli kalder denne meningsetablering for en dialektik mellem det dagligdags og det arketyperiske (Maffesoli, 2004: s. 206). Der antydes med andre ord en meningskausalitet, som forløber på

to niveauer som en ramme i en ramme, der på den ene side muliggør en med-givet egenefaring af den perciperede rum og tid, men som på den anden side trækker på det litteraturteoretiker Hans Lauge Hansen kalder en *ydreverdensreferens*.

Kombinationen af de koloniale og rejsende aktørers hjemførelse af kulturgenstande og museernes bekræftende fremstilling, mobiliserede sammen med guidebøgernes særlige anvisningsform til kulturens forholdsmæssigheder, en effektiv og gensidig validering af det fremmedes konstitution. Herunder blev de autoritative betragtninger organiseret som bevis for generelle forklaringer af eksempelvis et steds historie, mens mennesker parallelt blev forklaret gennem referencer til taksonomisk inddelte kultur- og civilisationsstader. Den kulturelle og normative identifikation var i det lys i tæt kontakt med både naturmuseets og guidelitteraturens taksonomiske fremstillinger af den kulturelle fremmedhed. Således kunne sted og rum præsenteres og udstilles for erkendelsen gennem referencer til objekter, mennesker eller oplevelser indsat i guidbogens eller museets generelle genkendelses- og tolkningskemaer.

### Noter

- 1 Kennedy Warne påpeger eksempelvis at tomaten før Linné blev benævnt ” (...) Solanum caule inermi herbaceo, foliis pinnatis incisae—the solanum with the smooth stem which is herbaceous and has incised pinnate leaves.”WARNE, K. 2007. Organization Man. *Smithsonian*, 38, 105-111.
- 2 Her markerede særligt to rejse- og litteraturretninger sig: den videnskabsste-matiserede rejse (scientific travelling) og dannelsesrejsen (The Grand Tour). Videnskabsrejsen er ofte blevet eksemplificeret i den historiske litteratur, som et fænomen der opstår som en naturlig del af den europæiske oplysningstid mens dannelsesrejsen under overfladen fremstod som et elitært dannelsesproj-ekt domineret af velstående briter, som ganske vist på makroplan søgte efter ny viden, men som på mikroplan i langt højere grad dyrkede opdagelsen som aristokratisk sport.
- 3 Ved siden af disse 3 indflydelsesrige guidebogsudgivere var der eksempelvis George Frederick Cruchley en britisk udgiver, kortsælger og boghandler der i ca 1840 tilbød (blandt mange andre guidebøger) en *Guide to the Levant* og *Handbook to the East*. Det er dog uklart om Cruchley selv har rejst de steder han skriver om. VAUGHAN, J. E. 1974. *The English guide book, c. 1780-1870: an illustrated history*, David & Charles (Newton Abbot Eng and North Pomfret, Vt)., side 40. Af andre varianter var der kristent motiverede og organiserede

rejser der benyttede deres egne vejledninger til sted og seværdighed. Et andet eksempel er Gaze & Son der også havde små ekspeditioner til Mellemøsten

4 I denne afgrænsning er der bevidst differentieret mellem museet i dets nuværende form og den græske variant (Mouseion) fra 283 f.Kr. der i højre grad havde form af et bibliotek. LIDDELL, H. G. E. A. 1996. *Greek-English Lexicon*, Oxford Oxford University Press.

## Referencer

- Barber, L. 1980. *The heyday of natural history 1820-1870*.
- Behdad, A. 1994 *Belated travelers: orientalism in the age of colonial dissolution*, Durham & London, Duke University Press.
- Blach, J. 2003. *The British Abroad: The Grand Tour In The Eighteenth Century*, Gloucestershire, Sutton Publishing Limited.
- Brendon, P. 1991. *Thomas Cook: 150 years of popular tourism*, Secker (Martin) & Warburg Ltd.
- Bundgård, P. F. 2004. *Kunst - semiotiske beskrivelser af æstetisk betydning og oplevelse*, s.l., P.Hasse & Søns Forlag AS.
- Byrnes, G. M. 1994. *The Imperfect Authority of the Eye*, University of Michigan Press.
- Casey, V. 2003. The museum effect: gazing from object to performance in the contemporary cultural-history museum. *Archives & Museum Informatics*.
- Cook, T. 1897. *Cook's tourists' handbook for Egypt, the Nile, and the Desert*, London, Thomas Cook & son.
- Duncan, J. S., GREGORY, D. & MYLIBRARY 1999. *Writes of passage: reading travel writing*, Routledge London.
- Frye, N. 1982. *Den store kode*, Århus, Aros.
- Hall, S. 1997. *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, London, Sage Publications Ltd.
- Hazbun, W. 2008. *Beaches, Ruins, Resorts The politics of Tourism in the Arab World*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press.
- Hunter, M. 2001. *The cabinet institutionalized: the Royal Society's 'Repository' and its background*, London, House of Stratus.
- Jensen, L. B. 2010. *Stemning som æstetisk og eksistentiel kategori i følsomme rejser fra 1768 til 1868, med særligt henblik på poetik og bystemninger og med hovedvægt på H.C.Andersen Odense, Odense SDU*.
- Kant, I. 1770. *Dissertation on the Form and Principles of the Sensible and the form of the intelligible world* s.l., s.l.



- Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, B. 1998. *Destination culture: Tourism, museums, and heritage*, Univ of California Pr.
- Liddell, H. G. E. A. 1996. *Greek-English Lexicon*, Oxford Oxford University Press.
- Maffesoli, M. 2004. Everyday Tragedy and Creation. *Cultural Studies*, Vol. 18, 201-210.
- Marshall, P. J. W., G. 1982. *The Great Map of Mankind: British Perceptions of the World in the Age of Enlightenment*, London, J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd.
- Mitchell, T. 1991. *Colonising Egypt*, London, Cambridge University Press.
- Murray, J. 1888. *A handbook for travellers in lower and upper Egypt*, John Murray.
- Shapin, S. 1995. *A Social History of Truth*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press.
- Stagl, J. 1995. *A history of curiosity: the theory of travel 1550-1800*, Chur, Harwood Academic Publishers.
- Towner, J. 1985. The grand tour: A key phase in the history of tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research*, Volume 12, 297-333.
- Vaughan, J. E. 1974. *The English guide book, c. 1780-1870: an illustrated history*, David & Charles (Newton Abbot Eng and North Pomfret, Vt).
- Waller, A. W. W. A. R. S.L. The Literature of Travel, 1700–1900. In: WALLER., A. W. W. A. R. (ed.) *The Cambridge History of English and American Literature Vol 1-18*. New York: Putnam.
- Warne, K. 2007. Organization Man. *Smithsonian*, 38, 105-111.
- [www.britishmuseum.org](http://www.britishmuseum.org). Available: [http://www.britishmuseum.org/the\\_museum/about\\_us.aspx](http://www.britishmuseum.org/the_museum/about_us.aspx) [Accessed 31. december 2012].

## Middle Class America in Africa

### Paul Theroux and American Perspectives on Postcolonial Africa

**Thomas F. Halloran**

*Dr. Thomas F. Halloran is Assistant Professor of English and Chair of Liberal Arts at Marian Court College in Massachusetts. He is the author of James Joyce: Developing Irish Identity (2009) and many articles in the areas of Irish Studies, postcolonial theory, and American expatriate writing. This article is a part of a larger study titled Strangers in the Postcolonial World.*

This paper studies the American perception of a lack of modernity in the postcolonial world. As usual, the lack of modernity allows for an idealized, romanticized vision of a simpler life without the ugliness of modern, Western life. A large aspect of Theroux's thesis concerns the need for Africa to "return" to its "traditional" ways, as a simple land, and cast-off the failed attempt at colonial modernization enforced by the Europeans. As a travelogue, Theroux is also a tourist. Therefore, this work returns to the typical motif of the search for authenticity. Here I investigate Theroux's approach to "finding" the real Africa as well as how his Africa is shaped by the experience he wants to find. Thinking himself apart from the mechanisms and history of the white man in Africa, Theroux speculates on the legacy of colonialism in the nations he visits. Customary colonial motifs of white superiority, African lack of technical know-how, and Africa's lack of culture arise. Theroux describes how Africans commit atrocities and oppress their own people in crueler ways than Europeans ever had. However, Theroux's criticism also extends to the present day European and American presence in Africa.

Paul Theroux's perspective as a privileged, middle-class, white American seems to oscillate from being racist to ignorant to brutally honest.<sup>1</sup> *Dark Star Safari* (2002) depicts his journey by land from Egypt to South Africa<sup>2</sup>. It is important to note that Theroux's trave-

logue follows a long line of European travel writing in Africa including works such as A. Cornwall Harri's *Ethiopian Travels: The Highlands of Ethiopia Described of 1844*, H. Clapperton's *Journal of a Second Expedition into the Interior of Africa* (1829), Richard and John Lander's *Journal to Explore the Course and Termination of the Niger* (1830), Mungo Park's *Travels in the Interior Districts of Africa* (1860), and Dr. Livingstone's *Travels and Researches* (1857). Thus Theroux enters a well-beaten path of white explorers and adventurers. While his observations are often shaped (with or without acknowledging his predecessors) by previous generations of Europeans, Theroux's American perspective on contemporary Africa provides a window into how Americans both emulate European colonialist traits and diverge to offer fresh insights.

Theroux is a professional travel writer who chooses Africa as a means of vicariously maximizing shock value and discomfort for his American middle-class readers' sensibilities and values. His mood upon embarking on this particular expedition and his wish to encounter the unpleasant African experience must be remembered in comparison to what Theroux finds. In other words, his desire to find the stereotypical Western representation of impoverished, backwards, and ruthless Africa is a *fait accompli*. Theroux begins his journey with this thought:

[I]n my usual traveling mood: hoping for the picturesque, expecting misery, braced for the appalling. Happiness was unthinkable, for although happiness is desirable, it is a banal subject for travel. Therefore, Africa seemed perfect for a long journey. (Theroux, 2002, p. 5)

From this opening statement, Africa is the ideal subject for misery. It is his objective to find wretchedness, the appalling, and the picturesque in Africa. However, this project is not only about shock value.

Theroux assumes that one travels to escape. Furthermore, the only reason anyone from the West would want to travel through Africa is to experience the most extreme end of escapism. It is a place without phones, answering machines, and the other "homebound writer's irritants" (p. 3). Theroux imagines that Africa means total isolation for a Westerner. This is not just escape from personal relationships and responsibilities in the United States; it is more impor-

tantly, the possibility of escaping modernity. For Theroux, Africa is a backward continent that has never developed the infrastructure to allow modernity. On this premise, Theroux posits that Africa's backwardness is its strength because it can serve as a foil to the modern West, a line of argument not far removed from Ernest Renan and Matthew Arnold's conception of Ireland's role as a feminine counterbalance to masculine England.<sup>3</sup> Theroux posits that Africa offers Westerners a vision into the primitive nature of man and allows the modern man to see his origins, as the "markets in Africa show us how we once lived and traded" (p. 62). Although the African city in Theroux's opinion may be desperate, sad, and violent, it offers a portal for Westerners to experience medieval Europe:

I was reminded again that medieval cities were all like this. African cities recapitulate the sort of street life that had vanished from European cities a motley liveliness that lends color and vitality to old folktales and much of early English literature. (p. 178)

Yet despite this preservation of medieval conditions and atmosphere, the urban African cityscape is the "nastiest" in the world; therefore, the African city, or the "snake pit," could only be appreciated by misguided foreigners who fail to understand how mistaken it is to mix urbanization and Africa (p.255). These foreigners are most likely unaware of the "simpler, happier bush" that Theroux remembers from his days in the Peace Corps (p. 188). One of the central arguments of *Dark Star Safari* is the necessity of encouraging "traditional" and "authentic" African modes of life, in other words, the mud huts and subsistence farming of Theroux's rural imaginings while simultaneously discouraging Western influence and aid which leads to modernization and urbanization.

Theroux continually looks for examples of how efforts to modernize Africa are failures. For example, when he stumbles across the ruins of an unused, modern style, German built housing complex in Harar, Ethiopia, Theroux deduces that its failure is due to the locals' desire to live in mud huts (p. 113).<sup>4</sup> However, this ruined site allows for speculation that such backwardness is the reason that Westerners like Arthur Rimbaud love Africa. Theroux imagines and contemplates on Africa as a foil for the West:

[Rimbaud] had liked Africa for being the anti-Europe, the anti-West, which it is, sometimes defiantly, sometimes lazily. I liked it for those reasons, too, for there was nothing of home here. Being in Africa was like being on a dark star. (p. 117)

In this quote, Theroux uses the most fundamental type of binary logic: Africa is that which is not Western and not modern.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, to travel to Africa is to escape modernity. Furthermore, the West is Earth, and Africa is extraterrestrial, the West is white, and Africa is dark. A whole host of other positions are signified in this statement revolving around darkness, the unknowable, strangeness, and backwardness.

The search for the authentic local experience is a familiar theme in travel literature in general as well as an easily recognized goal of anyone who has been a tourist. Guidebooks promise to help us find the non-touristy activities that are “off the beaten path” so that we may experience something deeper and more meaningful than what the overtly orchestrated tourism industry provides. Yet no matter how self-satisfying it may be to eat in a neighborhood restaurant, to find a beach without other tourists, or to form a bond with a local, tourists enter a power dynamic that orders their relationship with the local community. Nevertheless, Theroux is delighted by a local dance performance that he deems to be authentic because, “[T]his was not a spectacle put on for photographers and tourists but rather a weekly rite, done for the pure joy of it” (p. 68). The distinction between an inauthentic spectacle and an authentic performance seems tenuous, as the authenticity in this construction seems measured by the level of inaccessibility to the tourist. Theroux is equally aware and annoyed when his position as tourist is obvious, in other words, when the power structure is most visible. He complains when people in the service industry smile at him, clearly expecting a tip (p. 46). Interaction between the tourist and the local equates to the same power play involved in the service industry as a whole in any country. The local is expected to play the role of the authentic host, a play wherein the tourist/guest is meant to provide some form of compensation. Yet tourists desire to feel as though there is not actually a service being provided, that their experience is an “authentic” interaction between cultures.

When the reality of the tourist/service industry becomes too visible for Theroux, he demonstrates his frustration by expressing his disappointment. For example, Theroux confirms his dissatisfaction when stuck in the resort town, Hurgada, because it is so alien to his notions of Africa. Although this resort manager begs him to relax, Theroux replies, "I don't want to relax. If I wanted to relax, I would not have come to Africa" (p. 51). The "real" Africa for Theroux cannot be experienced while sitting comfortably on the beach; no matter how "real" this experience might actually be, the real Africa cannot be relaxing. Theroux's search for the authentic is in juxtaposition to his tendency to also seek out the familiar. That is to say, Theroux desires the non-touristed dangerous zones and also the "backwards" Africa of his fantasies which he associates with authenticity.

Towards the conclusion of his journey, Theroux attempts to describe the tourism rapport between South Africa and Mozambique using an analogy about how Americans visit Mexico. This analogy assumes that his American readers interpret Mexico as a colorful and exotic playground where the dollar goes far in everything from food to merchandise to sex. Theroux writes the following:

South Africans went to Mozambique for some of the reasons Americans went to Mexico: for "color" and a whiff of the gutter and the slum; for cheap eats, fresh tiger prawns especially; for "the real Africa," authenticity, and ugly knickknacks, also for snorkeling and swimming and whoring. (p.420)

Although the phrasing of this excerpt might seem to indicate an awareness of the essentialism and gross characterizations that such an analogy creates, further review problematizes such a sympathetic reading. By putting color in quotation marks, Theroux seems to be drawing attention to the shallowness of such a search; however, much of his travelogue has been a search for authentic local color. Therefore, this statement reads more like a condemnation of the South African tourist's bad taste in local color than a condemnation of the tourist's search for color itself. According to Jonathan Culler:

The distinction between the authentic and the inauthentic, the natural and the touristy, is a powerful semiotic opera-

tor within tourism. The idea of seeing the real Spain, the real Jamaica, something unspoiled, how the natives really work or live, is a major touristic topos, essential to the structure of tourism. (p.159)

Unintentionally it seems, Theroux acknowledges the tourist's search for the "real" or "authentic" while simultaneously failing to recognize the touristic nature of his own search for the "real Africa." As Culler explains, the problem for tourists "is to find an 'unspoiled' place, an attraction that has not attracted tourists or become encrusted with renown" (p.163). Theroux haughtily critiques the tourist (American or South African) while distinguishing himself as a traveler who seeks out the authentic places. Not only does this distinction tie Theroux's mission to the exploits of European colonists before him, but it also makes his own quest for authenticity seem all the more quixotic.

In a similar vein, Theroux highlights the concept of "the real Africa," but he critiques the South African vision of Mozambique, not the premise that there exists something that is the "real Africa." Furthermore, this quotation highlights the assumptions that Theroux makes about his audience, namely that he is speaking to an American, middle-class, and male reader who can appreciate the pleasures that the gutter, the slum, the consumable object, the recreational activities, and the women a poor country can offer. Theroux assumes his audience views Mexico and Africa as playgrounds for Western desires.

In terms of finding the authentic and the familiar in Africa, we must also consider the phenomenon of finding what we look for. The first sentence of *Dark Star Safari* announces, "All news out of Africa is bad. It made me want to go there, through the horror, the hot spots, the massacre- and earthquake stories you read in the newspaper; I wanted the pleasure of being in Africa again" (p. 1). From the perspective of the American reader, the first, most logical interpretation is that Theroux implies that the pleasure of Africa exists in finding the "real" Africa, a joyous and pleasurable continent that exists behind the myth of misery and terror depicted in the mainstream U.S. media. However, such a naïve perspective could perhaps suggest that Africa's problems are relatively minor compared to the everyday joy of spending time there. What be-

comes increasingly clear throughout the narrative is that the misery and the terror constitute the pleasure of being in Africa. Theroux confirms this reading as he summarizes his experience upon re-entry to the States after all of his possessions were stolen from a hotel and he is sick from food eaten in Ethiopia on the way home. He writes, "I arrived home Africanized—robbed and diseased" (p. 472). The shock of such a statement is muted by the knowledge that this was exactly the African experience he wanted.

Imagining himself to be a completely independent and objective reporter, Theroux describes how decolonization has been unsuccessful, and how Europe has failed Africa. Yet despite these judgments of African and European failure, Theroux never allows for any American culpability. On one level, Theroux notes how colonization continues to shape Africa by observing the way that Africans interact with outsiders. He finds that the former colonizers are still present, continuing to create problems; for example, he notes that the French soldiers in Djibouti have a reputation for exploiting child prostitution (p. 93). Regardless of the validity of such a claim, putting the animosity against whites on the French helps explain the hostile reception that Theroux often receives. In Harar, the people scream "foreigner" at Theroux and try to spit on him. Theroux explains that the foreigner is considered unlucky and unsafe, no doubt as a result of the European colonial legacy (p. 104). Strangely, as a means of clarifying such a treatment Theroux writes, "Since aloneness is the human condition, a stark example of the perfect stranger was the white man in black Africa, alone in his post, the odd man out" (p. 106). Theroux actually does not make specific reference to colonialism but instead implies that it is the difference between races that actually explains the hostile African reception. By portraying the hostile reception as a racially motivated prejudice, Theroux denigrates Africans as bigots without allowing for the logical explanation that his presence is something of a reminder of the "white man in black Africa" working his "post" as a colonizer, be it a lonely job or not.

While in Sudan, following President Clinton's bombing of the country, Theroux finds himself participating in a conversation between Western diplomats who are recounting various horror stories about Africa (p. 16). When one of the speakers proclaims that Africa is returning to a pre-colonial state (read pre-modern and



forsaking the gifts of colonization), Theroux offers this judgment of the situation:

This was a crudely coded sway of saying that Africans were reverting to savagery. Yet in another respect what he was saying was true. After a spell of being familiar and promising, Africa had slipped into a stereotype of itself: starving people in a blighted land governed by tyrants, rumors of unspeakable atrocities, despair and darkness. (p. 17)

Missing from this assessment is one evident detail; the Western perspective spins the story on Africa to reflect the stereotype. Yet Theroux's firsthand experience makes his anecdotal argument persuasive. Using race as the primary marker to discuss the differences between Africa and the West allows Theroux to make many inflammatory statements about failures of African civilization. While Theroux may be presenting a bold perspective on Africa that shocks his more liberal readers used to a more colorful, sugarcoated picture of rural bliss and exotic African people, he also replicates those same news stories he mentions in the opening, the backwards, violent chaos that is the inverse stereotype of Africa. Whether choosing to dig beneath the surface of the idealistic Africa or the Western media's portrayal of Africa as hell on earth, Theroux ultimately arrives at a conclusion that supports one of the extreme stereotypes about the continent.

In line with colonial era stereotypes, and justifications for colonialism, Theroux describes whites as being technically superior to Africans. Occasionally this position is expressed through brief asides; such as a lament for the uncompleted colonial railway lines that could have done so much for Africa if only revolution had not come so soon (p. 97). On a more personal level, he notes how the white British men that offer him a ride are far more proficient at fixing a blown tire than the Africans: "Mick and Abel jacked up the truck, Ben supervising. The tire was changed in half an hour. This speed was in great contrast to the cackhanded incompetence shown by Mustafa and his men the day before" (p. 161-2). However, these brief observations are less pronounced than specific cases of management and organization that Theroux uses to present an image of

black Africa as backwards. While visiting a white Zimbabwean farm, he admires the efficiency and organization of such an operation, which is clearly a pointed jab at the other locations he visited during the trip. Making this case even more directly, Theroux visits one of the black squatters on this white farmer's land. He finds the black man to be buffoonish and ridiculous (p. 369). By describing the plight of Zimbabwe's white farmers with such stark contrasts as this particular example of the efficient and sensible white compared to the unreasonable and foolish black squatter, Theroux achieves his effect of demonstrating black Africa's inability to organize and govern. He further strengthens this claim by giving voice to a group of white émigrés from Zimbabwe: these disposed farmers argue for a return to a white government for the sake of organization and economy (p. 385). Although this minority opinion might be useful in the larger debate, Theroux juxtaposes their argument along images of massacre and chaos in Zimbabwe since Robert Mugabe's takeover. For instance, in Cape Town Theroux makes detailed note of the rare book *Volksmoord/Genocide* a grizzly collection of crime photography from the farms where whites have been killed, often in barbaric ways (p. 461). Yet why go to such lengths to promote such a work in this context if not to reaffirm his racial bias against black African civilization? Theroux seems to argue that postcolonial Africa has suffered at the hands of Black leadership. However, on occasion, Theroux's attitude towards race is more complicated. His criticism of Zimbabwe's black government contains a gesture towards some sort of greater awareness:

Mugabe spent a great deal of time attacking whites and trying to make Zimbabwe's failure into a racial issue, but in fact black Zimbabweans accounted for most of the victims of human rights abuse — the government-sanctioned torture and murder, the electric shocks and beatings in police stations. (p. 480)

In this case, Theroux attempts to reaffirm his point that whites have been discriminated against in Zimbabwe while also highlighting how blacks have suffered the majority of Zimbabwe's ills if for no other reason than because they are the majority. While such a stance seems to indicate sympathy for the whole of Zimba-

bwe, Theroux's larger claim is that the black government is cruel and backwards<sup>6</sup>.

Furthermore, Theroux carefully details the examples of African cruelty as a means of pointing out just how far African civilization has slipped without the guidance of colonial masters. While in South Africa, Theroux makes a pilgrimage, against the advice of all the locals, to visit the squatter camp where a young American Stanford graduate was killed by an angry mob because of her race (p. 455)<sup>7</sup>. As is often the case in *Dark Star Safari*, this anecdote taken individually evokes no suspicion. However, when presented in the company of so many other examples of African cruelty, this story seems like an inflammatory comment on the oppression of whites in Africa. Later while aboard a train that passes through a South African squatter camp, he notes how stones are thrown at him when he refuses to pass food out the window (p. 469). While I do not wish to debate the validity of this experience nor deny that a white person might experience such situations, I do wish to draw attention to Theroux's problematic, one-sided representation of the events and his ordering of these experiences which create an overall impression of Africa as barbaric.

When Theroux finds his own novel, *Jungle Lovers*, on the banned book list in Malawi, he explains that Malawi bans the works that would be the classics of "any enlightened country" (p. 315). Although this comment is directed at a government that denies access to Western classics, Theroux is equally critical of common individuals as well. He describes in detail the ignorance of a boatman who believes that the Indian merchants get their wealth by taking the hearts of black virgin girls and using them to pull in fish that are full of diamonds (p. 344). While these descriptions may be made in a comic fashion, Theroux presents these events as truthful depictions of his actual experience. By giving voice to the strain of sub-Saharan indophobia, Theroux is exposing an ugly consequence of postcolonialism. Colonialism engenders racism, but Theroux chooses to mock the "backwardness" of these views rather than draw attention to the colonial condition that created this hostility. Indians immigrated to Africa to perform clerical, administrative, and banking work for the British Empire; however, independence movements often lumped these Indians together as "others," "exploiters," or "collaborators" with the British. While this case played

out most dramatically in Idi Amin's Uganda resulting in a massive deportation of Indians, the lingering aftereffects of British colonial prejudice that circulated in response to the Indian Rebellion of 1857 and ensuing years of struggle for independence trickled down to affect common citizens like the boatman<sup>8</sup>. Again, I do not deny the validity of these encounters, or the existence of those sentiments, but their presentation lends credence to the stereotype of Africa as backwards. By drawing attention to a well-known source of racial tension in Africa (in this case postcolonial intolerance towards Indians), Theroux supports his thesis that Africa is backwards.

Not only are Africans described as technically inferior, but they are also presented as beastly. One bus ride causes Theroux to remark on the bad smell of the local people (p. 275). But despite such basic sensory insults, Theroux insinuates something more sinister when he is sick. He writes that "Africans who seemed to understand that I was weak pursued me, the way predators harry slower or uncertain prey animals, and they demanded money, as though knowing that I was too weak to refuse them" (p. 329). This example is only one instance when Theroux likens Africans to predatory animals. His notions hark back to the early colonial impressions of Africa, where rather than noble savages, Africans were recast as plain savages or beasts paving the way for the "White Man's Burden," the moral imperative to colonize and proselytize. In describing the locals as beastly, Theroux also lingers dangerously close to the justifications for slavery: reminding one of the anthropological and physiological studies and application of social Darwinism that buttressed the slave trade. Later, when he gives in to his desire to visit the protected big game parks (no matter how touristy they may be) he consoles himself with the following:

The most dangerous creatures I had seen so far in Africa had been the shifta bandits firing their rifles over the truck I was riding in just north of Marsabit: wild men. The most exotic were the Ugandan hookers in their nighttime plumage, hissing at me from the roadside trees in Kampala: wild women. (p. 404)

Here Theroux is conflating the local people with the exotic animals. This description paints Africans as more dangerous than the

continent's exotic animals while simultaneously dehumanizing the people. Theroux continues on this topic when describing his comfort and safety during a ride through the countryside in a truck carrying cattle. Although physically uncomfortable, Theroux relays how his mind is at rest since the life of cattle is worth more than African human life. He assumes the driver will likely be extra careful thereby insuring his personal safety (p. 154). Again, this point confirms Theroux's low opinion of African civilization and humanity while also demonstrating his regurgitation of older colonial era stereotypes about Africans. By presenting these encounters as fresh evidence of African life from his "unbiased" American perspective, Theroux entices his readers to relearn the colonial stereotypes about Africa.

Echoing the observations of other postcolonial writers from Graham Greene to V.S. Naipual, Theroux observes how Africans have become worse oppressors than their European colonizers<sup>9</sup>. Yet ironically, Theroux delights in the colonialist lifestyle. He comments on how he feels like a real Orientalist while sitting beside the pyramids at night (p. 81). Later when he catches up with an old British civil servant, who he admires for the man's good motives, Theroux imagines that he might like to retire to Africa to run a school if not for what people back in America would say about him (p. 289). This daydream seems particularly troubling based upon his overall condemnation of international aid. However, the most worrying example involves Theroux's meeting with a South African who runs a farm in rural Mozambique. In this encounter, the South African asks, "are those your chaps?" when Theroux buys his guides some soda. Theroux interprets this question in colonial terms: "It was a significant question, the moment when one muzungu sized up another's workers. 'My Africans are better than your Africans' was a serious colonial boast [...]" (p. 342-3). It is unclear why Theroux would choose this particular interpretation; however, this example clearly demonstrates that Theroux views his guides as subservient and himself as a colonial master.

Further condemning African civilization, Theroux's perceives the African elite as unwilling to solve Africa's problems:

Medical and teaching skills were not lacking in Africa, even in distressed countries like Malawi. But the will to

use them was often non-existent. The question was, should outsiders go on doing jobs and taking risks that Africans refused? (p. 298)

Although it is difficult to criticize his firsthand knowledge, this sort of circumstantial and anecdotal presentation, combined with his condemnation of international aid in Africa, supports the agenda for reproving African self-management. The result of this partial blame based on anecdote is that Western readers unfamiliar with Africa are prone to take Theroux's observations as fact. When readers, like the author of the following book review, take Theroux's observations as accurate and unproblematic, then the stereotypes of Africa are reaffirmed:

Theroux is a curmudgeon, a brave traveler and a skeptic, honestly offering readers portraits of cruel post-colonial tyranny, heartbreaking poverty, and desperate hopelessness. For anyone wanting an unfiltered picture of early twenty-first century Africa, Theroux's account will be eye-opening. Not only does he detail his own adventures in vivid prose, but he also recounts--often in their own words--the hardships of the Africans whom he meets. The towns, villages, and open lands he passes through from Cairo to Cape Town hardly resemble the places he remembers so fondly. Everywhere he goes he finds devastated villages, hunger, petty dictators, fear, and the threat of violence. Yet despite the depressing realities of this changed Africa, Theroux tells his stories and those of the Africa he explores as a solo traveler with honesty, compassion, and gusto, leaving the reader glad to have shared his journey. (Barth, 2003)

For readers seeking tyranny, poverty, hopelessness, hunger, devastation, fear, and violence, Theroux's perspective is a compatible choice. For reviews of this nature, the fact that these conclusions come from a well established writer and include the evidence of some interviews with Africans seems to be enough to validate Theroux's claims. Furthermore, Theroux's work is presented as an independent American prospective, however; he is actually perpetuat-

ing common European colonialist assumptions about Africa. This type of interpretation tends to treat the journey itself as the most important element of the work rather than the findings; which is a point that echoes the familiar theme of the Western mind using Africa as a proving ground.

During his journey, Theroux admits that the idea of finding his own personal rejuvenation in Africa is another one of his “African fantasies” (p. 198). This rare moment of confession seems to admit that many of these observations about Africa say more about Theroux’s penchant for finding his predetermined authentic Africa: for his desire to disavow American responsibility in Africa, for forwarding his mistrust of international aid, and for playing out his sexual fantasies. Falling into the same colonial paradigm as Young describes in *Colonial Desire*, Theroux is both attracted to and repulsed by Africa because it operates as the binary opposite of his Western sense of self. Therefore, the best of Africa is what least resembles the West (the pre-modern bush), and the worst of Africa is the modern African city. This binary thinking extends to African people as well, as Theroux feels attracted to the raw, sexual women of Africa while at the same time he is revolted by the inhumanity and chaos. Yet despite the thousands of miles traveled and the countless personalities he meets along the way, Theroux’s journey is an interior, self-conscious exploration of the past and his personal feelings towards Africa. Basically using Africa as a zone for personal exploration and failing to attempt an objective interpretation of Africa, Theroux falls into Achebe’s archetype of the colonizer using Africa to discover himself or challenge his will. Theroux (consciously or unconsciously) consistently emulates colonial paradigms under the guise of an innocent and detached American.

### Notes

- 1 For example Theroux’s hatred for aid-workers in Africa can be interpreted as the following: (1) his belief that Africans are currently incapable of supporting themselves and need to learn responsibility with the crutch of Western aid, (2) his lack of awareness about the complexity of how international aid functions in Africa, or (3) an astute comment about how international aid is being misused.
- 2 Future study may discover additional examples from his fictional works set in Africa *Fong and the Indians* (1968), *Jungle Lovers* (1971), and

My Secret History (1989) to determine how his vision of Africa and Africans is constructed as well as to study the reception Theroux receives from his hosts.

- 3 See, "The Poetry of the Celtic Races." Ernest Renan. The Harvard Classics. Vol. 32 Ed. Charles W. Eliot LLD. New York: PF Collier and Son Company 1910. As well as, "On the Study of Celtic Literature." Matthew Arnold. 1866.
- 4 For a similar line of thinking, see his implication that universities are illogical in Africa whereas dwelling in mud huts and living hand-to-mouth is natural (205).
- 5 As noted elsewhere, see Achebe, Chinua. "An Image of Africa." *The Massachusetts Review*. Vol. 18, no. 4 (Winter 1977), pp. 782-794.
- 6 I am aware that this line of argument could be interpreted as a sort of defense of Mugabe. Although I am well aware of the international condemnation of Mugabe's government, I wish to draw attention to Theroux's fixation with white percussion in Africa. Therefore, I highlight Theroux's criticism in order to demonstrate a pattern of attention towards corrupt and cruel Africa, while admitting that instances like Mugabe's policy or the slaying of white farmers are, of course, reprehensible.
- 7 In 1998 Sindiwe Magona, a native of the township Guguletu where the murder took place, wrote *Mother to Mother*, a work that fictionalizes and recreates the famous murder.
- 8 See Kasozi, A. B. K. *The Social Origins of Violence in Uganda, 1964-1985*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994.
- 9 Prominent examples would include Greene's *The Comedians* (1965) (a novel that Theroux recently wrote an Introduction for in the Penguin Classics series) and Naipaul's *A Bend in the River* (1979).

## References

- Barth, Melissa E.**, 2003. *Dark Star Safari: Overland From Cairo to Cape Town*. Magill Book Reviews.
- Culler, Jonathan.**, 1988. *Framing the Sign: Criticism and Its Institutions*. University of Oklahoma Press: Norman.
- Fanon, Franz.**, 1953/1967. *Black Skin, White Masks*. Grove Press: New York.
- MacCannell, Dean.**, 1999. *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class*. University of California Press: Berkeley.



- Theroux, Paul.**, 2003. *Dark Star Safari: Overland from Cairo to Cape Town*. Houghton Mifflin Company: Boston.
- Young, Robert C. J.**, 1995. *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture, and Race*. Routledge: New York.

## All Writings Great and Small

### Reading James Herriot's Stories as Travel Literature

*John S. Vassar*

*Associate Professor & Chariman of the Department of Fine Arts, Foreign Languages, and Humanities  
Book: Recalling a Story Once Told: An Intertextual Reading of the Psalter and the Pentateuch (2007)*

The world of James Herriot has expanded far beyond its British beginnings. The stories of this Yorkshire veterinarian and his work in the fictitious town of Darrowby, have reached around the globe. His works have been translated into dozens of languages and read in numerous countries. By 1991 over 50 million copies of his books had been sold while two films and a television series had also been produced (Brunsdale 1). This popularity is all the more impressive for an author who began writing at the age of fifty and wrote stories primarily about animals.

Despite (or perhaps because of) his popularity, there has been little critical examination of Herriot's literary corpus. With a handful of exceptions, the Academy has largely turned a blind eye to his efforts. Part of the reason is likely a common misconception that Herriot's work should be considered children's literature. But before we consign Herriot's work to the children's section, we should first consider an alternative genre. This essay suggests that we reread this popular author and explore the possibility that when we encounter the stories of life in the Yorkshire dales, we are in fact, encountering an important work of travel literature. Following a brief examination of his life, this essay focuses on themes in Herriot's books that share much in common with other works of travel writing.

## Biography

James Herriot is the pseudonym for James Alfred (Alf) Wight. The distinction between Alf Wight and James Herriot is difficult to draw. Wight's personal autobiography and fictionalized observations all too often converge. In his biography of his father, Jim Wight even uses James Herriot and Alf Wight almost interchangeably (Wight, 1). Wight was born on 3 October 1916 in Sunderland, England. Three weeks after his birth his family moved to Glasgow and Wight was raised in that largest city in Scotland. In high school, after listening to a presentation by the principal of the Glasgow Veterinary College, Wight was convinced that veterinary practice would be his vocation. Upon graduation from high school, Wight was accepted at the Glasgow Veterinary College (Wight, 45).

Wight completed his veterinary training in 1938, during the height of the depression, and was fortunate to get a job in the practice of Donald Sinclair (the character Siegfried Farnon in his subsequent books) in the town of Thirsk, an agricultural community with a population around a few thousand. In his fictionalized telling of these stories, Wight substituted the name Darrowby for Thirsk (Wight, 94). It is located in the heart of the Yorkshire dales in northern England. Wight immediately grew to enjoy the scenic beauty and the delightful characters who he encountered in his day to day activities.

In 1941 Wight married Joan Danbury (Helen Alderson) and became a partner in Sinclair's practice (Wight, 128). Two years later, while Joan was pregnant with their first child, Wight volunteered for the Royal Air Force and was called up for training. His parent's home in Glasgow had been bombed during a Luftwaffe attack and this motivated Wight to join. Wight was discharged for health reasons from the R.A.F. in 1945 (Wight, 144-53). From 1950 to 1966 he remained working as a veterinarian in the dales except for two brief occasions when he traveled with animals overseas, once to the U.S.S.R. in 1961 and to Istanbul, Turkey in 1963.

In 1966, at the age of 50, Wight began writing down his experiences as a country veterinarian and tried unsuccessfully to find a publisher for four years (Wight, 245). Finally in 1970 his first book of recollections was published under the title of *If Only They Could Talk*, followed two years later by *It Shouldn't Happen to a Vet*.

That same year, in 1972 both books were combined and published in the United States with the title *All Creatures Great and Small* (ACGS).

The success of *All Creatures Great and Small* in the United States was an enormous surprise to Wight and his publisher. Wight expected his works to carry only a mild interest among those who had some knowledge of the dales. But perhaps unconsciously, Wight succeeded in expressing a theme common to world literature. Readers were instantly taken with the idea of the young, clumsy vet who grows into an accomplished, caring professional. As Michael Rossi has demonstrated, *All Creatures Great and Small* is a coming of age story (Rossi 32).

In *ACGS*, Herriot explains his initial attraction to animal work and his first encounter with the Yorkshire dales. He is a newly minted veterinary surgeon, fresh out of school, full of resolve and ready to change animal work. But as he begins his rounds, Herriot discovers that the theoretical book knowledge of his veterinary school has not always adequately prepared him for the daily encounters that he has in Yorkshire. *All Creatures Great and Small* covers the variety of experiences that beset young Herriot in his first few years, from 1938 to early 1941.

As *All Creatures Great and Small* progresses, Herriot moves through an initial period of self-doubt to some measure of confidence in his own abilities. By the end of the book he has developed as a veterinarian, but more importantly as a person. This change is brought about in him by his environment, and by people. Herriot is particularly impressed by the farmers of the dales themselves. Rossi suggests that the change in Herriot results from “the people, places, and situations he encounters. Herriot speaks of being affected by them and shares first impressions and conclusions about them.” (Rossi 33).

Herriot begins his job after arriving in the 1930’s, a key turning point for the traditional life in these farming communities. It was a time when some of the older traditions are changing, veterinarians are shifting from traditional animals like horses and cows to small animal care. As Herriot later wrote

Probably the most dramatic occurrence in the history of veterinary practice was the disappearance of the draught horse. It is an almost incredible fact that this glory and mainstay of the profes-

sion just melted quietly away within a few years. And I was one of those who were there to see it happen.

When I first came to Darrowby the tractor had already begun to take over, but tradition dies hard in the agricultural world and there were still a lot of horses around. Armed with my firing iron and box of blister I plunged determinedly into what had always been the surging mainstream of veterinary life.

And now, in less than three years the stream had dwindled, not exactly to a trickle but certainly to the stage where the final dry-up was in sight. (*ATBB*, 160)

In addition to the disappearance of the draft horse, new drugs and treatment methods were just beginning to come on the scene to displace traditional methods of animal care.

*ACGS* proceeds at an episodic pace. With few exceptions, the characters encountered only exist in that individual chapter. Most chapters are self contained units, completing an encounter within the context of one chapter. The effect is for the reader to accompany young Herriot on his visits, making the rounds with him in his antiquated car along the back roads of the dales. There are four important exceptions that not only play an important role in this book, but in the succeeding books as well.

The four main characters are James Herriot, Siegfried Farnon, Tristan Farnon, and Helen Alderson. The stories are all told from the first person perspective, and the reader's sympathies lie with young Herriot. The country veterinarian presents himself as an empathetic, caring individual who treats both people and animals with respect and compassion. His flaws are few, and relatively harmless. Mostly he is inexperienced and somewhat clumsy. He has the ability, which hindsight so often provides, of seeing the humor in various awkward situations. Herriot changes throughout the book as he matures and gains much greater confidence in himself and in his profession.

Siegfried and Tristan Farnon are brothers who work with Herriot. Siegfried is Herriot's employer and has worked as a veterinary for years. Siegfried is more of a comrade in arms than a boss. He hires Herriot at a time when unemployment was high and he con-

sistently pays him more than market value. Siegfried demonstrates compassion for and support for Herriot on the young veterinarian's very first case. Herriot orders the destruction of a valuable, but diseased, horse and the manager of the farm is outraged. Herriot puts the horse down and a postmortem confirms his diagnosis.

Siegfried possesses a complex, though kind, personality. He excels at behaving inconsistently, though he does not himself see that inconsistency. His obliviousness to his own actions delights the reader, who is all too familiar with the reality of his behavior.

We are introduced to a new element of Siegfried's behavior when his brother Tristan arrives in chapter six of *ACGS*. Tristan is Siegfried's younger brother and is attending, but not yet passing, veterinary school. Tristan also brings out the most boisterous behavior of his brother. Tristan is clever, but lazy—a combination that drives his brother Siegfried into fits of madness. In fact, Tristan's cleverness is expressed most explicitly through his laziness. Most of the narratives that take place at the center of the veterinary practice, called Skeldale House, involve these three interacting with one another.

The fourth major character is Helen Alderson. She is the attractive daughter of a local farmer and the object of affection for Herriot. Her decision to wear slacks in a day when it was still unconventional suggests her independent nature. Much of James and Helen's courtship is comprised of foolish actions expressed by Herriot followed by a great deal of grace demonstrated by Helen.

Helen appears to be unattainable for Herriot. The young veterinarian must overcome a series of obstacles (including competitive suitors and his own boorish mistakes) in order to win Helen's heart. It is only after both Tristan and Siegfried encourage Herriot to his attempts at courtship that the hero wins the lady's heart. *All Creatures Great and Small* concludes with the description of their marriage. The final chapter of the work describes how their honeymoon was spent testing cows for tuberculosis.

Over the next twenty years Wight published over a dozen more books narrating the life of Herriot and his various encounters with the denizens of the dales. These works carried forward the story of Herriot through his time with the Royal Air Force in World War II and into various veteran trips to the USSR and Turkey. In 1995 Alfred Wight died of cancer in his home at Thirlby, where he had moved after fifty years of veterinary work in Thirsk.

### Reading Herriot as a Travel Writer

There are at least two reasons why Wight's writings have not been adequately addressed as travel literature. The primary obstacle in reading these texts as travel literature is likely because they have traditionally been considered either children or animal stories. The Academy has not often deemed stories about children and pigs as worthy of critical investigation.

But these genres need not be mutually exclusive. A characteristic of exceptional literature is that it transgresses traditional formal boundaries. Reading Herriot's work as children's literature does not disqualify it from other classifications as well. It could be travel literature that children could still comprehend. *Huckleberry Finn* might serve as an important analogue of travel literature that is of interest to a younger audience.

But this simple classification of Herriot as a children's writer is incomplete. First, there are many adult themes present in the works of Herriot, from personal situations like courting, marital difficulty, and drunkenness to societal issues like euthanasia and the difficulties of war. Additionally, the language of the Yorkshire farmer was often a bit rough for children. As often as a character refers to an animal as an "Awd bugger!" or utters the expletive "Bloody 'ell!" it is problematic to conceive of these books exclusively as children's stories. The assignment of these stories to children's literature might be more a result of marketing strategies than based on the actual content of these works. Originally, *If Only They Could Talk* had a boy holding a horse's reins on the cover and that led many bookstores to put it in juvenile literature. (Wight 363).

The same is true of their designation as "animal stories." While they certainly contain animals, these creatures inhabit a background that is larger than themselves. Herriot spends more time describing the people and the landscape than he does the animals. When he does lovingly describe animals, it is almost always in the context of their owners. For example, he develops theories about the old rule that the larger the home, the smaller the dog and vice versa. Thus even his treatment of animals in these stories carefully illuminates their owners.

Lastly, Herriot has published books exclusively for children and has published abridged additions of these stories which contain only dog or cat stories. (e.g, *James Herriot's Dog Stories* (1986), not to

be confused with *James Herriot's Favorite Dog Stories* (1995). He has also published several children's stories *Moses the Kitten* (1984) and *Only One Woof* (1985). These titles demonstrate that Wight was aware of the distinctiveness of genre.

Several elements of Herriot's stories convey his traveler's eye for unfamiliar terrain. Indeed, a hallmark of good travel writing includes telling tales of alien surroundings. Herriot wrote extensively of the dales and included descriptions of customs, food, religious practices, rites of passage and (obviously) how they treat their pets. James Wight, in a memoir of his father, writes that Herriot "was fascinated by the ways and traditions of the [Yorkshire] people, uncovering warmth, humor and other qualities...[Herriot] was studying them." (Wight, 98). Herriot observed the farmers in the dale from the position of an outsider. He arrived from Scotland, having left the large metropolitan area of Glasgow, and thus had a perspective that was different from the community of Darrowby. This perspective, at times, made it difficult for him to integrate into this alien society.

Wight notes that, "Another obstacle [for Herriot] was the learning of a new 'language.' Words like 'felon' 'garget', 'marra' and 'wick' bombarded his brain as he attempted to unravel the mysteries of the Yorkshire dialect." (Wight, 97). Sometimes Herriot's writing sounds very much like that of a stranger caught in a strange land, encountering strange customs and food. On one occasion he was dining with a farmer and his wife. She offered Herriot two pieces of "bacon," each of which consisted of pure, white fat. He was torn between offending the hospitality of his hosts and eating something so unappetizing. When he despaired about how to handle the situation, he spotted a jar of piccalilli.

Feverishly I scooped a mound of it on to my plate. It seemed to contain just about everything; onions, apples, cucumber and other assorted vegetables jostling each other in a powerful mustard-vinegar sauce. It was the work of a moment to smother my loaded fork with the mass, then I popped it into my mouth, gave a couple of quick chews and swallowed. It was a start and I hadn't tasted a thing except the piccalilli...Looking back, I realise it was one of the bravest things I have ever done. I stuck to my task unwaveringly, dipping again and again into the jar,



keeping my mind a blank, refusing grimly to think of the horrible thing that was happening to me.... But at last I came to the end. A final heroic crunch and swallow, a long gulp at my tea and the plate was empty. The thing was accomplished. (*ATBB* 315-316)

Herriot thus encounters an experience so common to travelers, often torn between partaking in disconcerting customs or offending generous hosts.

But in this interaction, Herriot excels at recalling the voices of those who are often marginalized by contemporary societies today. Sanford Sternlicht observes that Herriot hears and transmits “the lost voices of a landed people who cared for and respected their ancient land, their beasts, and their way of life, and most of all, each other.” (136). Critical to the role of a writer of travel literature is the writer’s eye toward the unique and distinctive of the local

Herriot was able to observe so carefully because of his professional vantage point. Herriot’s position as a veterinarian provides a unique perspective on the home as well as the professional lives of the people in the dales. A veterinarian obviously deals extensively with the sheep, cows, horses and other livestock on the dales. In addition, vets during Herriot’s day had to work with large corporate farms, as well as small family farms. Herriot observes the changing financial landscape as farmers who have eked out a living in the dales and moors and must continue to scratch and claw in order to continue to survive.

James’ role as a veterinarian also offers him unprecedented access to the interior lives of his patients’ owners. Because Herriot began to branch out into small animal work early in his practice, he saw the inner workings of numerous dale families. This peculiar perspective allows for a rich fleshing out of characters and the rather private ways that they interacted with their pets. This twin perspective on the home and professional life of the people in the Yorkshire dales demonstrates Herriot’s eye for a good story.

Ultimately it is not only the people who fall underneath this traveler’s eye. Wight’s Herriot quickly succumbed to the enchantment of the Yorkshire country itself. On numerous occasions, Herriot describes the land in which he lives from the social location of a

visitor. He clearly fills the role of a city dweller who is enraptured by the natural beauty that surrounds him.

Ultimately, Herriot sees the people of the dales as connected inextricably to the dales themselves. The farmers and farm-wives in some ways merge with the animals and the land. This connectedness between people and land is a central theme running throughout these works. Herriot views these people and this land as inextricably linked. This close connection between people and land reflects the notion that our geographical location always affects our social location. Even within the dales, Herriot notes different personalities depending on where the individuals live.

The higher up the country, the more I liked them. At the bottom of the valley, where it widened into the plain, the farmers were like farmers everywhere, but the people grew more interesting as the land heightened, and in the scattered hamlets and isolated farms near the bleak tops I found their characteristics most marked; their simplicity and dignity, their rugged independence and their hospitality. (ACGS 67)

As Herriot progresses through these books, he notes that the farmers of the dales have begun to change him in many important ways. This change exemplifies a second important journey in these books.

Numerous literary critics have noted the importance of a second journey in travel writing. The best examples of travel writings include a journey of discovery that transcends geography and includes the development of the writer. As Michael Kowalewski notes: “while travel writing usually consists of part sociology and part natural history, it has also traditionally gone beyond “mere” ethnography by being insistently autobiographical” (8).

Wight’s work is obviously autobiographical. In fact, the line between author and protagonist is so liminal as to be almost indistinguishable. But an important narrative device makes it interestingly complex. Throughout these stories, there are two narrative voices speaking to the reader. In his first narrative voice, the young James Herriot is exploring this new land and making these new acquaintances. But in the second narrative voice, an older, wiser James Herriot is reflecting on the incidents of his youth. As an example, in

ACGS he and Siegfried fondly notice a fine collection of medicine bottles which they are to use. "The two of us stood gazing at the gleaming rows without any idea that it was nearly all useless and that the days of the old medicines were nearly over. Soon they would be hustled into oblivion by the headlong rush of the new discoveries and they would never return." (ACGS 19).

As Richard Gardner observes, this complex dual structure makes a more interesting narrative. "The young man is made more likeable by being blended with the narrators thirty additional years of awareness." (Beacham 635) Brunsdales agrees and adds:

James Herriot became a more complex literary character than his creator might originally have intended. Herriot the author supplied the grandfatherly perspective that anchored his recorded experiences on his youthful self, a character who might have begun as a humble observer, but matured and became much more interesting as the books progressed. (28)

This observation also demonstrates the sense of growth that accompanies Herriot throughout these books. As the young Herriot of the narrative world slowly transforms into the wise author reflecting fondly on the past, we accompany Herriot through that journey. As a result, the reader travels not just to the Yorkshire dales, but through life as well.

Good travel writing must include a focus upon the inner self of the writer. The journey inward is as important to the overall narrative as the journey outward. Norman Douglas wrote that:

the reader of a good travel book is entitled not only to an exterior voyage, to descriptions of scenery and so forth, but to an interior, a sentimental or temperamental voyage, which takes place side by side with that outer one; ... the ideal book of this kind offers us, indeed, a triple opportunity of exploration—abroad, into the author's brain, and into our own. The writer should therefore possess a brain worth exploring; some philosophy of life ... and the courage to proclaim it and put it to the test; he must be naïf and profound, both child and sage." (Fussell 15)

But Herriot's books offer another changing protagonist, one that grows and matures alongside Herriot: the Yorkshire dales themselves. As Herriot writes, he does so from the perspective of one who has experience stretching over decades. As his son wrote later: "The world that James Herriot wrote about has all but disappeared... and the countless family farms...are now few in number" (Wight 363). Writing about events forty years after the fact provides a temporal perspective that illuminates the past while providing the author with a perspective from a fixed point. This perspective might also contribute to Herriot's honest portrayal of his own faults and mistakes. As often occurs in ethnography, the observed culture has now largely disappeared and exists only in the writings of this initial observer.

This last connection between Herriot and travel writing is the modesty of his self-portrayal. His modesty comes through the narrative in numerous ways. Part of the popularity of this series is his frank description of numerous occasions where he made mistakes, misunderstood the local farmers, or exercised poor judgment. Not every chapter ends in a successful tale of a problem solved or an animal healed. But Herriot acknowledges his mistakes and attempts to learn from them. Herriot proves a compelling protagonist, always learning and always seeking. Fussell notes that, "Travelers learn not just foreign customs and curious cuisines and unfamiliar beliefs and novel forms of government. They learn, if they are lucky, humility" (14). That humility might be the distinguishing mark between traveler and tourist.

There is also a final irony inherent to the travels of James Herriot. His process of travel writing has itself remade the Yorkshire Dales. Herriot the traveler has now affected this foreign land. It is as true in travel as it is in quantum mechanics: the observer affects the observed. Decades after his books, Wight *himself* is now identified exclusively with the Yorkshire land.

It is a fascinating irony that other travelers have now written travel guides to Herriot's Darrowby. Thirsk today stands as the center of a tourist industry as farm houses have been transformed into Bed and Breakfast homes. Tourists plan trips to Thirsk and journey to the veterinary office where he worked and the home where he lived. Around 8 million visitors a year visit the Dales area, many of them lured by Herriot's books. (Brunsdale 7).

Tourism has proven lucrative for the region, bringing in \$8 million to Thirsk from 1978-1988 (Brunsedale 132)

This remaking of the dales is complete to the point of changing its name. The Yorkshire area's new name carefully aimed at travelers is Herriot Country, complete with website ([www.HerriotCountry.com](http://www.HerriotCountry.com)). Herriot brought film, books, and ultimately tourists to the Yorkshire dales, and paradoxically, the dales exist in its truest state only in his books.

His works, his stories, his remaking of the dales all offer important reasons to consider Herriot's work as an impressive example of travel literature. We should enlarge the genre of travel writing and bring Herriot in as well. As Percy Adams writes, "The library of travel literature is gigantic, but not too much so, since no library can be too large for this world, or for any reader." (Adams xi). Surely travel literature is vast enough to include a trip to the Yorkshire dales.

## References

- Adams, Percy. *Travel Literature and the Evolution of the Novel*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1983.
- \_\_\_\_\_, ed. *Travel Literature Through the Ages: An Anthology*. New York: Garland Publishing, 1988.
- Beacham, Walton, ed. "James Herriot (James Alfred Wight)." in *Beacham's Popular Fiction in America*, vol. 3 (Washington: Beacham Publishing, 1988), 635.
- Brunsedale, Mitzi. *James Herriot*. New York: Twayne Publishers, 1997.
- Craig, Patricia, ed. *The Oxford Book of Travel Stories*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996.
- Fussell, Paul, ed. *The Norton Book of Travel*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1987.
- Herriot, James. *All Creatures Great and Small*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1972.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *All Things Bright and Beautiful*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1973.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *All Things Wise and Wonderful*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1977.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Lord God Made Them All*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1981.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Every Living Thing*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992.

Holland, Patrick and Graham Huggan. *Tourists With Typewriters: Critical Reflections on Contemporary Travel Writing*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000.

Kowalewski, Michael, ed. *Temperamental Journeys: Essays on the Modern Literature of Travel*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1992

Rossi, Michael J. *James Herriot: A Critical Companion*. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1997.

Sternlicht, Sanford. *All Things Herriot: James Herriot and His Peaceable Kingdom*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1995.

Wight, Jim. *The Real James Herriot: A Memoir of My Father*. New York: Ballentine Books, 1999.

**akademisk**  
academic quarter

**akvarter**  
tidsskrift for humanistisk forskning

**Journeys in history/  
historical journeys**

# The Hammock and the Colonial Journey of Conquest

Reminiscences of British Colonialism  
among the West Niger-Igbo of Nigeria

*Dr Nwankwo T. Nwaezeigwe*

*is Senior Research Fellow/ Lecturer at the Institute  
of African Studies, University of Nigeria, Nsukka,  
Nigeria.*

## The Beginning

Igboland, particularly east of the River Niger has quite a few navigable rivers, of which the Niger forms the major artery of communication. The others include the Anambra, which is a tributary of the Niger, the Ezu, which connects to the Anambra; the Ebonyi, which flows into the Cross River; and the Imo which drains into the Bonny Creek of the Niger Delta. The same could be said of the Igboland lying west of the Niger, except that the few navigable rivers that flow from the hinterland not only lie within the Niger Delta basin, but cover short courses before gravitating into the Niger. These include the *Adofi, Umomi, Oboshi, Ubu, and Iyioji*.

Most of these rivers, apart from running through the geo-periphery of Igboland form part of the web of tributaries of the Niger, thereby eventually draining into the Atlantic Ocean. Thus the greater part of Igbo land are left without the utility of river transport. In other words, the bulk of the numerous over-land travel networks connecting the various communities of independent petty village group states were undertaken by foot and head-porterage, since the use of such beasts of burden as horses and donkeys were unknown among the people.

This is not, however, to say that the use of these animals as means of transportation was entirely unknown to the Igbo. The fact is that



even though they were fully aware of the animal's utility as beasts of burden, the prevailing circumstances could not permit their use for such. The dominant rainforest vegetation of Igboland with its often winding narrow tracks which are often infested with thick and out-grown shrubs and tree branches was not suitable for the use of such highly mobile beasts of burden. Moreover, such high density forest terrain could also afford less effective defence against sudden attacks by such wild animals as leopards, tigers, elephants and wild pigs on the beasts of burden and their riders.

The second factor is the prevalence of the highly deadly sleeping sickness disease *trypanosomiasis*, which kills these animals within a very short time. This no doubt is taken as another major reason for the non-domestication of these non-resistant savannah species of animals in the forest zone of which Igboland forms a part. Thus such animals even when brought into Igboland for other purposes did not often last long. They sooner or later died of sleeping-sickness infections.

But this is not to say that the Igbo never made use of these animals for other purposes. In fact horses and donkeys when available are important sources of protein like the cattle to the people. Most importantly however the use of the horse as a symbol of socio-political title status and the use of the tail as part regalia of high social dignity among the Northern and West Niger Igbo subgroups.

Socio-political statues among most Igbo sub-groups are based mainly on a form of graduated social title system generically known as *Ozo*. The horse is symbolic of the highest status of the title system among the Nkanu, Nsukka, and Aguleri groups of communities, and the Illah of West Niger Igbo. Here, the slaughtering of horse forms a principal requirement for anyone initiating into the apex *Ozo* title known variously as *Otiḡbu-Enyinya* and *Oḡbu-Enyinya* (Horse-killer).

Such a titled man, when dead, equally required a good number of horses as part of the requirements for his traditional burial rites. Such horses were thereafter shared among the surviving members of the title society. Among these people therefore horses served different purposes other than that of being used as a means of transportation.

Such was the situation in Igboland as it relates to the use of donkeys and horses as means of transportation before and at the early

period of colonialism. The early European visitors, who were not used to trekking long distances, found it therefore incomprehensible for them to get adapted to it, after several attempts to introduce these animals into Igboland had failed. Thus it became necessary to find an alternative means of confronting the problem.

It was in answer to this ominous situation that the idea of converting the hammock from a stationary apparatus of leisure into that of a mobile train powered by human energy became necessary. Thus, the hammock was to become identified with a symbol of British colonialism. But the introduction of the hammock was not accepted by the people hook, line and sinker; hence it was trailed by accounts of strong resistance and subsequent British policy of enforcement. The reasons for resistance ranged from the prevailing security situation of the period to associated customary interpretation of the idea of carrying a living and healthy person.

Travel in pre-colonial Nigeria in general and Igboland in particular was fraught with enormous danger. The danger of being caught by hostile neighbours and killed or sold into slavery, or even by slave raiders themselves. There was equally the danger of being caught by neighbours and used for human sacrifice. There was also the danger of being caught by cannibals and having one's different body parts distributed in different soup-pots and eaten as beef or any other edible animal. Again there was the danger of having one's head chopped off by head-hunters for the purpose of rituals of title-taking. All these constituted inhibiting factors for long distance travels among pre-colonial Igbo people in particular and Nigeria in general. The incidence of slavery was the most prevalent. A victim of slavery could be lucky enough to either end up as a domestic servant or being sold to *Potokri people*, the Igbo term for Portuguese slave traders then.

Olaudah Equiano, the Igbo freed slave author and abolitionist, and his sister was lucky enough to be sold into slavery rather than being eaten as meat or immolated for sacrifices (Edwards, 1996). The same is also the case of the millions of members of African descent whose descendants now paint the faces of Europe and the Americas black. Descendants of some domestic slaves who although treated as part of the society, but remained in danger of being called up to be used as beasts of sacrifices, survived today as full citizens of the society, thanks to British intervention.

Ironically some of these domestic-based slaves were much luckier to rise to stardom through the dint of hard-work and spirited adventurism, like the case of king Jaja of Opobo, who evolved from being a domestic slave to become one of the most powerful kings in the Niger Delta at the dawn of British conquest of Nigeria (Cookey, 1974). Equally, some of these domestic slaves who defiantly embraced Christianity and the accruing Western education were to give rise to those families who subsequently became the pioneers of Christian missionary activities and western education.

The cases of cannibalism and human sacrifice were even more dangerous than one being sold into slavery, and quite a number of slaves were bought and kept for the purpose of sacrifice to deities or used for burial rites. Picturing this chaotic situation E. A. Ayandele wrote this concerning the Yoruba city of Abeokuta:

The records make it abundantly clear that in spite of their moralistic professions the Egba remained until 1891 slaveholders, slave dealers and slave-hunters. In fact human sacrifice was performed publicly in Abeokuta their capital as late as 1887. (Ayandele, 1966, p. 6)

Ayandele went further to narrate how the Ijebu sacrificed 200 men and women on the eve of British invasion in propitiation of their deities to enable them defeat the invading British forces (Ayandele, 1966, p. 6).

But it was one of the the S.M.A Missionary agents among the West Niger Igbo, the Reverend Father M. Friedrich that gave an eye-witness account of the high level of cruelty which attended the practice of human sacrifice among the people. Reporting on this manner of human sacrifice at the turn of the 20th century in the town of Igbuzo, presently spelt Ibusa, in West- Niger Igboland, which incidentally is the present author's hometown, the Roman Catholic Missionary wrote in French:

*C'est le signal de la dernière cruauté que la plume ait écrite sur l'histoire des peuples. Les jeunes gens, échauffés par le vin de palme, se précipitent sur les esclaves, spectateurs inconscients de la scène, pour les pousser au lieu leur supplice. Un premier esclave est couché sur l'akpu et*

le maitre de la ceremonie lui tranch la tele des que le sang coule, des cris percepts de contentement se repercutent dans l'assistance et une danse effrence se mele aux cris. La tete de l'esclave roule par terre au milieu du vacarme indescriptible; son corps est enfoui au pied de l'akpu tandis que son chef est planté sur un piquet pour satisfaire les instincts sauvages des paiens. On amene ensuite des autres esclaves. Helas! quelle mort cruelle les attend! La tombe du chef est prete. Son cadaver est place en evidence. Quelquefois il est deja en decomposition. Les esprits des assistants sont echauffes car il s'agit maintenant du grand acte de la ceremonie. Au milieu du tumulte general on pousse l'un de esclaves dans la tombe, on met le cadavre dessus et le second esclave encore par-dessus; puis on recouvre le tout avec la terre et la fosse est comblee (P.M. Fredrich, 1907, pp. 103-4).

While human sacrifice was widespread among the Igbo of the West Niger like in the case of their Edo and Yoruba neighbours to the west, cannibalism held sway among the East Niger Igbo and their Ijaw and Efik/Ibibio neighbours. Professor Ayandele once described the Okrika people of the Ijaw ethnic group as "Veritable cannibals" (Ayandele, 1966, p. 90). Even at Brass, another Ijaw town, Ayandele wrote that the British High Commissioner Johnston,

Was bewildered to discover that the zealous Christian converts of Brass felt no twinges of conscience when in 1885 they ate their human enemies, and that all the punishment Archdeacon Crowther prescribed to the cannibals was deprivation of Holy sacrament for sometime. (Ayandele, 1966, p. 211)

This was the state of affairs in pre-colonial Southern Nigeria that made traveling for the ordinary people unsafe. The imposition of the *Pax Britannica* was to gradually erode these fears and the attendant dangers. But it did not disappear at a blow. And even when the fear of being enslaved or eaten as beef gradually disappeared, it was substituted with another fear, the fear of the Hammock, carrying the White man on the hammock over a long distance.

### **The West Niger Igbo and the British Conquest**

Among the West Niger Igbo, the nature of long distant travels is summed up in this Igbo saying, *Wa adieji ofu ubosi eje Idu*; meaning that one does not travel to Idu (Benin City) in one day. In fact, in those days, it took on average of seven-day journey on foot over a winding bushy track for one to travel from Asaba at the West bank of the River Niger, to Benin city, the seat of the all-powerful Oba of Benin kingdom, the great potentate then over the whole territory of West Niger Igboland.

Today, this same journey, which covers a distance of about 120 kilometres, takes an average of one hour thirty minutes to cover. Obviously, such distant journeys were undertaken on occasions and not on regular basis. They were also undertaken in groups and the travellers well-armed in defence against hostile neighbours, slave-raiders or head-hunters.

The conquest of the West Niger Igbo by the British was piecemeal, but their revolt was spontaneous. This elicited several pacification expeditions by the Colonial forces, which also meant the use of several natives from among those communities already pacified as carriers for the army.

Among the carriers, some were to carry goods while others were to carry the White Officers on the hammock. In the process some of the carriers were killed and did not return home. Those towns who agreed to provide the carriers for the White man were branded as collaborators. On the other hand, those who refused to provide were treated as enemies of the White man and had their rulers severely punished.

The people were therefore faced with either revolting against the superior powers of the White man in support of their besieged kinsmen and face the dire consequences, or accept the fact that they were a conquered people willing to do the biddings of their conquerors. At the end the latter option prevailed, that practice of levying young men by the various towns became a standing official policy of the colonial administration.

Describing the humiliating pattern of enforcing the carriers policy on the people, Dr Felix Nwanze Obi wrote:

A British officer wanting to make a journey within the territory however near or distant the destination might

be, would not go on foot neither would he use any of the beasts of burden. Natives were commandeered and compelled to carry him on their heads in hammocks and they must do that extremely careful. If they showed any discomfort with their human load, and tried to assuage the pain by shifting the pressure to another spot, thus causing a slight jolt to the man on top of their heads, the consequent penalty was a good flogging by the officer, or at his orders, with his gun at the ready both against the carriers and the man ordered to carry out the punishment should he refuse. (Obi, 1976, p. 6)

Dr Nwanze Obi further reported how in 1888 one of the carriers from Asaba, his hometown, was blown to pieces on the orders of a British Officer for refusing to go further on a journey to Igbuzo (Ibusa), for fear of his safety. As he put it:

In 1888 when on such a journey the carriers traveling with the officer of the Royal Niger company to Igbuzo, from Asaba refused to go further for reasons of their safety one of the British officers ordered the first of the natives to speak, to be blown to pieces with explosive bullets, so as to teach the rest of the party a lesson. This incident was described and referred to in his letter dated March 22<sup>nd</sup> 1888 by Rev. H. Johnson, to Bishop Crowder. (Obi, 1976, p. 68)

Thus, just as Asaba people were used as carriers to Ibusa, so Ibusa people were used to carry the Whiteman and his loads to other towns. *Obi Egbuna Ofili*, a local Red-cap Chief from Ibusa, then 87 years old, reported in 1987 that during the British intervention in Ogwashi-Uku kingship dispute of 1909 many Ibusa people died in the process of doing the job of carriers for the British (*Obi Egbuna Ofili*, 1987).

Under this state of chaos arising from the dangers of carrying the Whiteman and his load, many able-bodied young men, those within the *Okwulagwe* age-set, which is the work-force age-set among the West Niger Igbo began to flee into the bush, resolving rather unwillingly to reside in their farmlands which were located miles

away from the town in order to avert being conscripted as White-man's carriers.

The wealthy ones or those whose parents were rich had to take the *Ogbuu* title, a position which exempts such men from manual labour, irrespective of their age. Those who had come of age and could afford the high cost of *Eze*-title (Red-cap chief) did that in order to again avert being drafted as carriers. This was to give rise to a temporary shortage of young men needed to carry the hammock. Following this apparent shortage, the British officials were to devise another means to get these young men back into their carrier duty.

The first policy was to restrict the number and frequency of young men taking such traditional titles that exempted them from manual labour or acting as carriers. Among the towns where these titles were highly developed, and where there were no traditional monarchs to deal directly with the British, of which Asaba and Ibusa, the policy aimed principally at restricting the number of people initiating into the prestigious Red-cap *Eze* title. Among these communities whose socio-political framework was republican in structure, the *Eze title* acted as the social spring-board to political influence and leadership.

Among those towns operating monarchical system of government, the enforcement of the Hammock policy was less difficult, since it was easier to hold the monarch responsible for any transgression by members of his community. This was not the case with the towns of Asaba, and Ibusa which did not have strong central leadership structure like such towns on their western fringe as Ogwashi-Uku, Ubulu-Uku-Uku, Iselle-Uku and Agbor, among others where strong monarchical leaderships exist.

In Asaba this involved imposing a permit levy on all intending *Eze* title-takers in order to discourage people by way of making it more expensive. The levy was first put at two shillings per a person and later increased to two pounds when the former amount did not appear to make adequate impact (Obi, 1976, p. 68).

The second policy was to try to impose traditional monarchy on the people of Asaba, Ibusa, Okpanam, and Okwe, the towns where traditional Igbo republicanism held sway. In 1923, the British authorities ordered these four towns to immediately elect their respective kings and present to the British authorities for confirmation. In their reactions, the people of Ibusa, Okpanam and Okwe defiantly

presented their *Diokpa* - the traditional ceremonial heads of the towns to the authorities as their kings. Only Asaba adhered strictly to the orders and subsequently introduced the *Asagba* Paramount title as the traditional king of the town in 1925.

Among the West Niger Igbo, the title of *Diokpa*, variously known as *Okpala* or *Okpala-Ukwu* as the case may be, is held by the oldest man in a family, village or town, who remains the *de juri* head of the particular level of government. At the town level, like the cases of Ibusa, Okpanam and Okwe, the *Diokpa* of the respective towns hold the status of a ceremonial king, who rules the town through the Council of elders and chiefs, and age-grade associations.

In other words, the position of *Diokpa* is customarily occupied by the oldest male surviving descendant at every level of Igbo kinship structure - from the extended family, through the village, town, to the clan. In such a situation therefore, effective political powers often rested on the Council of Elders, Chiefs, title and age-grade societies, and decisions often by consensus

Under such circumstance the implementation of colonial policies was cumbersome and slow, unlike in those towns with centralized anchor of leadership represented by their kings. The British was therefore convinced that the only possible solution to this was to cause these communities to elect kings.

The third policy was the change of the original practice of employing the same set carriers from one particular town to go through several towns in journeys that covered several communities. This was to avoid the incidence of attacks on the carriers by members of rival communities often on their way back home. In dealing with this policy, the traveling British officials would send messages beforehand of his plan to travel to particular communities and requested all the towns lying on the route of his destination to levy carriers for the purpose of carrying him and his luggage. Each community concerned with the orders would therefore summon a meeting of the leaders at which the carriers were selected. Often, in order to ensure equity, it was either that the carriers were selected from the constituting villages of the town at a time, or the villages were made to provide the whole group of men for a particular journey in turns.

The pattern of carrying out the duty involved having each set of carriers from the attending communities to wait at the respective borders of their towns at where the hammock and the associated



luggage were handed over in the manner of a relay-race team handing over the baton. This policy was to persist until the introduction of motor cars.

It should be noted that this policy of converting the Black African natives to beasts of burden was not restricted to the British colonial officials alone. The early missionaries themselves, who professed equality of all human kinds, were equally enthralled by the mere act of being carried in hammocks. In a foot note to his work, Nwanze Obi reveals this paradox of conflicting policy of the sword and Bible in these words.

The missionaries themselves, also enjoyed the same ride on the Africans' heads. The ever too professed virtues of long-suffering, humility and service to those ministered unto, were not applicable to the relations between the missionaries and the African natives. In dispatch No 18 of 5<sup>th</sup> December, 1898, Section 3, for example, we find that more hammock men were required for carrying Rev. T.J. Denis of the Onitsha mission station. (Obi, 1976, p. 67).

In speaking of the many signs of British imperial power among the Igbo, particular the West Niger Igbo people, one cannot avoid to mention the hammock. In fact, among these people, the idea of carrying a living and healthy human being on the head as if he is a commodity or object was incomprehensible.

Only the dead, lame, or those unable to walk as a result of injury or sickness were meant to be carried in that manner. Even the sick and the lame among the people were carried on the back instead of being carried on the head like the dead or luggage.

To the people therefore, the idea of carrying a healthy, living human being was a taboo. Part of this taboo revolves round the idea that carrying such a person as if dead portends bad omen of inviting sudden death for both the person being carried and the carrier. To the people also, this practice not only made them appear as accomplices to this customary crime, but also debased them to the status of beasts of burdens. It was one of the many obnoxious traditions of the Whiteman which the Igbo were made to live with. This was the first reaction to the introduction of the hammock, before the fear of the danger of facing death in the process came into force.

Thus, far from being the Whiteman's burden, colonialism seen through the spectacle of the hammock became, in one respect the Black man's burden.

## References

- Ayandele, E.A., 1966. *The Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria 1842-1914*, London: Longman.
- Cookey, S.J.S., 1974. *King Jaja of the Niger Delta: his life and times 1821-1891*, New York: Nok Publishers Ltd.
- Edwards, p. (ed.), 1996. *Equiano's Travels*, Essex: Heinemann.
- Fredrich P.M., 1907. "Description de l' Enterrement d'un Chef a Ibouzo(Niger)" *Anthropos* 2, 103-4.
- Nwanze Obi, F., 1976. *The British Occupation of the Niger Territories (1830-1914)*, London: Mercury Press, 6.
- Evidence of *Obi Egbuna Ofili*, c, 87 years, Red-Cap Chief, Ezukwu Quarters, Ibusa, August 28, 1987.

## ”En disposition, form og orden”

Fællesskabets form i engelske koloniseringsfortællinger,  
ca. 1610

*Johan Heinsen*

*Ph.d. stipendiat ved Institut for Kultur og Glo-  
bale Studier ved Aalborg Universitet med pro-  
jektet ”Rejsens politik – Maritime hierarkier,  
sømænd og deres stemmer fra 1589 til 1790”.*

Efter nogle turbulente år i starten af det 17. årh. blev Jamestown i Virginia set som værende i et presserende behov for autoritet. Denne opfattelse kom til udtryk i propagandistiske pamfletter, rejseberetninger og lovttekster. Disse tekster kredser om et forhold imellem loven, ordene og en forestillet geografi eller topografi over fællesskabets steder. Det er for nyligt blevet argumenteret, at sådanne koloniseringsstekster knytter autoritet og suverænitet til geografiske og spatiale troper (Benton 2010). Indeværende artikel bygger videre på denne grundantagelse og undersøger teksterne om den engelske kolonisering omkring år 1610. I disse tekster fortælles fællesskabet som en positivitet med et indre og et ydre. Men dette skel effektueres kun igennem talehandlinger og performances af loven, som derved fremstår som et formgivende element<sup>1</sup>. Suverænitet er således synonymt med evnen til at forme fællesskabet. Jacques Rancière har i en analyse af politiske fortællinger identificeret en handling, han kalder for ’distributionen af det sanselige’ (Rancière 1999, 29). Med dette begreb mener Rancière den måde, hvorpå en given diskurs om fællesskab bliver en fordeling af stemmer og talere - et forsøg på at afmærke hvad Judith Butler i et lignende argument har kaldt ’the domain of the sayable’ (Butler 1997, 133). Følges denne tanke om konstitueringen af talen, må beskrivelser af det politiske undersøges i den æstetiske dimension, der prøver at definere, hvem

der i en given topografi over fællesskabet befinder sig hvor og dermed kan sige hvad. Æstetik må her tænkes som et begreb, der rummer en stærkere betydning, end det normalt tildeles<sup>2</sup>. I beskrivelsen af en topografi over fællesskabet tildeles politiske talehandlinger således deres rette steder. Det er sådanne fordelinger, som jeg forsøger at lokalisere i disse tidlige engelske koloniseringstekster og deres beskrivelser af forholdet imellem suverænitet og geografi.

Artiklen falder i to dele. Den første griber fat i beskrivelserne af fællesskabets rum i en række tekster om Jamestown. Dermed forsøges det vist, at den forestillede topografi er uløseligt bundet til konstruktionen af autoritet og lov. I den anden del skifter scenen til et narrativ om et skibbrud på vej til den nødstedte koloni. Denne fortælling er særligt interessant, da man deri finder spor efter stemmer, der på en gang udfordrer denne autoritet, men hvis udfordring samtidig omskrives til at udtrykke autoritetens beherskelse af sit territorium.

### **Utidige bevægelser og fællesskabets sted**

Allerede historien om den første kortlevede koloni i Roanoke i 1580'erne demonstrerer, hvordan forestillinger om suverænitet kommer til udtryk i beskrivelsen af rum. Thomas Harriot, hvis fortælling kom til at stå som autoritativ, beskrev fællesskabet som splittet imellem en situeret, lokalisbar suveræn, der bar en rest af kongemagten igennem patenter og forordninger fra London, og modsat en overskridende bevægelse, der knyttedes til begærets hersken iblandt sømændene (Harriot 1588). Havet (og kaperkriegerne i Caribien) lokkede sømændene væk fra deres udsete sted og fik dem i stedet til at bevæge sig. Koloniseringens historikere har sidenhen mere eller mindre ufrivilligt gentaget denne modstilling af et stedsligt forankret fælles bedste og en irregulær og skadelig mobilitet skabt af begærets fortrin over autoriteten (eks. Quinn 1974, 302). Fællesskabet er således det, som finder sted.

En sådan forklaringsstruktur, der lokaliserer bestemte parter som fællesskabets blokering og knytter denne blokering til en 'forkert' bevægelse, præger også fortællingerne fra 1610'erne, hvor den blev yderligere ekspliciteret. John Smith, en ledende figur i koloniens tidligste år, konstruerer sin egen autoritet som værende fast fokuseret på koloniens fysiske velvære og kontrasterer denne stedslige bevidsthed til en skadelig mobilitet på kanten af fællesskabet:

All this time our old taverne, made as much of al them that had either mony or ware as could bee desired; and by this time they were become so perfect on all sides (I mean Souldiers, Sailers, and Salvages,) as there was ten-times more care, to maintaine their damnable and private trade, then to provide for the Colony things that were necessary. (Smith 1612, 417)

Den private handel finder sted i stedet for det utilstedelige - 'our old taverne', som derved bliver et lukket rum udenfor autoritetens beherskede offentlighed. Dermed bliver disse grupper, alle markeret af deres bevægelse, identiske i deres negation af fællesskabet. Sømændene tager knive, redskaber og våben og bringer hemmeligt disse til indianerne for at bytte sig til varer, der kan sælges i England. Det hele foregår i en privat og hemmelig sfære, som dermed står overfor den offentlige sfære, som Smith varetager og som sættes lig med orden, når Smith erklærer:

euery one so regarding their priuate gaine, that it is hard to effect any publike good, and impossible to bring them into a body, rule or order, vnlesse both honesty, as well as authoritie and money, assist experience. (Smith 1624, 242)

Udvekslingerne i fællesskabets margin forstyrrer den legitime handel med indianerne ved at ødelægge bytteværdien af de ting, som kan skaffe de afgørende fødevarer (Smith 1612, 390). Dermed undergraves kolonien af en bevægelse - en irregulær udveksling, der gør sømændene og soldaterne lig med den 'vilde'.

Dette er ifølge Smith blot en af sømandens misgerninger. Også provianten, som medbringes til kolonien, fortæres. Her spiller Smith igen på ordene og kalder havet for en 'glutton'. Havets opslugende karakter, en almindelig figur i tidens religiøse søfortællinger om guddommelig indgriben i rejserne, overføres dermed til de folk, der har havet som sted (ibid., 461. For mere om religiøse søfortællinger, se Sievers 2006). Det utilregnelige hav står således i modsætning til koloniens offentlige sfære - som et sted for de private interesser, der negerer muligheden for udfoldelsen af det fælles bedste.

Smith portrætterer sig selv som undtaget fra denne undergravende mobilitet. Han eksisterer kun i den offentlige sfære, som han der-

med synes at give krop og synlighed. Denne undtagne, retfærdige tilstand, hvor han selv som partikulært medlem udviskes, illustreres i en passage, hvor der bygges boliger i den lille koloni. Som den eksemplariske foregangsmand negligerer Smith helt at bygge en bolig til sig selv (Smith 1612, 385-386). I stedet for at varetage sin egen interesse arbejder han udelukkende for det fælles bedste, som her består i at etablere et sted i vildnissets rum - at slide og derved lære ens 'lecture by experience' (ibid., 450-451). Dette fælles bedste er således knyttet til stedet som sådan og til forsøget på at lære stedet at kende for derved at beherske det. Dermed udviskes Smiths partikularitet fra sin historie og han bliver som den synlige bærer af det fælles bedste i stedet historiens entydige helt.

Modstillingen imellem begærets mobilitet og fællesskabets sted spiller også en afgørende rolle i en kort tekst publiceret af Virginia-kompagniet i 1610 populært kaldet *A True Declaration*. Denne tekst viser, hvordan begæret er knyttet til sproget, og hvordan selve begærets udsigelse konstrueres som en forbrydelse imod fællesskabet i sin helhed. En gruppe af de rejsende stjæler en båd og sværger imellem sig at blive "professed pirates, with dreames of mountaines of gold". At sørøveri også er en sproghandling er her implicit. Det er da heller ikke værdier, men håb, der er genstanden for sørøveriet ("so far priviledge trechery, and piracy as to rob us of our hopes"). Da disse 'scum of men' fejler i deres irregulære mobilitet ('wilde roving'), gør de endnu en talehandling. De sværger: "by mutuall oath, to agree all in one report, to discredit the land, to deplore the famyne, and to protest that this their comming awaie, proceeded from desperate necessitie" (Anon. 1610, 37-38). Sørøvernes talehandling er således netop at tale imod stedet som sådan - historier som *A True Declaration* efterfølgende går langt for at afvise som "scandalous reports of a viperous generation" talt af 'venemous tongues' (ibid., 39-40).

Smith benytter en lignende strategi, som også synes at sætte den private tale i modsætning til stedet, når han erklærer om private, cirkulerende og mobile rygter: "Yet some bad natures will not sticke to slander the Countrey, that will slovenly spit at all things, especially in company where they can find none to contradict them" (Smith, 1612, 372). Denne strategi låner fra blandt andre Harriot, der angreb de, som havde skæmmet koloniens ry ved at gøre selve talen til udtryk for et angreb på fællesskabet. Han kategoriser

således en skadelig taleform, som kun kan trives der, hvor den ikke bliver 'gainesaide' (Harriot 1972, 6). Denne forestilling bygger på en implicit topografi lig Smiths, hvor den skadelige tale altid foregår på afstand af det retfærdige - f.eks. i sømændenes 'roving'. Stedet skulle tværtimod forstås som en orden under udarbejdelse. En tidlig lovtekst fra kolonien fortæller, hvordan denne orden, der på en gang er materiel og politisk, skal virke på øjet igennem dens eksemplaritet: "for seeing a liuely pattern of industry, order, and comliness, wee are all of vs rather swayed vnto the same by a visible object" (Strachey 1612, 38). En orden er et mønster, der står for øjet. Denne lovtekst synes at knytte fortællingen om stedets orden og mobilitetens overskridelse til en autoritativ magtdiskurs. En sidste forbindelse understreger denne relation. Iblandt de papirer, som Smith og de andre kolonister havde haft med sig, da de rejste fra England, var en række instruktioner skrevet af Virginia-kompagniet. En af disse skrivelser udfolder denne utryghed ved sømændenes rolle i hierarkiet på en måde, der får Smiths fortælling til at stå som opfyldelsen af en profeti. Forfatteren, der oftest regnes for at være Richard Hakluyt, advarer imod sømændenes mobile tilbøjeligheder - at de vil stikke af med skibene og ødelægge handelen med indianerne. I samme ombæring beordres det: "Suffer no man to return but by pasport from the president and Council nor to write any Letter of any thing that may Discourage others." ([Hakluyt] 1969, 53-54).<sup>3</sup> Kontrollen med bevægelse og kontrollen med ordene er på denne måde også i denne autoritative diskurs bundet uløseligt sammen og rettet imod sømandens laster.

Historien om de talende sørøvere er bare en blandt flere i *A True Declaration*, der knytter sømandens bevægelse og dertilhørende tale til en undergravning af selve fællesskabet. Dette resulterer i en situation, hvor en mand ikke har sin sande værdi, men hvor alt i stedet fremstår 'blandet':

euery man ouervaluing his own worth, would be a Commander: euery man vnderprising his and others value, denied to be commanded" (Anon. 1610, 34).

Det retfærdige fællesskab er i denne diskurs en forestilling om en organisk helhed, hvori subjekterne indtager deres 'rette' pladser. Efter en oration gjort af autoriteten kureres 'the idle and restie

diseases’ i kolonien igennem ’unity’. At autoritetens tale tager form af en oration – altså en tale foran et folk med henblik på at overbevise – peger på teksternes åbenlyse arv fra tidens humanisme. Denne oration bringer en kur, som består i kendskabet til det rette arbejde - det, som hører til hver mands plads i en reguleret offentlighed: ”every man knoweth his charge, and dischargeth the same with alacrity” (ibid., 48). Hver mand har fået tildelt et sted - en plads i en topografi, som er udsagt af suverænen.

Fællesskabet er på denne måde en distribution af forskellige steder, som kan indtages af de retmæssige subjekter. Og denne regelmæssighed kaster nyt lys over en indledende passage, hvor det bemærkes: ”There is a great distance, betwixt the vulgar opinion of men, and the judicious apprehension of wise men” (ibid., 1). Denne distance må således også forstås som en forestillet, spatial distance imellem det gode fællesskabs offentlighed, styret af lederens tale, og den vulgære menings private forførelse iblandt de mobile klasser i fællesskabets periferi. Den sidstnævnte kategori knyttes også her til havet, når den i samme ombæring iscenesættes som ”the tide of vulgar opinion” (ibid.).

### Det formgivende sværd

Fællesskabets topografi og dennes relation til forsøget på at fortælle en historie om autoritet er måske tydeligst i William Stracheys *A True Reportory* - et langt brev sendt hjem fra Virginia, der fortæller om Sir Thomas Gates rejse til kolonien i 1609-1610, og som blev trykt af Samuel Purchas i 1625. Gates var en del af kompagniets forsøg på at genetablere autoritet bl.a. gennem nye, militære love. Imidlertid kom denne ekspedition i første omgang ikke kolonien til undsætning, da den led skibbrud på Bermuda og først efter 9 måneder kunne rejse videre. Det er begivenhederne på Bermuda, som er interessante, da autoriteten her udfordres af en række hændelser, hvor folket handler imod fællesskabets orden.

Grundet denne udfordring har Stracheys tekst været genstand for stor opmærksomhed iblandt marx-inspirerede historikere og litteraturforskere (Canny 1978; Greenblatt 1988; Rediker og Linebaugh 2000; Netzloff 20034). Men hvor disse analyser forsøger at indskrive tekstens beskrivelse af modstand i en socio-økonomisk sammenhæng af tidlig klassekonflikt (med sømanden som proto-proletariat), vil jeg her forsøge at undersøge, hvordan teksten udfolder



denne konflikt imellem autoritet og subjekt i termer, som er knyttet til en topografi over fællesskabet og dets steder. Opgaven er at undersøge, hvordan teksten konstruerer suverænenens magt som en formgivning eller opdeling. Med andre ord er autoritet også i Stracheys tekst knyttet til evnen til at udstede steder og dermed definere fællesskabets grænse.

Jeg vil derfor hævde, at Stracheys tekst kan læses som et forsøg på at gøre noget ved en æstetisk form. Og denne handling lignes med et ’sværd’, der skærer fællesskabets excesser væk:

the Lord Governour, and Captaine Generall, deliuered some few words vnto the Company, laying many blames vpon them for many vanities, and their Idlennesse, earnestly wishing, that he might no more finde it so, least he should be compelled to draw the sword of Iustice, to cut off such delinquents, which he had much rather, he protested, draw in their defence, to protect them from iniuries. (Purchas 1625, 4:1754)

Det er således sværdets beskæring, der drager grænsen imellem fællesskabets indre og ydre. Sværdet som formgiver kendes både fra bibelske fortællinger og fra Hobbes, der bruger sværdet som figur for retfærdigheden, der skal holde folket ”in awe” (Hobbes 1999, 112). Sværdet skal således konstituere en offentlighed, der er statisk. Imidlertid udøver selve passagen også en mere implicit beskæring. Det er netop i autoritetens tale og dens trussel om loven, at fællesskabet tildeles en offentlig sfære - et sted, som er fælles, men som alligevel tilhører den igennem hvis tale den fremkommer. Fællesskabet har dermed strengt taget kun et fælles sprog, såfremt talen af dette sprog er nøje fordelt imellem den, der taler og de, der lytter. Således er det netop orationens fordeling af talen, identisk med sværdet, der kan give fællesskabet, hvad Smith i tilsvarende og meget rammende passage kalder: ”a disposition, forme and order” (Smith 1624, 187).

Stracheys tekst er således kongruent med den forestilling om fællesskab som en form, der findes i de samtidige tekster om Virginia. Men tekstens beskrivelser af udfordringerne som denne formgivende handling møder, gør os i stand til at kaste yderligere lys over denne forestillede topografi.

Bermuda viser sig som en paradisisk ø, der frister sømandens appetit. Selve skibbruddet figurerer som en udjævning af fællesskabets hierarki, der ødelægges af havet. Og Strachey forsøger ihærdigt at knytte denne udviskning af hierarkiet til sømandens tale. I denne gerning fortæller han om den tale, som cirkulerer iblandt de sømænd, der ikke længere føler sig bundet til skibets hierarki, da skibet selv opsluges af bølgerne. Sømændenes tale lokker det nødstedte fællesskab, og denne cirkulation af fortællinger står i direkte modsætning til den orden, som er visuel og regelmæssig. Folket beskrives derfor som:

men of such distempered bodies, and infected minds, whom no examples daily before their eyes, either of goodness or punishment, can deterre from their habituall impieties, or terrifie from a shameful death (Purchas 1625, 4:1750).

Fællesskabet lider, da selv eksemplet, som skinner for øjnene af folket, ikke bliver forstået. Dermed kan folket ikke kende sin plads. I stedet strejker sømændene og formår derfor ikke at gøre sig nyttige for det fælles bedste, der her består i arbejdet med de skibe, som er nødvendige for, at autoriteten Gates kan komme Virginia til undsætning.

Med sig får disse irregulære sømænd en mindre forsamling, og i denne er der folk, som er 'seditious' og "sectary in points of religion". De plotter om at ville bryde "from the society of the Colony, and like outlawes retired into the woods" (ibid., 4:1743). Her afslører Stracheys spatiale strategi sig. Den politiske udfordring må vises som tilhørende et territorium, der ikke er sted for fællesskab som sådan. Skoven som en trope for vildskab har på dette tidspunkt allerede en lang historie (Le Goff 1988, 136; Nielsen 2011, 167-171). I forhold til den orden af synlighed, som disse fortællinger kredser om, er det desuden klart, at i skoven er netop synet ofte blokeret. Og i konteksten af de koloniale beretninger fra samtiden er dette territorium desuden uløseligt knyttet til indianeren. Ligesom det var tilfældet hos Smith, er sømanden dermed i sin irregularitet at ligne med den 'vilde'.

Ved at gøre fællesskabets grænse til en konkret grænse imellem et indre og et ydre med hver sin geografi kan Stracheys tekst holde fæl-

lesskabet identisk, imens 'det andet' tildeles sit eget ikke-sted. Der ved udviskes den forvirring, der ville være følgen af konkurrerende ytringer om fællesskabet indenfor dette selv. Flerheden af tale gøres til en modsætning imellem et fællesskab, som er ren offentlighed, og en tale, der figurer udenfor fællesskabet som sådan.

Komplottet opdages, og mytteristernes straf er at blive eksileret på en lille nabø, hvorved straffen forstærker afstanden imellem de to grupper. Disse folk får dermed det ønske, som Strachey tilskriver dem opfyldt. De kommer bogstaveligt talt til at leve udenfor fællesskabet<sup>5</sup>. Imidlertid er der hurtigt andre, der i det hemmelige planlægger lignende gerninger. Iblandt disse er en ung mand ved navn Stephen Hopkins med meget "knowledge in the Scriptures". Hopkins tjener som præstens degn, men synes også at have irreligiøse ideer:

[Hopkins] alleaged substantiall arguments, both ciuill and diuine (the Scripture falsely quoted) that it was no breach of honesty, conscience, nor Religion, to decline from the obedience of the Gouvernour, or refuse to goe any further, led by his authority (except it so pleased themselues) since the authority ceased when the wracke was committed, and with it, they were all then freed from the gouernment of any man; and for a matter of Conscience, it was not vnknowne to the meanest, how much we were therein bound each one to prouide for himselfe, and his owne family. (Purchas 1625, 4:1744)

Hopkins tale synes at inspirere sømændene, for Strachey fortæller, at en gruppe i et lovløst og 'giddy' komplot: "conceiued that our Gouvernour indeede neither durst, nor had authority to put in execution, or passe the act of Iustice vpon anyone, how treacherous or impious so euer" (ibid., 4:1744). At Hopkins citeres åbner imidlertid Stracheys diskurs. Som Judith Butler har argumenteret, er citationen af det transgressive en potentiel kilde til ambivalens, da konteksten for citationen ikke endeligt er i stand til at fastholde citatets læsning (Butler 1997, 147-153). Dette citat er ikke anderledes. I Hopkins ord høres andet end blot den uvidende sømands egeninteresse. Strachey indrømmer da også, at vi her har at gøre med en tale, som er særlig farlig. Den synes at have maskeret sig

som en lærd tale - en af den type taler, som ellers tilhører netop den regulerede offentlighed. Allerede her synes Stracheys symmetriske modsætninger derfor at blive udfordret af ord, som han i sin citation forsøger at omforme. Og selvom argumentet tilskrives en misfortolkning af Guds ord, er der også mere på spil end blot en mands religiøse afvej - ikke mindst når argumentet relateres til den foregående strejke og de efterfølgende udtryk af diffus solidaritet blandt sømændene. Den symmetri af lydighed/ulydighed, som Strachey forsøger at etablere, forskydes derved af citatets polemik om, hvad autoritet som sådan 'er'. For citatets brug af ordet 'authority' svarer ikke til den forståelse af autoritet, man ellers finder i Stracheys tekst, hvor denne er evig og givet af båndet til både gud og kongemagten i London. Autoriteten er i Hopkins argument bundet, og derfor er virkningen af dennes ord begrænset.

Denne læsning er imidlertid kun mulig, hvis Stracheys forsøg på at omskrive Hopkins argument suspenderes. Og netop tekstens forsøg på containment er uløseligt knyttet til de spatiale troper, som strukturerer koloniseringsfortællingerne. Stracheys tekst forsøger således at give denne tale en fast plads i en symmetrisk orden af lydighed/ulydighed, som samtidig er et fast indenfor/udenfor. Dette gøres blandt andet ved at ækvivalere Hopkins tale med en anden oprørske stemme tilhørende en langt mindre veltalende person ved navn Henry Paine. Paine angriber sin kommandør og taler 'evill language', som Strachey imidlertid afbryder, da dens 'vnreuerent tearmes' ville "offend the modest eare too much", hvis denne blev udtrykt "in his owne phrase". Her viger Strachey således fra at give disse argumenter for meget lyd og vælger i stedet at give sin egen udlægning af ordenes regering ved at citere noget af Paines argument, der igen er en afvisning af autoritetens evne til at fælde dom. Strachey lader passagen slutte med: "and therefore let the Gouvernour (said hee) kisse, &c", hvorved løftet om ukvemsordet udgrænser en andethed til den gode taleorden. Den radikalitet man kan skimte i Hopkins argument forsvinder derfor i Paines eder, der udviser det sagte til fordel for at betragte talemåden og dens relation til fællesskabet. Det ender da også med, at denne tale ophører ved selve demonstrationen af den evne Hopkins siger, at autoriteten ikke har. Paines ord bliver i stedet selv genstand for en 'public discourse'. Dermed gøres Paine til et eksempel i en fælleshed, hvori stemmerne er nøje fordelt og svarer overens med fælleska-

bets topografi. I fælleshedens sfære slutter passagen således med, at guvernøren "who had now the eyes of the whole Colony fixed upon him" dømmer Paine til døden (Purchas 1625, 4:1744-1745). Dermed ophøjes fællesskabet igennem autoritetens sværd i en retfærdig eksemplarisk distribution af tale og syn. Fællesheden tilhører igen historiens retmæssige aktør<sup>6</sup>.

Dette får de sidste modstandere til at flygte ind i skoven. Hermed gøres det radikale opgør med autoriteten til fællesskabets diametrale modsætning i en geografi over fællesskab, hvor det illegitime kun finder sted udenfor fællesskabets rum. Da de rejsende endelig forlader øen, efterlader de således en lille gruppe, der ikke overraskende er sømænd. En af disse har slået en anden sømand ihjel og er dømt til hængning, men iblandt sømændene hænger en irregulær solidaritet: "in despiht and disdaine that Iustice should be shewed vpon a Sayler, and that one of their crue should be an example to others, [...] they cut his bands, and conueyed him into the Woods" (ibid., 4:1746). Sømændens solidaritet vises dermed som en reaktion imod selve lovens virkemåde i eksemplets synlighed. Sømændene afviser selve eksemplariteten, og denne negation tilhører med deres flugt den vildes territorium. Dermed omskriver Strachey hele afvisningen af autoriteten i det opløste fællesskab og gør den til udtryk for noget, der slet ikke tilhører fællesskabets sted.

Smith præsenterer i en enkelt passage en tilsvarende konstruktion. Her vises autoritetens sværd som den ganske håndfaste evne til igennem ordet at forvise de, som måtte forbyde sig på ordenen. I forsøget på at få folket til at arbejde til stedets fælles bedste befaler han således: "one that gathereth not every day as much as I doe, the next daie shall be set beyond the river, and for ever be banished from the fort, and liue there or starue" (Smith 1612, 447). Transgressoren vil finde sig på den forkerte side af fællesskabets geografiske demarkationslinje – afskåret af autoritetens sværd.

### Konklusion

Denne læsning af koloniseringsteksterne om Jamestown har været et forsøg på at vise, hvordan beretningerne om koloniseringen er fortællinger om suverænitet, der portrætterer denne suverænitet som magten til at forme fællesskabet. Denne formgivning kan på denne vis knyttes til et forhold imellem ord, lov og topografi. At være autoritet betyder således at varetage et fælles bedste, der ud-

folder sig i en synlig offentlighed, hvor suverænen har alle øjne fikseret på sig. Dette kan forstås som fællesskabets sted. Forstyrrelser af denne orden fremstilles som irregulære bevægelser og udvekslinger i fællesskabets margin. Og talen knyttes til disse to modsatte lokaliteter. Dels er der orationen, der som suverænenes magt behersker den synlige offentlige sfære. Og dels er der udtrykket for begæret, der ligesom mændene cirkulerer i en privat sfære, der er udenfor fællesskabet. Denne diskurs udfolder dette skema i fortællinger om lovens håndhævelse af skellet imellem et entydigt indre og et ydre, der tilhører transgressoren. Derved bliver loven knyttet til evnen til at etablere en geografi af forskel imellem den tale, som hører hjemme indenfor autoritetens territorium, og den tale, som kun kan eksistere udenfor dette. Sværdet figurerer som metafor for selve denne evne til at give form på fællesskabet. I stedet for at eksistere i fællesskabets rum bliver sømandens laster og mobilitet derfor fremstillet som tilhørende et andet sted - skovene, på den anden side af floden eller en forladt ø. Og da evnen til den retfærdige tale i denne forestilling således er knyttet til den offentlighed, som findes i fællesskabets sted og arbejdet for det fælles bedste, bliver disse perifære steder stemmer ulæselige i den koloniale magtdiskurs.

## Notes

- 1 'Performances' skal her forstås som handlinger, der fremviser fællesskabets lov for øjnene af et publikum. Derved skaber de en opdeling imellem de, som bærer loven og de, som er underkastet den.
- 2 Rancière giver en definition af denne æstetiske dimension: "It is a delimitation of spaces and times, of the visible and the invisible, of speech and noise, that simultaneously determines the place and the stakes of politics as a form of experience." (Rancière 2004, 13)
- 3 I samme ombæring opfordrer Hakluyt til, at der blot efterlades et enkelt skib i kolonien, og at dets anker holdes på land. Ingen må kunne forlade kolonien uden ret dertil. Se [Hakluyt] 1969: 50-53
- 4 Teksten er desuden kendt for at være et muligt forlæg for Shakespeares *The Tempest*.
- 5 Giorgio Agambens læsninger af Carl Schmitt synes at melde sig som en mulig fortolkningsramme for den lov, som her forestiller sig sin rekonstitution som magten til at forvise.

- 6 Lauren Benton har i sin diskussion af forholdet imellem geografi og lov demonstreret, hvordan selve det, at udøve en lovgerning såsom en henrettelse kan læses som et forsøg på at lægge krav på et territorium (Benton 2010, 57). Dermed kan beskrivelsen af Paines henrettelse læses som en performance af suveræniteten, der skal gøre Bermuda engelsk.

## Referencer

- Anon., 1610. *True declaration of the estate of the colonie in Virginia : vvith a confutation of such scandalous reports as haue tended to the disgrace of so worthy an enterprise. Published by aduise and direction of the Councill of Virginia.* London: William Barret
- Benton, L., 2010. *A Search For Sovereignty: Law and Geography in European Empires, 1400-1900.* New York: Cambridge University Press
- Butler, J., 1997. *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative.* London: Routledge
- Canny, N., 1978. The permissive frontier: the problem of social control in English settlements in Ireland and Virginia 1550-1650. I: K.R. Andrews, N. Canny og P.E.H. Hair red.. *The Westward Enterprise : English activities in Ireland, the Atlantic, and America 1480-1650.* Liverpool: Liverpool University Press. s. 17-44
- Greenblatt, S., 1988. *Shakespearean Negotiations : The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England.* Oxford: Oxford University Press
- [Hakluyt, R.], 1609. Instructions given by way of Advice. Trykt i Philip Barbour, red.. *The Jamestown Voyages Under the First Charter 1606-1609.* 2 bd. Glasgow: The Hakluyt Society. 1:49-1:54
- Harriot, T., 1972. *A Briefe and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia : The complete 1590 Theodor De Bry Edition.* New York: Dover Publications
- Hobbes, T., 1999: *The Elements of Law : Human Nature and De Corpore Politico.* Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Le Goff, J., 1988. *Medieval Civilization 400-1500.* Oxford: Blackwell
- Netzloff, M., 2003. *England's Internal Colonies : Class, Capital, And the Literature of Early Modern English Colonialism.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan

- Nielsen, T. K., 2011. Henry of Livonia on Woods and Wilderness. I: Marek Tamm m.fl., red.. *Crusading and Chronicle Writing on the Medieval Baltic Frontier*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 157-178
- Purchas, S., 1625. *Haklvytvs posthumus, or, Pvrchas His Pilgrimes. In Five Bookes*. 4 bd. London: H. Fetherston
- Quinn, D.B., 1974. *England and the Discovery of America 1481-1620*. London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd.
- Rancière, J., 1999. *Disagreement*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press
- Rancière, J., 2004. *The Politics of Aesthetics : The Distribution of the Sensible*. London: Continuum
- Rediker, M. og Linebaugh, P., 2000. *The Many-Headed Hydra : The Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic*. London: Verso
- Sievers, J., 2006. Drowned Pens and Shaking Hands. *The William and Mary Quarterly* 63:4, 743-776
- Smith, J., 1612. A Map of Virginia. Vvith a Description of the Covntrey, The Commodities, People, Government and Religion. Genoptrykt i: P. Barbour, red.. *The Jamestown Voyages Under the First Charter 1606-1609*. Cambridge: The Hakluyt Society. 2:327-464
- Smith, J., 1624. *The Generall Historie of Virginia, New-England, and the Summer isles with the names of the Adventurers, Planters, and Governours from their first beginning An: 1584 to this present 1624*. London: Michael Sparkes
- Strachey, W. 1612. *For The Colony in Virginea Britannia. Lavves Diuine, Morall and Martiall, &c*. London: Walter Burre



## Death or taxes

Choosing itineraries between the Persian Gulf and the Mediterranean in the mid-18th century

*Eivind Heldaas Seland*

*(born 1975) works as a postdoctoral fellow at the University of Bergen, Norway. His main academic interest is in pre-Islamic trade between the Mediterranean and Indian Ocean, but with a strong side interest in comparative history and the long-term patterns of premodern trade, travel and communication.*

### Abstract

In the 18th century, the fastest passage between Europe and the Indian Ocean was by way of Syria and Iraq. Travellers were faced with the choice between a number of routes across the desert and along the rivers, each with advantages and disadvantages in terms of price, time and security. This article discusses the choices made by a selection of European mid-18th-century travellers utilising perspectives from New institutional economics, arguing that their decisions must be interpreted in light of their status as outsiders and the socio-economic structure of the societies they moved through.

### 18th-century travellers in Syria and Iraq

As the 18th-century statesman Benjamin Franklin pointed out, “in this world nothing can be said to be certain, except death and taxes” (1833, p. 619). Valid as this observation might be, sometimes there is a choice between the two. Before the start of steam-service in the Red Sea in 1830, the swiftest passage between Europe and India was by way of Syria and Iraq. Ships needed at least six months for the journey around Africa, but couriers, diplomats and individual travellers frequently utilised the shortcut between the Mediterranean and the Persian Gulf, following either the large Mesopotamian rivers or the merchant caravans crossing the Syrian Desert be-

tween Aleppo, Baghdad and Basra. While the river-routes offered provisions and infrastructure for the traveller, many nevertheless preferred the strenuous 30 days haul across the desert. Reports of their travels are preserved in diaries, travelogues and letters, which contain considerations on the advantages and disadvantages of different travel options. These sources provide an opportunity to look behind the decisions made by people who were rarely travelling for leisure, and who had to deal with very real concerns for the safety of life and property – death and taxes. This article approaches the experience of a selection of such travellers in light of theory from New Institutional Economics. The aim is to better appreciate why the shorter, cheaper or the safer itinerary was not always the most attractive alternative when choosing among the plurality of routes between the Mediterranean and the Persian Gulf.

Modern academic interest in these early travellers has been more limited than in their 19th- and early 20th-century aristocratic counterparts such as Burton, Digby, Bell and Lawrence. Douglas Caruthers published three of the travellers' reports utilised in this article in his *Desert Route to India* (1929), which also contains an overview of other European travellers and their accounts, and Christina Phelps Grant depended heavily on travel descriptions for her published dissertation, *The Syrian Desert* (1937). Mohamad Ali Hachicho has compiled a catalogue and summary of known English travel books of the eighteenth century, which also covers works by travellers who went to India by other routes, thus also including the riverine and maritime alternatives to the desert route (Hachicho, 1964). These early contributions all emphasise the positivist question of what contribution these early travellers made in collecting and disseminating knowledge about the Middle East in Europe. In the wake of Edward Saids *Orientalism* (1978), research turned to focus more on travellers' part in shaping the western image of the "other" both in the sense of 18th-century Middle Eastern society (Murphey, 1990, pp. 292-3) and in the sense of the historical landscape of the distant Oriental past (Ooghe, 2007; Sancisi-Weerdenburg and Drijvers, 1991). As Murphey argues, however, although most pre-industrial European travellers in the Middle East were clearly biased, this was before aristocrats had extended their grand tours to include the Middle East, and before westerners had developed a clear idea of their own perceived superiority

towards other groups. Western travellers in the region were generally practical men, mostly merchants, soldiers and artisans, moving through what was in many cases hostile and dangerous landscapes. Their decisions could ultimately become matters of survival, and their writings, although certainly influenced by their cultural background, reflect this in a generally practical, fact-oriented and open-minded approach (Murphey, 1990). The practical vein in 18th-century travel literature can be utilised, not in order to reconstruct the Middle Eastern society of the period, as most pre-Said scholarship aimed to, but to better understand the problems and priorities of the travellers who put down their advice in writing.

### Difficult decisions

In late 1765, 32-year old Carsten Niebuhr found himself in Basra in southern Mesopotamia. He was the sole survivor of the Danish scientific expedition to Southern Arabia, which had set out almost five years earlier. After making his way from India, up the Persian Gulf and through Iran. Niebuhr now had to decide how to cover the next leg of his journey, which was a ca 1400 km haul across Mesopotamia and Syria to Aleppo, where European representations could be found.

Niebuhr was a conscientious man. Although he was originally a subordinate member of the expedition and although Mesopotamia was not its main objective, he carefully recorded the information that would lead to the official expedition report, *Beschreibung von Arabien* (1772) and to his published diary, *Reisebeschreibung nach Arabien und andern umliegenden Ländern* (1774/1778). His diary contains not only information on his own travels, but any information he thought could be of use to European travellers following in his footsteps, including on the routes between the Persian Gulf and the Mediterranean.

Niebuhr describes four main itineraries (fig. 1): (1) a caravan across the desert to Aleppo, organised by merchants and protected by Bedouin tribes, (2) an upriver passage to Baghdad followed by caravan to Damascus protected by Ottoman authorities, (3) a journey on and along the Euphrates, crossing over to Aleppo from Northern Syria, and (4) a voyage along the Tigris through Northern Iraq and Southern Turkey, reaching Aleppo by way of Mosul and Diyarbakır. The Baghdad-Damascus caravans, he reports, were the

most expensive and least safe option. This was because the role of *caravanbashi*, caravan leader, was auctioned by the Ottoman authorities, and the highest bidder had to make good his investment; also these caravans relied on hired guards rather than cooperation with the Bedouin tribes and thus had to pay more protection money. Moreover, he claimed, there had been several incidents where *caravanbashis* had deliberately arranged the plundering of their own caravans (1778, p. 238). Niebuhr does not reveal his reasons for not continuing along the Euphrates, but security seems to have been among them, as he several times mentions Bedouin raids along the river (1778, pp. 243-5). He would have preferred the desert route, because it was faster, but no caravan was due to leave for Aleppo because trade has been disrupted by political conflict in the Persian Gulf (1778, pp. 235-6). He describes the desert route as quite safe, as long as there was no war among the Arab tribes or between them and the Ottomans, the *caravanbashi* was honest and providing that the traveller spoke the language and was used to living according to local customs, but as he comments himself, these circumstances rarely coincided (1778, p. 237).

Carsten Niebuhr was one of the few western travellers who could live up to most of these personal requirements to individuals opting for a safe passage by way of the desert route. His sojourn in Egypt and his journeys in Yemen had made him familiar with the language, and he had gradually taken up local diet and clothing. As for the political conditions, they were outside his control. For reasons of safety he settled for the Tigris route (1778, p. 334), and spent six months underway to Aleppo, albeit with extended stops in cities such as Baghdad, Mosul, Mardin and Diyarbakır, on a passage he could have covered in 25-50 days if times had been more stable and he had been lucky enough to catch a caravan.

### Crossing the desert

The desert route between northwestern Syria and Southern Mesopotamia was perhaps the shortest route in terms of distance, but as Niebuhr's advice implies, it was not necessarily the easiest. Desert travellers had to arrange with animals and to bring most provisions for a long journey. For safety, directions and water, they depended on cooperation with the nomadic Bedouin population, whose territory the caravans passed through. That such considerations were

important is best illustrated by the fact that from the Bronze Age to the early twentieth century, the Euphrates Valley was always the preferred corridor of communication between the Persian Gulf and the Mediterranean (Finet, 1969; Gawlikowski, 1994, p. 32). There are two exceptions to this: The first three centuries AD, when trade seems to have deviated from the Euphrates valley towards the desert city of Palmyra (Gawlikowski, 1994; Gawlikowski, 1996), and the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries, when biannual caravans crossed the Syrian Desert between Aleppo and Basra (Carruthers, 1929; Grant, 1937). In antiquity, the desert route seems to have been created by political tension between the Parthian and Roman empires and political fragmentation in the Euphrates valley (Gawlikowski, 1994, p. 27; Gawlikowski, 1996, p. 139; Millar, 1998, pp. 126-7). Related factors seem to have played a role in the Ottoman period: the extortion of local and government officials, and the threat of Bedouin raids in the desert as well as along the rivers.

While Niebuhr never attempted the desert crossing, others did. Portuguese couriers started using both the Euphrates and desert routes for urgent despatches between Lisbon and India in the sixteenth century (Carruthers, 1929, pp. xvi-xvii). English travellers, at first connected with the founding of the Levant Company and later in the employment of the East India Company appear from 1580 onwards (1929, pp. xix-xxx). Italian, Dutch and German travellers are also attested (1929, pp. xvi-xxx).

One of the most thorough descriptions of the desert passage was made by William Beawes, an otherwise unknown Englishman travelling by this route on his way to India in 1745. Together with his travel-companion, Robert Golightly, he approached the English community in Aleppo and local travelling merchants for advice on the different routes. Going in the opposite direction from Niebuhr, he also had the option of swift downriver passage on boats or rafts, so in this case the desert was not necessarily the fastest alternative. Niebuhr's northern route he describes as the most frequently used, but he dismisses it in his own case, because he found the detour to Mosul too long, and because the rafts of inflated skins (*kellek*) used downriver on the Tigris had a reputation for accidents (Beawes, 1929, p. 5). The passage along the Euphrates, which was not explicitly considered by Niebuhr, Beawes deemed the easiest and most comfortable, but exposed to impositions, probably by local authori-

ties, and also to robbers (1929, pp. 5-6). Beawes also describes an overland option close to the Euphrates, with never more than two nights outside town and villages. Then there were two varieties of the desert route: either to Hit on the Euphrates and downriver to Baghdad and Basra from there, or directly from Aleppo to Basra, the route preferred by Beawes (1929, pp. 6-7). Considerations of time and safety seem to have been the most important when he and his travel-companion decided to opt for the desert option.

Bartholomew Plaisted travelled from Basra to Aleppo in 1750. He was on his way home to England, where he planned to complain to the directors of the East India Company after losing his post as engineer and surveyor in Calcutta (Carruthers, 1929, pp. 51-52). Plaisted chose the desert route because he arrived in Basra in late April, when the seasonal flood in the Euphrates caused the passage to Baghdad to take an estimated 40 days (Plaisted, 1929, p. 64), more than twice the normal time, while he was told that a desert caravan was due to depart shortly. This, however, proved to be premature, as the caravan had to wait for permission from the Turkish governor, and Plaisted was not underway until early June (1929, p. 59, p. 68). He states that the direct desert route was faster and cheaper than going by way of Baghdad and from there to Aleppo by caravan or to Mosul as Niebuhr did, but that the desert traveller risked meeting with robbers or dishonest travel companions, and had to make do with bad water and without fresh food (1929, pp. 102-3).

Our fourth and last traveller was John Carmichael, who travelled from Aleppo to Basra the year after Plaisted, on his way back to India after an unsuccessful complaint to the East India Company's directors in London. Carmichael does not go into details about the different routes in the way Niebuhr and Beawes did, but states that both the Euphrates and the Mosul-Tigris routes were better options for those "having money and leisure" (Carmichael, 1929, p. 177). All the travellers, by the way, were also concerned with the ruins and ancient remains they passed underway, and Carmichael (1929, p. 177), Plaisted (1929, p. 103) and Beawes (1929, p. 6) all mention the possibilities for sightseeing and antiques hunting along the road.

Summing up, there were three main options for travel between northern Syria and southern Mesopotamia in the mid 18th century (fig. 1), both with several variations and combinations:

1. Desert passages between Aleppo and Baghdad or Basra, alternatively between Damascus and Baghdad (Niebuhr). The direct desert passage is described by all our travellers as faster and by most as cheaper than other options, but depending on departure times of caravans, political conditions in the desert and exposed to robbers as well as the hardships of desert travel. Niebuhr (1778, pp. 238-9) and Plaisted (1929, p. 103) both report that passage with the caravans from Baghdad was more expensive than with those leaving from Basra, and Niebuhr (*ibid.*) deemed this route less safe. Still, Plaisted advises travellers from Basra to proceed via Baghdad if they can, in order to keep the Tigris option open if the waiting time before the next westbound caravan is too long.

2: Riverine passage on the Euphrates. This is described by Carmichael (1929, p. 177) and Beawes (1929, p. 6) as a fast, scenic and comfortable downriver alternative with good access to food and water, but travellers were exposed to impositions by authorities and Bedouin raids from the desert. None of our travellers discuss the use of this route for the upriver journey.

3: Riverine passage on (downriver) or along (upriver) the Tigris to Mosul, overland to Aleppo. This was the route taken by Niebuhr, and considered the "common" itinerary by Beawes (1929, p. 5). Its main advantage was its relative security and uninterrupted local access to water and provisions for travellers and animals. Both Beawes and Niebuhr, however, were concerned about the possibility of robber-attacks along certain stretches of the road, and neither had a high opinion of the *kellek*, rafts used for crossing and downriver passage (Beawes 1929, pp. 4-5; Niebuhr 1778, p. 348).

As for the motivation of the travellers, they were concerned with time, cost, security, comfort, sights and scenery. Comfort, sight and scenery are mentioned, but never given priority. All the travellers discuss costs, although they travelled in relative affluence, and Beawes (1929, p. 33) and Plaisted (1929, p. 103) both comment on the comparably low expenses connected to travel in the region. Emphasis, however, is placed on avoiding taxation and keeping protection money at a minimum, probably one of the main reasons for the operation of the desert route (Carruthers 1929, pp. xxxi-xxxii). Time also seems to have been important. Carmichael and Plaisted had undertaken the long voyage to England in order to complain about conceived injustice experienced in the service of the East In-

dia Company, and naturally had little inclination to linger under-way. We are not informed about Beawes' business, but it is likely that he was also on his way to India. Niebuhr was heading home after a long journey, and although he spent almost six months *en route* between Basra and Aleppo, he never lingered longer than he had to in order to find a caravan, so that he did not have to travel alone, and he only chose the Tigris route because there was no caravan heading from Basra when he arrived and because he did not trust the caravans from Baghdad. For all travellers, however, considerations of security had priority. This caused Niebuhr to stay away from the Baghdad caravans and Carmichael and Beawes to prefer a strenuous desert voyage to a comparably comfortable downriver passage on the Euphrates, ironically paying the same Bedouins who represented a threat of robbery along the river for protection in the desert.

### **Which way to go? Organisations, institutions, protection and predation**

How then can this collection of individual stories reveal anything about the nature of early modern trade and travel? Neo-classical economic theory would have explained the choice of routes in terms of transaction costs (cf. North 1990, pp. 27-30). This is the taxes part of the death and taxes argument, albeit in an extended sense of the word. Although difficult to calculate, the rational traveller would choose the route which he perceived to give the lowest total costs including taxes, transport, sustenance, security costs and so on. This approach, however, misses the death part of the argument – the very real opportunity for violence (whether lethal or not) and seizure of property. Here insights from the field of New Institutional Economics might help us look behind the idiosyncrasies and short term considerations preserved by our sources.

The North American discourse on taxes, which Benjamin Franklin was a part of, was concerned with legitimacy and representation. In the Ottoman Empire his contemporary travellers moved through, no one could have cared less. As Peder Bang points out in his comparative study of premodern empires, the line between taxation, protection money and predation was thin, in many cases beyond discernment (2008, pp. 202-238). Douglass C. North and his colleagues Wallis and Weingast conceptualise this difference by divid-



ing societies into the minority of “open access societies”, such as Franklin’s young United States of America and the majority of “natural states” or limited access societies, such as the Ottoman Empire of the eighteenth century and many modern states. Among the traits of open access societies are the wide distribution of the right to form organisations and the foundation of social relationships on impersonal variables such as rule of law, property rights etc. Natural states one the other hand are dominated by ruling coalitions restricting access to forming organisations and basing relationships on personal variables such as friendship, kinship ethnicity etc (North, Wallis, Weingast 2009, pp. 11-12). North et al. also state that all societies have to cope with the problem of violence, and that they do this by way of organisations and institutions, organisations being “groups of individuals pursuing a mix of common and individual goals”, and institutions “the patterns of interaction that govern and constrain the relationships of individuals” (2009, p. 15; North 1990, pp. 4-5). In the landscape between Aleppo and Basra in the mid-eighteenth century as described in the travel literature discussed here, we find a number of such organisation, notably the Ottoman government, Bedouin tribes, Kurdish tribes and the Safavid Empire. These were all competing political organisations specialising in the containment and use of violence with the aim of raising revenue by means of institutions such as gifts, protection money, taxation and robbery. Failure to comply with the demands for revenue in various forms would lead to the withdrawal of protection and in many cases the transition to predation – from the containment of violence to the actual use of violence.

The most important difference between these eighteenth-century travellers and the nineteenth-century leisure and adventure travellers and explorers in the Middle East is perhaps in this emphasis on security: Beawes, Plaisted, Carmichael and their many colleagues were not travelling for the experience of it, but because they had to, and although they always acted with imperfect information, they also always tried to minimise risk. Niebuhr was the only explorer in this small selection of travellers, but the results and preliminary reports from his expedition had already been sent ahead, and now he was going home, and was under no obligation to take risks. As Murphey points out, from the age of imperialism until today, European travellers in the Middle East have been protected by virtue of

their nationality. For the 18th-century European traveller, his status as an outsider and Christian was primarily a problem. European powers were still not militarily superior to the Ottoman Empire and neither capable of nor interested in operating in the Middle East (1990, pp. 294-7). The British factory in Aleppo or the Danish consul in Constantinople operated at the mercy of their hosts, and could do little to help their countrymen if they got into trouble. In the terms of organisations and institutions outlined above, our travellers were excluded from the organisations they had to deal with, and as outsiders they lacked the social relationships integrating the societies they travelled through, and were thus at a disadvantage when interacting with other individuals by means of the local institutions. The reports of our travellers must be read in this light. In order to cope with their exposed position, they teamed up with other Europeans they met underway, and depended on the advice of resident countrymen and seasoned travellers. Niebuhr, in lieu of European company, enrolled in a Jewish company of travellers (Niebuhr 1778, pp. 334-335), thus joining up with another group of outsiders. The travellers also hired servants, typically from Middle Eastern Christian minorities such as Greeks, Georgians or Armenians, to act as interpreters and take care of practicalities. Importantly, by joining caravans, they also joined a sort of organisation, in the sense used by North et al. Doing this they placed themselves under the protection of the *caravanbashi*, typically a respected and experienced merchant (Beawes 1929, p. 13; Plaisted 192, pp. 98-100; Niebuhr 1778, p. 238), who in return for the fees they had paid was under obligation to safeguard them from harm to life and property, thus taking care of their interaction with other organisations. By choosing the desert route, as the British travellers did, they could deal with a single *caravanbashi* for the whole journey, and this is probably one of the reasons why this route was considered the cheapest, while travellers going by way of the Tigris would have to deal with local or Ottoman authorities in a number of places and deal with a number of *caravanbashis* if they preferred to travel in company with others, as Niebuhr did. In this way they only had to interact with one organisation dealing in the protection/violence business rather than several.

The discussion above is based on the reports of four travellers only. They have not been selected because they are representative,

but because they shared their thoughts on the challenges of early modern travel. In this, however, they also have wider interest. This was information deemed useful and important by the people who recorded it and by those who read and in some cases published it, thus giving insight into the practicalities and sometimes hardships of early modern travel rarely glimpsed in the summary itineraries of preceding periods or the romantic travelogues that followed. In their emphasis not only on costs (taxes), but also on the possibility of violence (death), they highlight how social and political considerations influenced the decisions of early modern travellers in this part of the world as much as economic considerations did.

## References

- Bang, P. 2008. *The Roman Bazaar*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Beawes, W. 1929. Narrative of a Journey from Aleppo to Basra in April 1745. In: CARRUTHERS, D. (ed.) *The Desert Route to India*. London: The Hakluyt Society.
- Carmichael, J. 1929. A Journey from Aleppo to Basra in 1751. In: Carruthers, D. (ed.) *The Desert Route to India*. London: The Hakluyt Society.
- Carruthers, D. (ed.) 1929. *The Desert Route to India being the Journals of Four Travellers by the Great Desert Caravan Route between Aleppo and Basra 1745–1751*, London: Hakluyt Society.
- Finet, A. 1969. L'Euphrate, Route Commerciale de la Mesopotamie. *Annales Archéologiques Arabes Syriennes*, 19, 37-48.
- Franklin, B. 1833. *Memoirs of Benjamin Franklin vol. 1*, Philadelphia, M'Carty & Davis.
- Gawlikowski, M. 1994. Palmyra as a Trading Centre. *Iraq*, 56, 27-33.
- Gawlikowski, M. 1996. Palmyra and its Caravan Trade. *Les Annales Archeologiques Arabes Syriennes*, XLII, 139-144.
- Grant, C. P. 1937. *The Syrian Desert*, London, A. & C. Black.
- Hachicho, M. A. 1964. English Travel Books about the Arab near East in the Eighteenth Century. *Die Welt des Islams*, 9, 1-206.
- Millar, F. 1998. Caravan cities: the Roman Near East and long distance trade by land. In: Austin, M., Harries, J. & Smith, C. (eds.) *Modus Operandi: Essays in Honor of Geoffrey Rickman*. London: Institute of Classical Studies, School of Advanced Study, University of London.

- Murphey, R. 1990. Bigots or Informed Observers? A Periodization of Pre-Colonial English and European Writing on the Middle East. *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 110, 291-303.
- Niebuhr, C. 1778. *Reisebeschreibung nach Arabien und andern umliegenden Ländern*, vol. 2, Kopenhagen, Nicolaus Möller.
- North, D.C. 1990. *Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance*.
- North, D.C, J.J. Wallis and B.R. Weingast. 2009. *Violence and Social Orders. A Conceptual Framework for Interpreting Recorded Human History*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Ooghe, B. 2007. The Rediscovery of Babylonia: European Travelers and the Development of Knowledge on Lower Mesopotamia, Sixteenth to Early Nineteenth Century. *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain & Ireland*. 17 (3), 231-252.
- Plaisted, B. 1929. Narrative of a Journey from Basra to Aleppo in April 1750. In: Carruthers, D. (ed.) *The Desert Route to India*. London: The Hakluyt Society.
- Sancisi-Weerdenburg, H and J.W. Drijvers 1991. *Through Travellers' Eyes. European travellers on the Iranian monuments*. Leiden, Eisenbrauns.

# The Parthians between Rome and China

Gan Ying's mission into the West (1st century AD)

**Leonardo Gregoratti,**

*PhD, is Post-Doc fellow at the University of Udine. In 2010 he was DAAD fellow at the University of Kiel, Germany in order to work on the publication of his PhD thesis : Between Rome and Ctesiphon, Royal authority and peripheral powers along the trade routes of the Parthian kingdom. Most of his work concerns the Roman Near East, Palmyra, the long distance Trade and the Parthian Kingdom.*

## Abstract

Following the expansion westwards of the Chinese Han Empire at the end of the 1st century AD the Parthian kingdom entered China's political horizon. Gan Ying, a Chinese envoy was at the head of a diplomatic mission charged with establishing direct contacts and business relationships with the Roman Empire, the final destination for most of the goods they were exporting to the West. Gan Ying was able to reach Arsacid-controlled south Mesopotamia. Although very close to the Roman territory he did not manage to go further and accomplish his task. The Parthian leaders, well aware of the commercial role they played between Rome and China, dissuaded him from trying to proceed. This largely unknown but extremely interesting episode in the ancient history of Asia provides direct evidence concerning the political and commercial role of Parthia, Rome's fierce enemy, in central Asia and along the Silk Route.

At the beginning of the 1940s the sinologist Homer H. Dubs speculated on the possibility that the small unit of one hundred men in "fish scale" formation which, according to Chinese sources was crushed by the Han cavalry at the Talas River battle in eastern Kazakhstan (36 BC), may have been formed by Roman legionaries cap-

tured by Parthians during the battle of Carrhae several years before (53 BC) and used as mercenaries by Zhizhi, a chieftain of the Xiongnu barbarians<sup>1</sup>. According to Dubs, these soldiers crossed the Euphrates frontier marking the edge of the Roman domains following Crassus' attempt to conquer Parthia (54 BC). Taken prisoners in the disaster at Carrhae they were sent to the central Asian Arsacid town of Merv (in nowadays eastern Turkmenistan), as stated by Pliny<sup>2</sup>, and employed as mercenaries by local tribes. Finding themselves again on the defeated side at Talas they were later recruited by the Chinese and moved to China.

Despite the fact that that hypothesis was soon considered as merely conjectural, with the general interest that Chinese culture and history aroused in recent years in Europe, Dubs' idea has also found new supporters. In the Liqian village, Yongchang county, north-western China, where the inhabitants claim Roman ancestry, "Roman Festivals" are organized regularly by the local Office of Tourism. Recently some modern writers picked up this fascinating idea using it as a background setting for some quite successful novels<sup>3</sup>.

Rome and China, the Empire of the eagle and that of the dragon were the two main states of the ancient world. They still constitute the "Empires" par excellence in the modern minds of Westerners and Asians respectively. They were the first states able to unify all the different local subjects in one stable political structure, deeply influencing the culture and civilization in those two different parts of the world. For this reason their model of state has remained alive over the centuries in both Europe and Asia as a source of inspiration for all the political subjects which succeeded and which tried to present themselves as legitimate heirs of their historical heritage. The Roman Empire and the Celestial Empire still today incarnate the archetype and historical model for every state structure<sup>4</sup>.

It is thus much more understandable the interest aroused by the possibility of contact and interchange among those political giants, the two cornerstones of historical experience in the West and Far East. The information provided by western sources concerning the importation of silk and other goods to the Roman Empire from the East prove that indirect trade contacts undoubtedly took place. Goods were exchanged among traders along that network of routes later known as the "Silk Road". The merchants active along this route were normally responsible for transporting goods along a de-

terminated portion of the itinerary. Usually they were supported by the political subjects lying on the traffic routes which considered the taxation of goods from the long distance trade between East and West an important source of income<sup>5</sup>.

The most important and powerful of these political subjects lying in a strategic position on the route connecting Roman territories with China was the Parthian Empire<sup>6</sup>

The kingdom of the Parthians (*Anxi* in the Chinese sources) was established a few decades after Alexander's death (in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC), in central Asia, close to the remotest borders of the Seleucid Empire. Its monarchs were members of the Arsacid dynasty and were able to gain the best advantages from the weakening of the house of Seleucos and the consequent disintegration of that huge Hellenistic state. They managed to spread their control over large territories of Southern Asia. The Parthian mounted armies, after overrunning the whole Iranian plateau, Babylonia and Mesopotamia, stopped on the eastern bank of the Euphrates river, western limit of the Arsacid expansion (2<sup>nd</sup> century BC). The Arsacid rule stretched from the Euphrates to north-western India, including Mesopotamia, Iran and all the territories lying between the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean to the south and the Caspian Sea and the Caucasus to the north.

Since then for more than three centuries Rome's expansionist goals in Mesopotamia and in the East were fiercely opposed by the Parthians.

The city of Selucia on the Tigris, a rich and populated metropolis close to the most vital centres of the Arsacid kingdom<sup>7</sup>, was the fundamental reference point in the sphere of movements of men and goods between the Eastern Parthian provinces, central Asia and Roman Syria. From the Hellenistic metropolis, the route headed northwards to the ancient Parthian capitals of the Northern Iranian plateau. Past them, beyond the extreme foothills of the Arsacid territory, lay the boundless Asian steppes. Heading north the road proceeded toward Ekbatana, Rhagai, Nisa and Merv, the *Mu-lu* of Chinese sources<sup>8</sup>.

In Merv, the Silk Route, leaving the Arsacid domains, forked into two distinct branches, to the north and south of the Taklamakun desert respectively. Having crossed the desert they reemerged near the Altaj Mountains and thereby entered the territory controlled by

the Chinese Authority<sup>9</sup>. Very likely the merchants, subjects of the Great King, were responsible for the transport from Eastern Turkestan to Seleucia<sup>10</sup>. As is easily understandable, it was necessary, in order to ensure the continuation of such activity and the massive profits for the Arsacid administration, to impede any relationship between the two main trading partners, China and Rome, and avoid a trade agreement between the two Empires, which would exclude the Parthian merchants from the long-distance caravan trade.

Of course many merchants were active along those trade routes and some of them provided information about the remote lands they visited, which the Roman as well as the Chinese annalists and geographers needed for their works. One of the most valuable sources despite being largely unknown, is the account provided by a Chinese envoy. It concerns the travel undertaken by an official Chinese diplomatic mission which was able to reach regions no Chinese diplomat had been able to visit before. The report constitutes one of the few first hand evidences from a traveller along the Silk Route and sheds light on the fundamental role played by the Parthians as an insuperable political obstacle for communications between the two Empires.

With the campaigns to the West and the ensuing extension of the frontier of the Han state, operated by the Chinese General Ban Zhao (between 91 and 101 AD) and by his son Ban Yong, the Parthian Kingdom entered the political scene of the Celestial Empire<sup>11</sup>. The goal of the Asian leader was to extend Chinese control along the Central-Asian commercial routes in order to preserve their efficiency and impede the nomadic tribes (like the Huns, *Hsiung-nu* in Chinese sources) from interrupting the connections with the West by which Chinese silk reached the Parthian border or the Indian ports. After some major military campaigns the Chinese were able to reopen the Silk Route and restore a direct contact by land between China and the Parthian Empire<sup>12</sup>.

But Ban Zhao's plans were even more ambitious. Around 97 AD, Ban Zhao placed an important dignitary named Gan Ying at the head of a diplomatic mission charged to do all that was possible to establish contacts and business relationships with that realm which the Chinese knew well to be the final destination for most of the goods they were exporting to the West - the Kingdom of Da Quin: the Roman Empire<sup>13</sup>. His narration was later collected in



the more general historical work, the *Hou Hanshou*, the official annals of the Later Hans<sup>14</sup>.

Gan Ying states that the westernmost place his mission was able to reach was the country of *Tiaozhi*, which most modern scholars identify as Mesene, on the northern shores of the Persian Gulf, arrival point of the sea routes from the Indian subcontinent<sup>15</sup>.

The exposition of the anthropic and topographic characteristics of the region provided by Gan Ying shares some elements with the description of Mesene in Pliny's *Naturalis Historia* some years earlier<sup>16</sup>. In antiquity that land was known as being the seat of the Arsacid vassal kingdom of Characene<sup>17</sup>, a political situation also reported in the earlier Chinese historical descriptions of the region<sup>17</sup>.

According to Gan Ying's report it seems that in those years the Parthian Great King's control over the country had been enforced. A passage in the *Hou Hanshou* states: «Later on, *Anxi* (the Arsacid kingdom) conquered, and subjugated *Tiaozhi* (Characene). They have, in fact, installed a Senior General there to supervise all the small towns» (Transl. J.E. Hill)<sup>19</sup>.

Gan Ying seems to record a precise political situation. The Arsacids seem to have militarily occupied the entire area, transforming Mesene into a Parthian Satrapy and nominating an Army official as responsible for the points of major economic interest: the cities and river harbours<sup>20</sup>.

From the dates reported by Ban Zhao's envoy it is possible to conclude that the gap of monetary emissions of the independent kingdom Characene that took place in those years was due to a military or even political occupation of the client potentate. Characene harbours had in that period become Arsacid harbours and the authority that regulated and controlled the commercial traffic and transactions depended directly on the Great King or on his military representative in the area. Given the goals of Gan Ying's mission it would predictably have been unfruitful, in search of collaboration, to turn to the members of the ruling Arsacid class in Ctesiphon, the fulcrum of the State of *Anxi*<sup>21</sup>. As the Chinese seemed to know well<sup>22</sup>, the Arsacid leadership would never have facilitated contact between the two greatest economic powers of the known world, one the producer, the other the main purchaser, of most of the goods that travelled across Arsacid territory.

For the Great King it was vital, not only that the two states not be able to entertain reciprocal diplomatic relationships, but it was extremely important to avoid, as much as possible, that the merchants coming from the two Empires should meet. If that had happened the tangible risk would have remained, in the light of the impressive resources and inexhaustible means which the two states would have had, that an agreement and a direct collaboration between the Romans and Chinese would have excluded the Parthian merchants from the long-distance trade between East and West, depriving them of their role as mediators and of the high earnings related to the difference between the sale and purchase costs, and the Arsacid crown of the substantial revenue derived from the taxation of the transported goods<sup>23</sup>.

It is easy to comprehend how it would have seemed more reasonable, to Ban Zhao and his entourage, in order to gain collaboration in the attempt to reach the Roman territory, turning to merchants and ruling classes of a Kingdom, that of Characene, who during the previous years had demonstrated a considerable openness towards foreign economic initiatives, as well as a conspicuous independence from Arsacid directives. Unfortunately for Gan Ying and his explorative mission, upon their arrival in Mesene, the region had been occupied by the Great King's troops who had put an end to the Characene trade apogee and to a phase of wide political autonomy.

In the occupied lower-Mesopotamia it is likely that the officials and merchants with whom the Chinese mission was in contact were governmental agents or men properly trained to provide information and answers in line with Arsacid interest. The Great King Pacorus II (?), perhaps the most attentive of all the monarchs to the economic revival of his kingdom, anxious to re-establish fruitful contacts with the Celestial Empire could not risk the degeneration of the relationships between the two Empires – by preventing the diplomats from crossing his territory – but he nonetheless possessed the means for causing, discreetly, their mission to fail.

In fact, the report of Gan Ying continues:

He reached Tiaozhi next to a large sea. He wanted to cross it, but the sailors of the western frontier of Anxi (Parthia) said to him: "The ocean is huge. Those making the round

trip can do it in three months if the winds are favourable. However, if you encounter winds that delay you, it can take two years. That is why all the men who go by sea take stores for three years. The vast ocean urges men to think of their country, and get homesick, and some of them die (Transl. J.E. Hill)<sup>24</sup>.

Therefore, the informants exploited to their advantage the absolute ignorance of the maritime routes to Roman Egypt, about which Gan Ying was asking, deliberately multiplying the days necessary for the crossing, and making sure not to inform the Chinese of the possibility of reaching via land - by simply following the Euphrates - the nearby border with the Roman province of Syria.

Deterred from continuing by such nefarious news, Gan Ying resolved to return to his homeland and report what had happened. After the failed attempt of Ban Zhao, the Chinese leadership decided to renew the agreements with the Parthians already established at the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC during the era of Emperor Wu (145-87 BC), accepting the proposal that the Great King had presented during the ambassadorship in 87 AD. To seal the renewed business harmony, Pacorus II, remembered in Chinese sources with the name of Manju - sent a series of gifts to the Chinese ruler, among which were lions and birds from the Mesene marshes (101 AD)<sup>25</sup>.

Recent historical research has been able to substantially improve our knowledge of the Parthian Empire. The contribution of Chinese sources in general and Gan Ying's report in particular has been relevant. It seems evident that the Parthian leadership conceived a well-defined policy concerning the long distance trade thorough central Asia, a policy which aimed at strengthening its role of mediation between Rome and China.

Modern scholars dealing with the Parthian state managed to shed light on the structure and the policy of the Arsacid kingdom beyond the stereotyped description provided by western sources. From the shadows of ancient history is thus gradually emerging another powerful Empire lying between the Roman and Chinese ones: a bitter enemy to the former and a cunning trade antagonist for the latter.

## Notes

- 1 Dubbs, 1941; Dubbs, 1942; Dubbs 1957.
- 2 Plin., *Nat. Hist.*, VI, 47.
- 3 For example Valerio Massimo Manfredi's *Empire of Dragons*, (2005) about a Roman soldier captured along with Emperor Valerian by the Persians and his journey to China after he escapes and Michael E. Anderson's, *The Parthian Interpreter* (2007), about the journey of a Roman senator and his Parthian slave to China during the reign of Marcus Aurelius.
- 4 Starting a quite successful tradition of comparative historical studies: Roberts, 2003; Edwards, 2005; Hui, 2008; Mittag, Mutschler, 2008; Scheidel, 2009.
- 5 Map: <http://americanhistory.si.edu/collections/numismatics/parthia/frames/pamaec.htm>
- 6 In general on the history of the Parthian Kingdom: Debevoise 1938; Schippmann 1980; Bivar 1983; Dabrowa 1983; Frye 1984; Wolski 1993; Wiesehöfer 1994. On the sources the recent Hack, Jacobs and Weber, 2010.
- 7 Strab., XVI, 2. 5; Plut., *Crass.*, 32; Plin., *Nat. Hist.*, VI, 122; Paus., I, 6. 3.
- 8 Isidor. *Mans. Parth.*, c. 7-14; *Hou Hanschou*, c. 88. 2918; Chaumont 1973 ; Walser 1985.
- 9 Choisnel, 2004, 63-65.
- 10 Parthia imported slaves, raw silk, steel, Plin., *Nat. Hist.*, XV, 44; XXXIV, 145. Among the exportations were the horses of Media, high esteemed in China where they were called "celestial horses". Haussig 1992, 126-130; J. Wiesehöfer, 2001. The merchants met in a place called "Stone Tower", Plin., *Nat. Hist.*, VI, 54-55; Loewe 1971.
- 11 Chavannes, 1906, 216-245; Chavannes 1907, 177-178; Grosso 1966, 157-161; Wolski 1993, 16; Choisnel 2004, 147-149, 152-153.
- 12 Chavannes, 1906, 228-233; Grosso 1966, 163-167.
- 13 Choisnel 2004, 153-154.
- 14 *Hou Hanschou*, c. 88. 2918; *The Annal of the Later Hans*, written between the 4th and the 5th century AD utilising as sources mainly imperial officer's reports from the previous periods of the Han dynasty. Chavannes, 1906, 214 ; Chavannes 1907, 149-151; Leslie and Gardiner 1984, 282-284.
- 15 Chavannes 1907, 177-178; Posch 1998, 361.
- 16 Plin., *Nat. Hist.*, VI, 125; 136.

- 17 Concerning Characene remain fundamental : Nodelmann 1960 and Schuol 2000.
- 18 *Shiji*, cap. 123. 3163; *Shiji* is a dynastic chronicle written in the 1st century BC by Sima Qian; Chavannes 1907, 176-177; Grosso 1966, 167-169; Leslie and Gardiner 1984, 268-270; Posch 1998, 357-359; Tao 2007, 88-92.
- 19 *Hou Hanshou*, c. 88. 2918.
- 20 Dealing with the Chinese sources the scholar must be really careful since later writers used to re-elaborate information given by early historians mixing them with new accounts.
- 21 Leslie and Gardiner 1984, 287-288.
- 22 *Hou Hanshou*, c. 88. 2919: «The king of this country [DaQuin = Roman Empire] always wanted to send envoys to the Han, but Anxi (Parthia), wishing to control the trade in multi-coloured Chinese silks, blocked the route to prevent [the Romans] getting through [to China]».
- 23 Alam, 2004, 55.
- 24 *Hou Hanshou*, cap. 88. 2918; Chavannes 1907, 177-178 ; Grosso 1966, 169; Tao 2007, 99-101.
- 25 *Hanshou*, c. 4. 168.

## References

- Alam, M., 2004. The History of the Silk Road as reflected in Coins, *Parthica*, 6, pp. 47-68
- Bivar, D.A., 1983. The Political History of Iran under the Arsacids, in: Yarshater E., *The Cambridge History of Iran, The Seleucid, Parthian and Sasanian Periods*, Cambridge, III, 1, pp. 21-99
- Chaumont, M.-L., 1973. Études d'histoire parthe II. Capitales et résidences des premiers Arsacides (III<sup>e</sup>-I<sup>er</sup> S. av. J.-C.), *Syria*, 50, 1973, pp. 197-222
- Chavannes, E., 1906. Trois Généraux Chinois de la dynastie des Han Orientaux (Pan Tch'ao (32-102 p.C.); – son fils Pan Yong; – Leang K'in (112 p.C.). Chapitre LXXVII du Heou Han chou), *T'oung pao*, 7, pp. 210-269
- Chavannes, E., 1907. Les Pays d'Occident d'après le Heou Han chou, *T'oung pao*, 8, pp. 149-234
- Choisnel, E., 2004, *Les Parthes et la route de la soie*, Paris
- Dąbrowa, E., 1983. La politique de l'état parthe à l'égard de Rome – d'Artaban II à Vologèse I (ca 11 – ca 79 de n. è.) et les facteurs qui la con-

- ditionnaire*, Uniwersytet Jagiellonski, Rozprawy Habilitacyjne 74. Kraków
- Debevoise, N.C. 1938. *A Political History of Parthia*. Chicago
- Dubbs, H., 1941. An Ancient Military Contact Between Romans and Chinese. *American Journal of Philology*, 42, pp. 322-30.
- Dubbs, H., 1942. A Military Contact Between Chinese and Romans in 36 B.C., *T'oung Pao*, 36, pp. 64-80.
- Dubbs, H., 1957. *A Roman City in Ancient China*, The China Society, London
- Edwards, R.A., 2009. Federalism and the Balance of Power: China's Han and Tang Dynasties and the Roman Empire. *Pacific Economic Review*, 14, 1, pp. 1-21
- Frye, R.N., 1984. *The History of Ancient Iran*, HAW III, 7. München
- Grosso, F., 1966. Roma e i Parti a fine I inizio II secolo d. Cr. attraverso le fonti cinesi, in *Atti del Convegno sul tema: La Persia e il mondo greco-romano (Roma 11-14 aprile 1965)*, Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, Roma, pp. 157-176
- Hackl, U., Jacobs, B., Weber, D., 2010. *Quellen zur Geschichte des Partherreiches*. Göttingen
- Haussig, H.W., 1992. *Die Geschichte Zentralasiens und der Seidenstrasse in vorislamischer Zeit*, Darmstadt
- Hui, V.T., 2005. *War and State Formation in Ancient China and Early Modern Europe*, Cambridge University Press: New York
- Leslie D.D. and Gardiner K.H.J., 1982. Chinese Knowledge of Western Asia during the Han, *T'oung pao*, LXVIII, pp. 254-308
- Loewe, M., 1971. Spices and Silk : Aspects of World Trade in the first seven Centuries of the Christian Era, *JRAS*, pp. 167-169
- Mittag, A., Mutschler, F., eds., 2008, *Conceiving the Empire: China and Rome Compared*, Oxford University Press: Oxford
- Nodelman, S.A., 1960. A preliminary History of Characene, *Berytus*, 13, pp. 83-121
- Posch, W., 1998. Chinesische Quellen zu den Parthern, in J. Wiesehöfer, *Das Partherreich und seine Zeugnisse, Beiträge des internationalen Colloquiums. Eutin (27.-30. Juni 1996)*, Franz Steiner Verlag, Stuttgart, pp. 355-364
- Roberts, J., 2003. The Fall of the Roman and Chinese Empires Compared, *The complete history of China*, Sutton Publishing: Stroud
- Scheidel, W., 2009. *Rome and China: comparative perspectives on ancient world empires*, Oxford University Press: Oxford

- Schippmann, K., *Grundzüge der parthischen Geschichte*, Darmstadt, 1980
- Schuol, M., 2000. *Die Charakene, Ein mesopotamisches Königreich in hellenistisch-parthischer Zeit*, *Oriens et Occidens* 1, Franz Steiner Verlag, Stuttgart
- Tao, W., 2007, Parthia and China: a Re-examination of the Historical Records, in V.S. Curtis and S. Stewart, *The Age of the Parthians, The Idea of Iran*, vol. II, I.B. Tauris, London- New York, pp. 87-104
- Walser, G., 1985. Die Route des Isidorus von Charax durch Iran, *AMI N.F.* , 18, 1985, pp. 145-156
- Wiesehöfer, J., 1994. *Das antike Persien. Von 550 v. Chr. bis 650 n. Chr.* München, Zürich, 1994
- Wiesehöfer, J., 2001. Griechen, Iraner und Chinesen an der Seidenstraße, in U. Hübner, J. Kamlah und L. Reinfandt, *Die Seidenstraße. Handel und Kulturaustausch in einem eurasiatischen Weizenetz*, *Asien und Afrika* 3, Hamburg
- Wolski, J., 1993. *L'Empire des Arsacides*, *Acta Iranica* 32, Leuven, 1993

**akademisk**  
academic quarter

Zalburga Universitet

tidsskrift for humanistisk forskning

**Literary journeys/  
Journeys in literature,  
film and theatre**



## Arthur Conan Doyle's Quest Journey to *The Land of Mist*

**Jørgen Riber Christensen**

*associate professor at the Institute of Communication, Aalborg University. Among his publications are Medietid 2.0 (2009) with Jane Kristensen and Marvellous Fantasy (ed., 2009), and articles within the fields of cultural analysis, the media, marketing, museology and literature. Editor of Academic Quarter.*

Arthur Conan Doyle employed the quest narrative structure in his Professor Challenger novels and short stories. The themes that were embodied in the journey form were imperialism, positivist science, the male role, evolution, degeneration and atavism. However, in the last of this cycle, *The Land of Mist* (1926) the Victorian quest romance does not go to a lost, prehistoric world in the Amazonas. It takes on a surprising form as now the journey is to the realm of the dead. This destination can be regarded as a result of Doyle's deep interest in spiritualism, but the article will seek to explain this in the context of its contemporary epistemology. It is the hypothesis of the article that doubts and problems of faith, both religious and ideological, could not be answered in any other way than by converting the narratological device of the quest journey into a statement of faith. Yet the positivist and imperialist metaphor of the journey of exploration imploded into morbidity and domestication as a result of the transformation, which sought to reconcile positivist science with the existence of the supernatural or paranormal of the spirit world. The double world-view and its narratological consequences will be explained by the article through its use of Michel Foucault's concept of the episteme.

### The Challenger novels

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's writing career falls into distinct phases and groupings. His Sherlock Holmes novels and cases have survived him, whereas his many historical novels and romances are largely unknown today. During the last part of his life, however, he devoted much time and money to the cause of spiritualism. For instance he published *The History of Spiritualism* (Doyle, 1926), and he went on several lecturing tours in Britain, Australia and the U.S.A. as an advocate of the belief in a spiritual afterlife. It is in this context that the third group of his writings, the Challenger novels gains significance, in the own right as entertaining works of fiction, but primarily they can be regarded as documents of the epistemology and ontology of the period in which they were conceived and written. There are three novels: *The Lost World* (1912), *The Poison Belt* (1913) and *The Land of Mist* (1926), and two short stories: "The Disintegration Machine" (1928) and "When the World Screamed" (1929). *The Lost World* establishes the ensemble. There is a journalist, Edward Malone, two professors, Challenger and Summerlee, and an aristocratic adventurer, Lord John Roxton. This group of men is challenged for various reasons to go on an expedition to an unknown part of the Amazonas to prove the existence of prehistoric dinosaurs, and they manage to bring back a living pterodactyl and diamonds to London. The characters reappear in *The Poison Belt*. In this novel professor Challenger warns the others that the Earth is going to pass through a cosmic cloud of poisonous ether, and with tanks of oxygen they together with Professor Challenger's wife, but without his servants, take refuge in a sealed room in his home. Through the panorama window they witness the end of civilization and the extinction of mankind. Nearly suffocated they survive the ordeal, and after 28 hours the people who have not been killed by runaway machines and fires start to wake up from what appeared to be only a coma. In *The Land of Mist* taking place many years later Summerlee and Challenger's wife are now deceased. The journalist Malone together with Challenger's daughter Enid is making research for a newspaper article series about spiritualism. They become convinced that there is an afterlife and that spirits can communicate with the living. With Lord Roxton they witness a spirit in a haunted house, they take part in séances, and they meet with likeable and honest mediums, but also with frauds, who are exposed as

such. Professor Challenger is aggressively and sceptically opposing the spiritualist movement, but after his dead wife has shown herself to him in spirit form, and Enid has shown her abilities as a spiritualist medium, he too is convinced. In "The Disintegration Machine" an inventor, Theodore Nemor demonstrates his infernal machine to Professor Challenger and Edward Malone telling them that he will sell it to the Russians as a weapon to be used against Britain. Challenger tricks the inventor into his own machine and disintegrates him. Also "When the World Screamed" is concerned with science. Professor Challenger has formed the hypothesis that the Earth and other planets are living organisms, and he has hired a skilled artesian-well engineer to sink a sharp drill into the core of the Earth. Challenger is right, and the Earth reacts to the stabbing by screaming and by erupting an organic fluid and secretions from the hole. Volcanoes erupt all over the globe, and the professor is celebrated as a scientific genius.

Thematically the five Challenger texts deal with responses to aspects of modernity. *The Lost World* is about Darwinism and survival of the fittest, or more precisely about degeneration theories that claim that evolution in nature and in society may move backward to earlier atavistic forms. Ironically, the "the greatest brain in Europe" (Doyle, 1995, p. 438), the professor himself, is almost physically identical to the chief of the ape-men on the inaccessible plateau in the Amazonas. Challenger as the so-called higher degenerate (Lombroso, 1876: Greenslade, 1995) is described by the narrator, Malone as "a primitive cave-man in a lounge suit" (Doyle, 1912/1995, p. 438), and it is his primeval aggressiveness that has equipped him with "a driving force that can turn all his dreams into facts." Doyle's societal critique here, in which the lack of basic social skills paired with superhuman abilities becomes an instrument of survival, is again combined with another discourse, the gendered one about the male role. Edward Malone joins the evolutionary, scientific quest to the Amazonas in order to prove his manhood to his fiancée Gladys, who will not have him unless he can display some manly, heroic qualities. Again, Doyle's societal critique is apparent. When Malone returns a better man to his London suburb it is only to find that his Gladys has married a solicitor's clerk, "a little ginger-haired man, who was coiled up in the deep arm-chair" (Doyle, 1995, p. 167).

The apocalyptic novel *The Poison Belt* continues the scientific and evolution discourses in combination with an imperialist one. The poisonous effect of the ether does not affect everybody in the same way: "the less developed races have been the first to respond to its influence. There are deplorable accounts from Africa, and the Australian aborigines appear to have been already exterminated. The Northern races have as yet shown greater resisting power than the Southern... The Slavonic population of Austria is down, while the Teutonic has hardly been affected." (Doyle, 1995, p. 194).

Thematically, the last of the Challenger novels, *The Land of Mist* is a combination of discourses; but now science is combined with religion, and it is this combination within the narrative framework of a quest structure that is the subject of the rest of this article.

### **The quest romance and the scientific quest**

Conan Doyle's production of the Sherlock Holmes cases was highly formulaic, almost mechanically repetitive in its narrative pattern, though the concept was highly original and successful in its time (Christensen, 2010). Also in the Challenger novels the same narrative structure was employed by Doyle. The quest has its root in myths and religions, and it has been a recurring and relatively unchanging phenomenon in cultural history with manifestations in e.g. medieval romances, fantasy and popular films (Campbell, 1949/1975; Vogler, 1995/1999). The quest is a journey. It is circular, and may be compared to the folktale structure of at home – out – home again, as the questing hero is sent on a mission to foreign parts to retrieve some kind of an elixir that can save his homeland. The quest runs through certain steps. The hero is called to adventure; sometimes he is abducted or lured away. He then has to cross the threshold of adventure. The threshold is guarded, and the guard must be defeated or the hero may have to trick or negotiate his way into the otherworld. In some cases the hero is killed at this stage, and the otherworld becomes the land of death. After the threshold-crossing the hero is subjected to various tests in the form of e.g. brother battles, dragon battles or dismemberment. The continued journey can change into abduction, the so-called night-sea journey or underground journey. At this point of the quest journey its clearly symbolic nature becomes apparent, where the otherworld resembles unconscious structures of the mind. Other varia-

tions are the wonder journey, or the hero may be swallowed and enter the whale's or monster's belly. Both before and during the quest journey the hero encounters and is allied with an assortment of helpers, who may each possess a special ability. At the end of the journey, farthest away from home, the hero meets with the goal of his quest. He now has to pass the ultimate test and get the reward for the journey and his pains. The reward may be the hero's sexual gratification with a goddess of the otherworld, and / or reconciliation with a father-figure. The reward may even be apotheosis, and the hero becomes a god-like figure. More negatively, he may have to steal the prize he came to win and the homeward journey becomes flight. The reward the hero brings home is an elixir in some, symbolic or literal form, which can cure the ailing kingdom from which he set off. In itself the homeward journey is filled with obstacles, but the hero returns home a changed and wiser person with the elixir, which also improves or heals his native country.

The Victorian quest romance is a particular instance of the general quest narrative pattern as it has been described briefly above. Apart from Conan Doyle its literary practitioners were R.L. Stevenson (e.g. *Treasure Island*, 1881), H. Rider Haggard (e.g. *King Solomon's Mines*, 1885), Rudyard Kipling (e.g. *The Man Who Would Be King*, 1888) and H.G. Wells (e.g. *The Time Machine*, 1895). One theme that tied these authors' quest novels together was the discussion of the changing male gender role. The very genre was part of this discussion as the relatively short and action-packed quest romances defined themselves in opposition to the prevalent three-volume realistic novel with its largely female readership (Fraser, 1998, p. 3). These male Victorian quest romances were highly topical in their thematics in other respects, too. Positivist science is at the surface of H.G. Wells' production, which is often labelled as the subgenre, the scientific quest. The scientific quest connects the Victorian quest genre per se with science fiction. With forerunners such as Jules Verne the territorial quest could examine the future in the genre of science fiction. However, it is in its very journey form the quest narrative in itself embodies the search for empirical knowledge when the quest is for the confirmation or verification of factual truths. The Empire as a theme is also formally connected to the quest narrative as this genre reflects the imperial expansion and its consequences. Not only the fate of the British

male colonial administrator and his journey overseas, but also the clash of cultures, which was sometimes regarded in a Darwinist light, were stable ingredients of the novels.

### **The reformulation of the quest romance in *The Land of Mist***

Conan Doyle's *The Lost World* almost follows the narrative quest structure to the letter. Basically, a group of men departed for unknown destinations in search of knowledge, wealth, honour and personal development. The classic quest elements are represented: The call to adventure, an assortment of helpers, an abduction of Challenger by ape-men, wonder journeys up to the plateau, and an underground journey down again, dragon battles with dinosaurs, sexually attractive native women, the brother battle between Challenger and his alter ego, the ape-man chief. The questers did not only gain insights into their own characters and male roles, but they could also return to London with a scientific discovery in the form of a living pterodactyl and £200,000 worth of diamonds.

*The Poison Belt* is a step towards the rather special way Doyle used the Victorian quest romance in *The Land of Mist*. In the former of the two the call to adventure from Challenger to Malone, Roxton and Summerlee is merely to join him in his comfortable home outside London on a hilltop in pastoral surroundings with a view to a golf course and a railway line, and the bulk of the action takes place in a sealed sitting-room in the professor's home only supplemented with a flow of telegrams from all over the world as the apocalypse strikes. There are quite dramatic occurrences outside the large window as the poisonous ether also reaches this part of England. The questers do not have to journey in this novel as they cross the threshold of adventure in the way that it comes to them in the form of a poison belt of ether with a speed of "some million miles a minute", which kills all humans on its way. The quest structure is actually followed as here the otherworld is the land of death and the return is resurrection near the end of the novels when the questers have run out of oxygen, but at a time when the ether has passed.

Two points are notable in the use of the quest narrative leading on to its further use in *The Land of Mist*. There is the morbidity with the apocalypse and the seeming extinction of mankind as it is depicted in the chapter called "The Dead World" with a journey

through a post-apocalyptic London, and there is the domestication of the quest genre where the action has moved into a closed, claustrophobic room in an English home.

The late date of 1926 in the genre history of *The Land of Mist* and in the history of the British Empire becomes apparent when Lord Roxton has to insert an advertisement in a newspaper to find new quests. The call to adventure in the quest structure now seems to be so low that it can hardly be heard. He has exhausted the "sporting adventures of this terrestrial globe", and is "seeking fresh worlds to conquer" (Doyle, 1995, p. 319); but these so-called fresh worlds are even more gloomy than those in *The Poison Belt* as Roxton specifies them as a haunted house, thus in this reformulation of the Victorian quest romance domestication is combined with morbidity. The domestication of the quest is stressed when its goal, the so-called scientific proof of an afterlife is discovered right in the intimate sphere, as it is the relationship between a husband and wife that provides the sought for evidence, and in this way the structure home – out – home again has imploded: The otherworld is at home, and the geographical quest has become psychic research, or a "psychic quest" as it is called in the novel (Doyle 1995, p. 341). The aim of this quest is verification of an afterlife, and the helpers and guides of the traditional quest narrative have now become spiritualist mediums, who open the way into the realm of the dead for further investigation, and the séance in private-living-rooms the threshold of adventure. Has the quest formula then become a scientific quest? And answer could be that the word "science" together with "scientific" has 52 instances in the novel, but there are numerous other indications that Doyle's motivation for writing this new Challenger novel is a wish to reconcile positivist science with the existence of the supernatural or paranormal of the spirit world.

The narrative form is in itself a sign that it has been necessary to reformulate the quest genre. The narrator of the other Challenger novels has primarily been an omniscient, impersonal one and sometimes the journalist Edward Malone, but the narrator of *The Land of Mist* becomes more and more an intrusive one, and this to the extent that not only the quest formula, but also its fictional status are dismantled. In his attempt to verify spiritualism the voice of the narrator is taken over by Doyle himself. He asks the reader rhetorical questions, and notes and lengthy appendices are added to

the novel. These appendices may contain passages such as: "The scenes in this chapter are drawn either very closely from personal experience or from the reports of careful and trustworthy experimenters." (Doyle, 1995, p. 416) or "The account of Pithecanthropus is taken from the *Bulletin de l'Institut Métaphychique* (Doyle, 1995, p. 419). The text of the novel itself is interrupted by directions to the appendices: "For the incidents recorded in this chapter vide Appendix." (Doyle, 1995, p. 352). The comments of the intrusive narrator are part of the rhetorical pattern of the novel. Prolonged debating sections are inserted into the action of the novel, in which scepticism of spiritualism and the spiritualist movement are given words, only to be refuted again and again. Positivist science and spiritualism are fused when the term "spiritualist science" is used and experiments are described in a laboratory setting (Doyle, 1995, pp. 361-370). One of the results of these experiments is not only the verification of an afterlife, but also of the theory of evolution with echoes from *The Lost World*. The missing link "either an ape-like man or a man-like ape" is summoned during the séance. In *The History of Spiritualism* Doyle's carries the idea of physical evolution into the afterlife, when he writes that "evolution has been very slow upon the physical plane, at it is slow also on the spiritual one...we shall evolve from heaven to heaven until the destiny of the human soul is lost in a blaze of glory whither the eye of imagination may not follow." (Doyle, 1926, Vol. II, p. 110).

*The Land of Mist* is situated in the context of Doyle's many spiritualist works, which are not fictional. His main spiritualist oeuvre is *The History of Spiritualism* (Doyle, 1926), and some of his other spiritualist publications are: *The New Revelation* (1918), *Life After Death* (1918), *The Vital Message* (1919), *Our Reply to the Cleric* (1920), *Spiritualism and Rationalism* (1920), *The Wanderings of a Spiritualist* (1921), *Spiritualism—Some Straight Questions and Direct Answers* (1922), *The Case for Spirit Photography* (1922), *Our American Adventure* (1923), *Our Second American Adventure* (1924), *The Early Christian Church and Modern Spiritualism* (1925), *Psychic Experiences* (1925), *Pheneas Speaks* (1927), *Spiritualism* (c.1927), *What does Spiritualism Actually Teach and Stand For?* (1928), and in Doyle's autobiography he writes in its last chapter that the psychic question has come to absorb the whole energy of his life, and that he and his wife "have now travelled a good thousand miles upon our quest. We have spoken face



to face with a quarter of a million people." (Doyle, 1924/2007, pp. 342-343). In his letters Doyle writes about his many and successful public lecturing tours about spiritualism, but also about his personal experiences at séances of contacts with deceased family members, especially with his dead son Kingsley (Doyle, 2008, p. 654).

### **A rupture of epistemes?**

The ultimate aim for Conan Doyle and the movement of spiritualism was to produce the empirical evidence of contacts with spirits. If scientific proof of this kind could be irrefutably presented to the world the cause of the spiritualist movement would obviously benefit from it, and the existence of an afterlife could be demonstrated; but also positivist science and religious belief could be reconciled and united within the same world picture. Instead of science overthrowing faith, spiritualism could in other words be regarded as an experimental science about a natural continuation of life after death, and not only as a religious belief, and the supernatural could become natural. This attitude is expressed in *The London Spiritual Magazine*:

Spiritualism is a science based solely upon facts; it is neither speculative nor fanciful. On facts and facts alone, open to the whole world through an extensive and probably unlimited system of mediumship, it builds upon a substantial psychology on the ground of strictest logical induction. Its cardinal truth, imperishably established on the experiments and experiences of millions of sane men and women, of all countries and creeds, is that of a world of spirits, and the continuity of the existence of the individual spirit through the momentary eclipse of death; as it disappears on earth reappearing in that spiritual world, and becoming an inhabitant amid the ever-augmenting population of the spiritual universe. (Wallace, 1892, p. 645)

How does one seek to explain this very often sincere, but also apparently desperate and incredibly credulous attempt to believe both in spirits, which could materialize ectoplasm and in positivist science, which rests on hypotheses that can be tested by empirical knowledge? This question can be rephrased into one of the epistemology of the period, where it seems that two systems conflicted, but also co-existed, in spiritualism. Michel Foucault's concept of epistemes is a possible way to understand this complex epistemology.

In his *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (Foucault, 1969/2011) Foucault describes how the epistemology of a certain historical period is based on unconscious assumptions, beliefs and values with accompanying formational rules, systematic shaping factors and conceptual possibilities about specific fields of knowledge, e.g. the human body, the mind, the natural world or economy. Foucault calls these systems epistemes. Negatively, an episteme sets up boundaries for thoughts about a scientific subject in a period. This archaeology of knowledge includes discontinuity and rupture, as an episteme may change rapidly, or one episteme may replace another. This change fundamentally affects what is considered valid knowledge in itself, and the very content of scientific discourses changes.

Though one episteme may supplant another, this does not necessarily mean that the take-over is complete and all-embracing. There may be contemporaneity of two epistemes, and Foucault writes that "one can, on the basis of these new rules, describe and analyse phenomena of continuity, return and repetition" (Foucault, 1969/011, p. 191), and one may not imagine "that rupture is a sort of great drift that carries with it all discursive formations at once (Foucault, 1969/011, p. 193). It is the point of this article that spiritualism as an epistemological effort is an instance of double epistemes in the sense that spiritualism as it is also depicted in *The Land of Mist* both manifested a full acceptance of the positivist scientific, new, modern world and also retained the episteme of a pre-secularized world without being ready yet to let go of it. It is in this way that the apparent contradictions in the movement and in one of its fictional manifestations *The Land of Mist* can be understood and explained.

### **Conclusion: The best of two worlds**

Spiritualism as it is described in Doyle's novel was on a quest to use the scientific world-view of a new episteme to maintain the religious or supernatural of the episteme that had already been ousted and supplanted, and thus attempting to merge the best of two worlds.

This article has described how the territorial journey of the quest narrative as used narratologically in *The Lost World* with its evolutionary scientific, epistemological discourse was transformed in both *The Poison Belt* and in *The Land of Mist*. In these two Challenger novels Conan Doyle domesticated the geographical quest, and in the latter novel he also disrupted the novel genre with an

intrusive narratorial voice and appendices that again and again stressed a scientific approach to the subject of spiritualism. The contradiction inherent in this simultaneous fictionalisation of two Foucauldian epistemes had its costs. One, as pointed out, was the break-down of the Victorian quest romance; another was the general apocalyptic and morbid atmosphere and sense of loss and pessimism of the two last Challenger novels that contrasts strongly with the sense of epistemological victory and triumph in the first Challenger novel, *The Lost World*.

## References

- Campbell, J., 1949/1975. *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. Sphere Books: London.
- Fraser, R., 1998. *Victorian Quest Romance*. Northcote House: Plymouth.
- Christensen, J. Riber, 2010. Conan Doyle's «The Adventure of the Six Napoleons» and the Mechanical Reproduction of the Sherlock Holmes Formula in Christensen, J. Riber and K. Toft Hansen (eds.), 2010. *Fingeraftryk Studier i krimi og det kriminelle: Festskrift til Gunhild Agger*. Aalborg Universitetsforlag: Aalborg, pp. 387-405.
- Coley, N. G. and Hall, V.M.D. (eds.), 1980. *Darwin to Einstein Primary Sources on Science and Belief*, The Open University Press: Burnt Mill.
- Doyle, A. Conan, 1926. *A History of Spiritualism Vols. I-II*, Amazon: Kindle edition.
- Doyle, A. Conan, 1924/2007. *Memories and Adventures An Autobiography*, Wordsworth Literary Lives: Ware Hertfordshire.
- Doyle, A. Conan, Lellenberg, J., Stashower, D. and Foley, C. (eds.), 2008. *A Life in Letters*, Harper: London.
- Doyle, A. Conan, 1995. *The Lost World and Other Stories*, Wordsworth Classics: Ware Hertfordshire.
- Foucault, M., 1969/2011. *The Archeology of Knowledge*, Routledge: London.
- Green, R.L. and J. M Gibson, 2000. *A Bibliography of A. Conan Doyle*, Hudson House: Boston.
- Greenslade, W., 1994. *Degeneration, Culture and the Novel*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge.
- Jay, M. and M. Neve (eds.), 1999. *1900: A Fin-de-siècle Reader*, Penguin: Harmondsworth.

- Lombroso, C. and G. Lombroso-Ferrero, 1876/1972. *Criminal Man, According to the Classification of Cesare Lombroso*, N.J.: Montclair.
- Orel, H. (ed.), 1992. *Critical Essays on Sir Arthur Conan Doyle*, G.K. Hall & Co.: New York.
- Vogler, C., 1992/1999. *The Writer's Journey Mythic Structure for Storytellers and Screenwriters*. London.
- Wallace, A.R., 1892. Spiritualism, *Chambers Encyclopaedia*, pp. 645-648 in Coley and Hall, pp. 50-58.

## Livet ude af balance

Den økotopeiske rejse hos Callenbach og Cameron

*Kim Toft Hansen*

*er studieadjunkt ved Institut for Kultur og Globale Studier ved Aalborg Universitet. Han har senest udgivet bogen Mord og metafysik (2012). Han er medansvarshavende redaktør for Akademisk kvarter og ansvarshavende redaktør for formidlingstidsskriftet Kulturkapellet. Hans seneste udgivelser handler om krimi og metafysik, den kinesiske krimi, religion i skandinavisk krimifiktion og den erotiske vampyr.*

### Abstract

Artiklen analyserer Ernest Callenbachs roman *Ecotopia* (1975) og James Camerons film *Avatar* (2009) som to beslægtede fortællinger under fællesbetegnelsen økotopi med særligt fokus på rejsen som erkendelsesmiddel. Økotopien forstås her som en særlig mellemposition mellem utopien og dystopien. Samtidig tegner artiklen en kort historisk udvikling fra naturreligioner, over modernitetskritik, til nutidens litterære og filmiske fokus på naturen.

De to fortællinger, Ernest Callenbachs roman *Ecotopia* (1975) og James Camerons film *Avatar* (2009), har nogle bemærkelsesværdige ligheder. Begge handler om en persons rejse til en fremmed kultur, begge bearbejder menneskets forhold til naturen, og begge forsøger med hård hånd at mane til besindighed over for menneskets forbrug af naturen som en uudtømmelig ressource. Deres brug af genretræk fra særligt science fiction er også et prægnant fællestræk, hvor handlingen er trukket frem i tiden, så konsekvenserne af nutidens handlinger kan fremdrages. Denne artikel analyserer disse to fortællinger med særligt fokus på rejsen som et erkendelsesmiddel.

At interessen for menneskets omgang med naturen har nogle historiske rødder, der går langt tilbage, understreger, at tankegangen i sig selv ikke er ny, men den store succes og eftervirkning, som

James Camerons film *Avatar* har haft, viser, at den brede populærkultur også har inddraget denne vinkel på den menneskelige omgang med naturen. Jeg vil læse denne film som et populærkulturelt udtryk for et offentligt fokus på natur- og miljøkrise ved at analysere den som en økologi, som står på skuldrene af Ernest Callenbachs klassiske roman *Ecotopia*. Det interessante ved disse to fortællinger er, at de begge indbefatter en geografisk forflyttelse af mennesket for at kunne fortælle om alternative omgangsformer med naturen. På den måde bliver rejsen ikke kun en fysisk bevægelse, men den kommer også til at fungere som et kritisk erkendelsesmiddel. Efter analyserne af Callenbachs og Camerons fortællinger vil jeg kort inddrage et religiøst perspektiv på rejserne, eftersom filmen *Avatar* ikke kun formidler drømmen om menneskelig kontakt til og bæredygtig omgang med naturen, men den motiverer også brugerne til moderne religiøse forestillinger, der indbefatter mentale rejser til forestillede verdener. Først et par bemærkninger om rejser og erkendelse, dernæst en indføring i økologien.

### 1. Hjemme: Rejse som erkendelse

Rejsen har gennem kulturhistorien stået stærkt som et narrativt virkemiddel. Det gør den stadig. Vladimir Propp viste, hvordan rejsen er et konstituerende element i russiske folkeeventyr, hvor helten sendes ud på en rejse for senere at vende forandret hjem. Propp kaldte udrejsen for "a spatial transference" (39), mens hjemvendelsen er "a surmounting of space"; begge dele implicerer en rejse, hvor blot retningen – ud, hjem – er forskellig. Dette bevægelsesmønster står så stærkt, at det fra folkeeventyret går ind i romantikkens forkærlighed for kunsteventyret, der på en interessant måde spiller ind i en kulturel sammenhæng med romantikkens opprioritering af naturfilosofien. Friedrich Schellings filosofi er interessant i sin kobling af det åndelige og naturen, hvor naturen bliver den synlige aflejring af ånden (Schelling, 1988). H.C. Andersen er et interessant biografisk møde mellem opelskningen af kunsteventyret og den romantiske naturfilosofi, hvilket Andersen i sin selvbiografi også antyder ved beskrivelsen af sit møde med Schelling (Andersen, 2004). I fantasy, der er den moderne videreudvikling af kunsteventyret, fastholdes derfor også en nærmest sakral omgang med naturen, der ofte bliver levende (som i J.R.R. Tolkiens *Ringenes herre*), eller hvor dyrene får menneskelige evner (som i

C.S. Lewis' Narnia-fortællinger). Fantasy er på den måde et populærkulturelt udtryk for en fastholdelse af naturen som en levende organisme, som mennesket ikke blot kan underlægge sig efter for-godtbefindende. Fantasy fungerer indirekte som en modernitetskritik, der ofte narrativiserer denne kritik gennem en rejse, hvilket således også gælder for både Tolkien og Lewis.

Idéen om rejsen som et erkendelsesmiddel indfinder sig ikke kun i eventyrformatet, der også gennemæssigt benyttes i *Avatar*. Science fiction som genre, der er den anden relevante genrekomponent i *Avatar*, handler ofte om rumrejser. Lige fra George Méliès *Le voyage dans la lune* (1902), over Stanley Kubricks og Arthur C. Clarkes *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968), til Paul W.S. Andersons *Event Horizon* (1997) spiller den lange rumrejse på forskellig vis en central betydning. I såvel fantasy som i science fiction er dette en interessant reminiscens fra dannelsesromanen, der ofte implicerer en dannelsesrejse, hvor hovedpersonen skal bringes ud af de trygge rammer for at vende hjem med visdom. Antallet af forfatterskaber, der har skrevet selvbiografiske rejseromaner, er derfor også stort, og omfatter forfattere som H.C. Andersen, Adam Oehlenschläger og Jens Baggesen. Lars Handesten tematiserer fæl-lestrækket mellem rejse og erkendelse fremtrukket i titlen på sin bog *Litterære rejser. Poetik og erkendelse i danske digteres rejsebøger* (Handesten, 1992). George Lakoff og Mark Johnson viser også, hvordan rejsemetaforen i forbindelse med viden og diskussion "fokuserer på indhold og forløb" (Lakoff & Johnson, 2004: 114). Eksemplet implicerer hos dem også bevægelse, fx: "Han er gået dybt ind i disse idéer", hvor "overfladen som defineres af diskussionens vej, dækker et område, og indholdet er det område der dækkes af diskussionen" (ibid., 116). En diskussion eller et argument kan *skride fremad* mod en konklusion. På samme måde er rejsen et fælleselement, der indgår i fortællinger, som handler om erhvervelse af ny viden, eller som handler om bekæmpelse af modargumenter. Fortællinger og viden kommer således til at hænge sammen med eventyrformlens struktur, hvor det gode (argument) helst skal vinde over det onde (modargument), mens vejen frem til denne konklusion udgør en rejse, der kan forstås og opbygges som en diskussion.

Det gælder også for eksemplerne her. Begge fortællinger handler om at rejse til et fremmed sted, der har formålet at etablere sig i

harmoni med naturen. Dette leder til betegnelsen økotopi, der er en økofilosofisk genrekategori, som jeg vil trække med fra Callenbachs fortælling til Camerons film. At den er filosofisk, handler i udgangspunktet om, at den stiller grundlæggende, metafysiske spørgsmål til menneskets eksistens. At den er økofilosofisk, understreger, at det er menneskets forhold til naturen, som er i fokus.

## 2. Ude 1: Rejsen til Ecotopia

Mange af de genremæssige kendetegn ved økotopien udstikkes i Callenbachs *Ecotopia*. Den handler om journalisten Weston, der rejser fra USA ind i landet Ecotopia. Kontinentet ser politisk anderledes ud, end vi kender det, eftersom en række vestkyststater for 20 år tilbage løsrev sig fra de forenede stater for at danne sin egen stat. *Ecotopia* foregår således godt nok i 'vores' verden, men den er ikke almindeligt genkendelig. Det er en kontrafaktisk fremtidsfortælling om, hvordan verden ville se ud, *hvis* en række stater havde løsrevet sig. Romanen er bygget op gennem to forskellige spor. Det ene er en række avisartikler, som Weston sender hjem til sit dagblad. Disse beskriver fra en journalistisk og antropologisk vinkel hverdagen, de politiske sammenhænge og almindelige måder at leve på for indbyggerne, *the ecotopians*, økotopierne. Det andet spor er Westons private dagbogsoptegnelser, hvor han nøjere beskriver mødet med forskellige personer og oplevelsen af økotopiernes levevej. Det er særligt i de sidste, vi ser en udvikling ske, mens det første fungerer som en rejsebeskrivelse til dagbladet.

Weston er først fremstillet som snæversynet person med selvtilstrækkelige holdninger til økotopiernes hverdag. Han skriver ironisk og nedsættende om den måde, som økotopierne har indrettet deres tilværelse på. En tilværelse, der bærer stærkt præg af grøn og økologisk tænkning. De har erstattet det kapitalistiske system med et bæredygtigt system, hvor de er selvforsynende inden for egne landegrænser. De gør det meste selv, har en kort arbejdsuge på 20 timer, og har oprettet en lang række juridiske rammer, der tvinger indbyggerne til at tænke økologisk og grønt. Heraf navnet på landet Ecotopia. Stavelsen 'øko' betyder 'hjem', mens 'topia' betyder 'sted'. Samlet betyder det *hjemsted*, men signalerer også en sproglig sammenhæng til utopien og til økologien, som er trukket sammen i denne sammenhæng. Bogen har derfor også lagt navn til den generelle betegnelse økotopisk fiktion.



Beskrivelserne i romanen fungerer som videnskabsstunge forslag til, hvordan et samfund baseret på grøn vækst og teknologi kan opbygges. I begyndelsen er dette system læst gennem Westons sarkasme, men langsomt udvikler hans tilgang sig fra en objektiv, selvretfærdig skildring til en mere indlevet og subjektiv beskrivelse af ting, der – overraskende for Weston – faktisk ser ud til virke til økotoapiernes store tilfredshed. Afslutningsvist sender Weston sine noter til sin redaktør med ordene, der får lov til at afslutte romanen: "But thank you for sending me on this assignment, when neither you nor I knew where it might lead. It led me home" (Callenbach, 1975: 181). Den omvending, som Weston går igennem i sit møde med økotoapierne, bliver kun mulig for ham, fordi han bevæger sig fra sit kendte miljø ind i det ukendte land kaldet *Ecotopia*, hvorved romanen i høj grad trækker på eventyrets struktur og dannelsesromanens erkendelsesvej. Forskellen er blot, at i den velkendte hjemme-udehjem-struktur, så falder de sidste to topoi i *Ecotopia* sammen. Det 'ude', som Weston rejser til, viser sig for ham – understreget af romanens sidste sætning, sågar romanens sidste ord – at være 'hjem'.

### 3. Mellemlanding: Økotoapien siden Callenbach

Økotoapien fungerer på denne måde som en interessant mellemting mellem utopien og dystopien. Det er heller ikke uvanligt, at utopien indbygger rejseskildringer i fortællingen. Det gælder utopien i Thomas Mores *Utopia* (1516) og Ludvig Holdbergs *Nils Klims underjordiske Rejse* (1741), mens dystopiens protagonist oftere er en person på indersiden, hvilket gælder fx Aldous Huxleys *Brave New World* (1932) eller Ridley Scotts film *Blade Runner* (1982). Økotoapien er utopisk i sit ønske om at ville redde verden fra menneskeskabte naturkatastrofer, mens den er dystopisk i sit syn på konsekvenserne, hvis dette ikke lykkes. Lisa Garforth kalder derfor også økotoapien for *radical ecology* med fokus på, at formen er kritisk, nedbrydende og emancipatorisk i sit sigte (Garforth, 2006: 10).

Før Callenbach fandtes den såkaldte økokritik selvfølgelig i litteratur og medier. Bevidsthedshistorisk har den rødder i naturreligioner, mens den igen opdyrkedes som en slags reaktion på moderniteten inden for såvel romantikken som Rudolph Steiners interesse i biodynamisk økologi i forbindelse med antroposofien (Gilhus & Mikaelsson, 1998). Det er en vinkling af økologismen, der er blevet omtalt som økosofi, og som i løbet af det 20. århundrede formuleres

skarpest af den norske filosof Arne Næss (Næss, 1976). Han kalder også den rammeforståelse for *dybdeøkologi*, der er en metafysisk ramme om naturen, hvor "well-being and flourishing of human and nonhuman life on Earth have value in themselves" (Næss, 1986: 37). Erik A. Nielsen pegede i 80'erne på en udvikling inden for dansk litteratur, der indvarslede – men ikke gestaltede en fuldendt bevægelse – i retningen af en økologisk realisme. Peter Lützen omtaler denne tendens som "litteraturens svar på en krisesituation og samfundets omgang med naturen" (Lützen, 2002: 209).

I samme periode udgiver Godfrey Reggio den første dokumentarfilm i sin såkaldte *Qatsi-trilogi*, der omfatter *Koyaanisqatsi* (1982), *Powaqqatsi* (1988) og *Naqoyqatsi* (2002), og som udelukkende gennem billeder og musik skildrer en menneskeskabt naturkatastrofe. Den første film *Koyaanisqatsi*, hvis titel på Hopi-indiansk betyder 'livet ude af balance', er den dystreste skildring af konsekvenserne af menneskelig forurening og naturudnyttelse, hvorved den i højere grad læner sig opad den dystopiske side af økotoapien. Filmen begynder med opsendelsen af en rumraket, der indledningsvist fremhæves som den ypperste menneskelige frembringelse: *rumrejsen*. Undervejs viser filmen naturskønne områder blive mødt af menneskelig undertvingelse og kraftfuld kapitalisme, men vender til sidst tilbage til rumraketten. Nu vender fascinationens fortegn om, eftersom rumrakettens eksplosion får lov at slutte filmen. Mennesket flyver – som en anden Ikaros – højere, end vingerne og naturen kan bære. Menneskets fornemme fremdrift visualiseres symbolsk som en afbrudt rumrejse.

Gennem det seneste årti har vi – som en videre populærkulturel udvikling – set en bølge af film, der på ny diskuterer naturkatastrofer, hvor oplagte eksempler er Roland Emmerichs *The Day After Tomorrow* (2004), Brian Trenchard-Smiths *Arctic Blast* (2010), Travis Forts *2012: The Ice Age* (2011) og Nick Copus' tv-serie *Ice* (2011). Al Gores dokumentarfilm *An Inconvenient Truth* (2006) er endnu et godt eksempel, hvor konklusionen også er, at gøre vi noget, kan det stadig nytte (utopien), men undlader vi at gribe ind, kan jorden bukke under (dystopien). Disse film danser på – og i flere tilfælde også over – grænsen til apokalypsen, verdens undergang. I denne bølge af film, der handler om økologiske og menneskeskabte katastrofer, er James Camerons *Avatar* – målt på box office indtjening – ultimativt den mest populære.

#### 4. Ude 2: Rejsen til Pandora

*Avatar* har en lang række strukturelle og karakterologiske ligheder med *Ecotopia*. Jake Sully er en handicappet *ex-marine*, der rejser til planeten Pandora for at træde i sin afdøde tvillingebrors sted som fører af en avatar – en genmanipuleret krop, som kan bevæge sig og trække vejret i planetens luft. Sully er indledningsvist ikke specielt interesseret i at lære noget om Na'vi, indbyggerne på Pandora. I stedet allierer han sig med militæret, der ønsker insider-viden om Na'vierne, så de kan få fat i det værdifulde grundstof Unobtanium (betydning: uopnåelig), som findes på planeten. Denne selvtilstrækkelige og selvtilfredse indgangsvinkel minder meget om den måde, som Weston hos Callenbach tænker: Hovedpersonen kommer fra den civiliserede verden, og ved bedre, hvilket desuden fungerer som en postkolonial kommentar til kolonisering og vestlig imperialisme: *The white man's burden*.

Den nye verden mødes med fordomme, og det er disse fordomme, der langsomt skal krakelere. Langsomt vinder – i både *Ecotopia* og *Avatar* – en ny tankegang frem hos hovedpersonen. I begge fortællinger er der indbygget navnesymbolik hos hovedpersonen. Will Westons navn er indlysende nok, og signalerer, at Weston repræsenterer 'the will of the west', vestens vilje. Jake Sully benyttes omvendt, og antyder den vending, som han kommer til at gennemgå i fortællingen: Jake betyder 'mand', mens Sully kommer af Solomon, der betyder 'fred': fredens mand. Han kommer med fred. Det er selvfølgelig indledningsvist en ironisk kommentar til de handlinger, som han er med til at udføre, som fører til en regulær krig mellem menneskene og Na'vierne. Men Sully er med til at sende menneskene væk fra planeten, og er på den måde med til at bringe fred.

Filmen har flere mytologiske betydningslag, fx navnet Pandora. Pandora var den første kvinde i græsk mytologi, skabt af Zeus i trods mod Prometheus, der havde givet menneskene ilden – og dermed en skabende magt på jorden. Dette benyttes i *Avatar* som en modernitetskritik af menneskelig skaben. Zeus sendte Pandora, og med sig havde hun Pandoras æske, som indeholdt ondskab og sygdom til menneskene. I æsken var der dog også håb, men det er først helt til sidst – efter alle lidelserne – at håbet slipper ud af æsken. Denne mytologiske opbygning overføres til filmens struktur, hvor menneskene, der rejser til Pandora, bringer lidelse, men til sidst er der en antydning af håb for indbyggerne på Pandora.

Og måske på sigt for mennesker, der formår at leve i overensstemmelse med naturens organiske luner. Endnu et fællestræk mellem *Ecotopia* og *Avatar* er, at der skal en kvinde til, før hovedpersonen lærer dette budskab: både Weston og Sully forelsker sig i lokale, indfødte kvinder.

Det grundstof, som er så værdifuldt for menneskene (og fuldstændig værdiløst for Na'vierne), er en nærliggende metafor for olie. Ikke nok med at olie fører til krige verden rundt; olie er også et af de brændstoffer, der er med til at forstyrre jordens økosystem. Indledningsvist benytter *Avatar* samme visuelle montage-teknik som Reggios *Koyaanisqatsi* ved at vise den uspolerede natur på Pandora, der dernæst mødes af menneskenes destruktivitet. Vi møder tidligt en række CGI-programmerede billeder af den visuelt betagende planet. Disse afbrydes på et tidspunkt af en bulldozer, der begynder at vælte sig vej gennem skoven. Naturen er i denne optik ikke en organisme, der skal varetages – det er en ting, der skal underlægges menneskets kapitalistiske behov for økonomisk vækst og rigdom. Grundstoffets navn 'unobtainium' virker i udgangspunktet som en banal metafor, men det er inden for naturvidenskaben en betegnelse for forskellige materialer, der er svære at få fat på.

Menneskets behov for naturdominans står i stærk kontrast til Na'viernes måde at leve på. Ikke nok med at de tilbeder naturen, holder den hellig, og hele tiden takker naturen for det, den har givet dem. De har også et helt bogstaveligt fysisk link til naturen. I deres hår findes en biologisk vækst, der kan forene dem med dyr og natur. Når de rider på forskellige dyr, går Na'vierne i bogstavelig fusion med dem, og når de kommunikerer med Eywa – alle tings moder – sker det også ved, at deres hårvækst binder sig til et træ lysende grene. At naturen er fremstillet som en levende organisme, understreges kraftigt af, at skovbunden lyser op, når den betrædes om natten. Langsomt går det derfor op for Sully gennem filmen, at han er med til at udnytte og udvinde noget meget, meget værdifuldt. Værdien er blot en helt anden end den kapitallogiske. Som parallel til Reggios første film i trilogien, *Koyaanisqatsi*, peger Na'vi-en, som Sully forelsker sig i, på, at planetens moder Eywa ikke tager sider. Eywa "perfects only the balance of life". Eywa holder livet i balance, mens mennesket med dets moderne naturforbrug bringer livet ud af økobalance.

På den måde er *Avatar* også opbygget som en økotopi, der fastholder det tvedelte svar, som gives i økotopien. *Avatar* er en økologisk kommentar til udnyttelse af naturen, der i overført betydning fra fiktion til virkelighed peger på, at hvis vi gør som menneskene i filmen, ender det i en dystopi, en menneskeheds og naturens endeligt. Lærer vi derimod af Na'viernes måde at leve i pagt med naturen, ender det i en utopi, en glædelig udgang hvor mennesket lever i kraft af og ikke på trods af naturen. Et liv i balance og ikke et liv ude af balance. (Jeg vil i denne sammenhæng undlade at gå dybere ind i, at denne kapitalismekritiske film var verdens hidtil dyreste film, da den blev indspillet, og at den var en af årets bedst sælgende film – og indtjente styrtende med penge.)

### 5. Ude 3: Astralrejser

Betegnelse 'rejse' har hidtil været forstået primært som en fysisk bevægelse fra et punkt til et andet. Undervejs i denne bevægelse har jeg peger på, at protagonisten i økotopien går gennem nogle faser. Først fastholder denne en selvtilstrækkelig position, hvor forståelsen af den alternative levemåde er yderst sparsom. Dernæst begynder hovedpersonen gennem forskellige møder med de lokale langsomt at ændre sit syn på samfundsindretningen, men denne ser sig selv mest splittet i sin rolle. Det ser vi fx i *Avatar*, hvor Sully er splittet mellem militæret og sin arbejdsgiver på den ene side og Na'vierne og videnskaben på den anden. Til sidst vælger hovedpersonen side til fordel for den økologiske omgang med naturen og understreger derved denne løsningsmodel som bedre. Dermed er rejsen til et økotopisk land også knyttet til en erkendelsesmæssig bevægelse.

*Avatar* trækker kraftige veksler på økotopiens mere spirituelle og mytologiske komponenter, der har de allerede beskrevne historiske rødder. Den meget direkte adgang til og omgang med naturen er en populærkulturel visualisering af den tankegang, som Friedrich Schelling beskrev i mødet mellem åndelig transcendens og naturens immanens. Den ikke sete åndelighed er aflæselig i naturen, hvilket bogstaveligt udnyttes i filmens naturvisualiseringer. Derfor er det måske ikke så overraskende, at *Avatar* har medvirket til det, som Markus Danielsen kalder for *fiktionsbaseret religion* (Danielsen, 2010a). Hans eksempel er jødismen som en religiøs praksis, der udspringer af filmene i serien *Star Wars*. Han peger også på *Avatar* som et eksempel på denne form for moderne, mediebase-rede reli-

gion (Danielsen, 2010b). Det mytologiske og religiøse lag er fra starten indbygget i filmen gennem referencer til den græske mytologiske fortælling om Pandora samt hinduismens begreb om 'avatar', der er en betegnelse for de inkarnationer, som guden Vishnu kan tage. Den webbaserede bevægelse *The Navi Movement* er gået skridtet videre og erklærer en ny metafysik: "We believe that humanity and the environment are one", hvilket i øvrigt er helt i tråd med Arne Næss' dybdeøkologi. Bevægelsens manifest peger på nogle af de samme teser, der udspringer af økotopien: det utopiske, hvis vi gør noget, og det dystopiske, hvis vi ikke gør noget (The Navi Manifesto, 2011). Denne bevægelse forsøger i samme sammenhæng at fravriste sig relationen til *Avatar* ved at påstå, at de eksisterede før filmens tilblivelse, og at filmen er baseret på deres oplevelser.

Davidson peger på, at andre tilhængere af den såkaldte *eywaisme* tager på astralrejser til Pandora, og derfor anser instruktøren James Cameron for at være profet. I diskussionsfora kalder tilhængere denne religion for *The Way of Eywa*. Metoden er interessant nok igen en rejse, men i dette tilfælde er det en rejse, der udspringer af nogle teknikker, som har sine rødder i avatar-begrebets hinduistiske rødder, nemlig astral projektion, hvor den enkelte selv forsøger at vælge sine drømme. I dette tilfælde rejser den troende gennem drømme til planeten Pandora for at indgå i de omgivelser, der er visualiseret i *Avatar*, for – ligesom i filmen – dernæst at vende hjem til egen krop med ny viden. En meget præcis parallel til Jake Sullys inkarnation af en fremmed krop. I *Avatar* er den astrale projektion et spring fra krop til krop, mens astralrejserne indgår i mange af verdens religioner som en særlig form for sjælerejser. På den måde er eywaismen i tråd med de modernitetskritiske elementer, der indgår i såvel økotopiens mere romantiske rødder og i religiøsitetens modernitetskritiske elementer. Moderniteten har haft, som et indbygget skisma, et problematisk forhold til religion, der i denne forståelseshorisont helst skulle gemmes væk i privat regi (Hansen, 2012). Derfor er det naturligt nok, at religion tager til genmæle mod forsøget på at blive gemt væk. Dog er eywaismens religiøsitet i høj grad en privat sag, eftersom dens erkendelser fås gennem personlige drømme, men det fælleskulturelle element frembringes af, at et populærkulturelt medie leverer det visuelle materiale, der tæres på, mens de mere politiske idéer, der indgår i økotopien og i økokritikken i høj grad tager denne type forestillinger ud af det private regi. At se en film,

der bringer kritisk information med sig, er på mange måder en helt elementær projektion (når filmen vises på et lærred), og fungerer i videre forstand som en budbringer, der kan overføres til den visuelle bank, som praktiserende af den eywaistiske astrale projektion kan tære på.

## 6. Hjem: Konklusion

*Ecotopia* og *Avatar* nærer et tæt slægtskab i den narrative udvikling såvel som tematiseringen af en potentielt forestående økologisk katastrofe. De trækker begge to på nogle elementer fra science fiction, hvilket i noget grad gælder *Avatar* mere end *Ecotopia*. I sidstnævnte er det opfindelser, som hjælper den økologiske hverdag, der tematiseres, mens det i førstnævnte snarere er remedierne (rumskip, avatarprogrammet), som skal bringe menneskene i kontakt med Na'vierne, der er i fokus. *Avatar* trækker i sin fokusering på en meget direkte tilgang til og omgang med naturen på fantasygenren, hvilket ikke gælder *Ecotopia*, som i stedet trækker på et mytologisk grundlag fra indianerkulturer. Slægtskabet er med andre ord mest iøjnefaldende i tema og narrativ udvikling.

Fortællingerne udkommer på hver sit tidspunkt, men begge udgivelser sammenfalder med et forøget fokus på potentielle økokriser. Callenbach udgiver *Ecotopia* under højdepunktet af en grøn bølge i 70'erne, hvor FN's 'Conference on the Human Environment' i 1972, også kendt som Stockholm-konferencen, var et vendepunkt. Slut-60'ernes og start-70'ernes stærke interesse for en påpasselig omgang med naturen inden for hippiekulturen fungerer også en resonansbund under fortællingen. *Avatar* udkommer på et tidspunkt, hvor miljø, økologi og grøn tænkning igen for alvor er kommet på dagsordenen i kraft af særlig medieopmærksomhed omkring naturkatastrofer, miljøtopmøder og nærmiljøets økokriser. Særlig interessant er den popularitet, som *Avatar* har nydt, der på flere måder – både som publikumsmagnet og som religiøs videreførelse – viser en vis kulturel interesse denne udvikling. Om udviklingen igen sætter *livet i balance*, er ikke inden for denne artikels rammer at vurdere.

Denne artikels hovedfokus har været at tolke to populære fortællinger, der på hver sin måde, men med tydelige fællestræk, tematiserer menneskets problematiske naturdominans. Sigtet har været at koble formidlingen af dette budskab til seeren gennem brugen af rejsen som en metafor for erkendelse og erhvervelse af

ny viden. Rejsen fungerer her som en erfaringsbaseret socialantropologi, der indkredser en forståelse af en alternativ levemåde, mens den i den videre religiøse udvikling fungerer som erfaringsbaseret religiøsitet, hvor de troende får indsigt gennem projicering af selvet ind i en parallelverden. Der er naturligvis aspekter, der vil kunne uddybes videre. Økologismens filosofihistorie, som jeg her trækker på, kan udfoldes mere, mens fortællingernes genrebase-ring – ud over økotopien – også kunne fortjene yderligere fokus. Men i dette tilfælde har hovedmotivationen været at koble to centrale fortællinger i spørgsmålet om rejse, erkendelse og natur. Rejsen leder i disse økotopier hovedpersonen til nye indsigter om menneskets forhold til naturen.

## Referencer

- Andersen, H.C., 2004. *Mit livs eventyr*. Gyldendal, København.
- Callenbach, Ernest, 1975. *Ecotopia*. Bantam Books, New York.
- Danielsen, Markus, 2010. Fiktionsbaseret religion – fra Star Wars til jedisme, *Religionsvidenskabeligt tidsskrift*, 55, s. 3-21.
- Danielsen, Markus, 2010. Genfødt og blå – religiøsitet baseret på James Camerons film "Avatar". I René Dybdal Pedersen (red.). *Religion 2.0. Tendenser og trends i det nye årtusind*. Det teologiske fakultet, Århus Universitet, Århus.
- Garforth, Lisa, 2006. Ideal Nature: Utopias of Landscape and Loss. *Spaces of Utopia*, 3, s. 5-26.
- Gilhus, Ingvild Sælid og Lisbeth Mikaelsson, 1998: *Kulturens re-fortrylling*, Universitetsforlaget, Oslo.
- Hannesten, Lars, 1992. *Litterære rejser. Poetik og erkendelse i danske digteres rejsebøger*. C.A. Reitzel, København.
- Hansen, Kim Toft, 2012. *Mord og metafysik – Det absolutte, det guddommelige og det overnaturlige i krimien*, Aalborg Universitetsforlag, Aalborg.
- Hjarvard, Stig, 2008. *En verden af medier – Medialisering af politik, sprog, religion og leg*. Samfundslitteratur, Frederiksberg.
- Lakoff, George & Mark Johnson, 2004. *Hverdagens metaforer*. Gyldendals bogklubber, København.
- Lützen, Peter, 2002. *Et billede at læse med*. Akademisk forlag, København.
- Nielsen, Erik A., 1982. *Søvnløshed – Modernisme i maleri, digtning og musik*. Centrum, København.



Næss, Arne, 1976: *Økologi, samfunn og livsstil*, Universitetsforlaget, Oslo.

Næss, Arne, 1986: The Deep Ecology Movement: Some Philosophical Aspects. *Philosophical Inquiry*, 8, s. 10-31.

Propp, Vladimir, 2001. *The Morphology of the Folktale*. University of Texas Press, Austin.

Schelling, Friedrich, 1988. *Ideas for a philosophy of nature*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

*The Navi Movement*, "The Navi Manifesto". [online] Tilgængelig på <http://navimovement.com/manifesto/> [besøgt: 12. december 2011].

## Sin Nombre

Skæbnesvangre rejser og fortællinger

*Pablo R. Cristoffanini*

*er lektor ved Institut for Kultur og Globale Studier, Aalborg Universitet. Cand.mag. og Ph.d.: kultur-analyse, Latinamerika og Spaniens kultur og inter-kulturel forståelse. Interesser er møder og konflikter mellem kulturer, forbrugskultur især i Latinamerika og film som værktøj til forståelse af sociale og kulturelle problematikker og sidstnævntes betydning for forståelse af film. Endvidere forsker han i de processer som skaber en global kultur.*

### Introduktion

Film er ikke nødvendigvis kun underholdning og æstetisk nydelse, ofte repræsenterer de vigtige samfundsmæssige, kulturelle og inter-kulturelle problemer. Til at skabe disse repræsentationer benytter film fortællinger, billeder og musik, og ved hjælp af disse har dens frembringelser en mægtig appel. Repræsentation er et vigtigt begreb for kulturstudier, men også for samfundsvidenskaber i al almindelighed. Da alle begreber kan udfyldes med forskellige meninger, vil jeg kort præsentere en forståelse af repræsentation, der er tæt knyttet til en fortolkende tilgang og til semiotik og diskurs som teorier og metoder.

Jeg hævder i artiklen, at når filmen repræsenterer vigtige problemstillinger i den faktiske verden, gør den det ofte og samtidig på en ideologisk og utopisk måde. Derfor opridses jeg to centrale tilgange til forståelse af ideologien, og hvordan den opererer og ekspliciterer på, hvilken måde filmen samtidig indeholder ideologiske og utopiske elementer.

Den empiriske genstand for min analyse og fortolkning er filmen *Sin nombre* (spansk: Uden navn), der repræsenterer to af den globaliserede verdens grundlæggende spørgsmål: a) den illegale emigration fra Syd mod Nord, i dette tilfælde fra Mellemerika gennem Mexico til USA og b) ungdomsbanders vold, kriminalitet og paral-

lækultur. Filmen udkom i 2009 og er instrueret af den amerikanske filminstruktør Cary Fukunaga. Fukunaga foretog en grundig research i form af interviews med og risikofulde ophold blandt de to grupper, som filmen beskæftiger sig med, og rejste selv gennem Mexico i det berømte *beast* eller dødens tog, som fragttoget, der transporterer de illegale immigranter fra Mellemamerika gennem Mexico og til USA, bliver kaldt. (Rudzki-Weise, 2010) Filmen er ikke kun vedkommende, fordi den tager vigtige samfundsmæssige og eksistentielle spørgsmål op, men også fordi den, som kritikerne har påpeget, rent æstetisk er af høj kvalitet. Farver, lyd og de intense scener støtter en god fortælling.

Ud over at se filmen som repræsentation, ideologi og utopi vil jeg analysere den ved hjælp af sociologiske begreber som risiko og transnationale bånd. (Ruiz, 2003) Jeg ønsker at vise, hvordan Fukunagas repræsentation af den navnkundige Mara Salvatrucha og emigrationen fra Mellemamerika til USA gennem Mexico gør disse samfundsfænomener levende på en farverig og følelsesmættet måde. Som Clifford Geertz har påpeget, er det dette, der karakteriserer ideologien som symbolsk system i modsætning til videnskaben. Jeg kommer også ind på andre ideologiske, men også utopiske, elementer. Det er min hensigt at påvise, at det for at forstå disse elementer er nødvendigt at inddrage den bredere sociale, kulturelle og historiske kontekst. Især når det handler om film som *Sin Nombre*, hvor der eksisterer prototyper og situationer i den virkelige verden for de karakterer og situationer, vi bliver præsenteret for i filmen.

Det er min påstand, at hvis man ikke har en tilstrækkelig viden om disse kontekster, vil man risikere at forbigå ideologien og utopien i filmen og på denne måde bekræfte dominerende diskurser, som eksisterer i samfundet og medierne om de sociale og kulturelle spørgsmål, som filmen tager op. Disse diskurser kan give en ensidig og partisk forståelse af vigtige samfundsproblemer og have negative konsekvenser for de sociale og etniske grupper, der bliver repræsenteret.

### **Film som repræsentation, ideologi og utopi**

Repræsentationen er tæt knyttet til meningen. Vi giver betydning og mening til tingene ved at anvende dem: hvad vi siger, tænker og føler om dem. Desuden giver vi mening til begivenheder, mennesker og genstande gennem de symbolske systemer, som vi

placerer dem i. Disse symbolske systemer kan være kunst, religion, æstetik, videnskab eller idelogi (Geertz, 1973). Derfor kan vores vurdering af personer, grupper, sociale og økonomiske fænomener være forskellige, selv om vi taler om den samme "virkelighed." Endvidere får ting, personer og genstande mening ved den måde, vi repræsenterer dem på, de billeder eller den musik vi bruger, de historier vi fortæller. Film er lige præcis et mægtigt repræsentationssystem, fordi de kombinerer fortælling, musik og billeder i deres repræsentationer.

I repræsentationsprocessen bruger vi tegn (Eco, 1977 og 1968 / 1999) eller symboler som Clifford Geertz forstår dem: "*any object, act, event, quality, or relation which serves as a vehicle for a conception-the conception is the symbol's meaning.*" (Geertz, 1973: 91) Tegn eller symboler kan således være ord, lyde eller billeder, der optræder i stedet for et begreb eller andet i virkeligheden.

Kulturen beskæftiger sig specifikt med produktion og udveksling af betydninger, og derfor kan vi sige, at medlemmer af en kultur har tendens til at se verden på samme måde, hvilket ikke betyder, at en kultur nødvendigvis er præget af konsensus, når det gælder betydninger og meninger. Tværtimod, i enhver kultur er der mere end én betydning, når det gælder personer, begivenheder og genstande. Ofte finder der er en kamp sted om betydninger. Den måde, vi kategoriserer verden på, de betydninger, vi tilføjer tingene, kan påvirke vores adfærd, derfor er det en vigtig problemstilling, hvilke betydninger, sociale eller kulturelle fænomener får. I deres repræsentationer af vigtige sociale og kulturelle problemer, som fx ungdomsbander og migrationen fra Syd mod Nord er, kan film have ideologisk og utopisk indhold. Da der findes forskellige tilgange til ideologibegrebet, er det nødvendigt at præcisere det. Overordnet kan man hævde, at der findes to forskellige retning mht. til forståelse af begrebet. I den ene ende finder vi den marxistisk inspirerede ideologiforståelse, der udspringer af Marx og Engels' skrifter, som har påvirket bl.a. Althusser, Barthes, Eco og Eagleton. Man kan betegne disse tilgange til ideologien som kritiske. Her vil jeg nøjes med at gengive nogle ideer fra den fremtrædende semiotikker og forfatter, Umberto Eco. Eco mener, at ideologi er et partisk og usammenhængende verdenssyn, som er karakteriseret ved at skjule - i valg af ord og argumentation - alternative betydninger og relationer. Ideologien er ude af

stand til at redegøre for den kompleksitet, der findes i modstridende semantiske felter. (Eco, 1968: 156-183; Eco, 1977:457-472)

I den anden ende, når det gælder opfattelser af ideologien, finder vi dem, der tænker på ideologi på en ikke evaluerende måde. Dvs. man udtaler sig ikke på forhånd om et fordrejet, forvansket eller falskt indhold af ideologien. De teoretikere, som tilslutter sig denne tilgang, forstår ideologi som overbevisninger, ideer eller symbolske systemer. Indholdet af disse overbevisninger og ideer er ikke nødvendigvis negativt eller problematisk.

Repræsentanter for denne tilgang er Karl Mannheim (1960) og den amerikanske antropolog Clifford Geertz (1973), som har været hovedpersonerne bag samfundsvidenskabernes drejning imod en fortolkende eller hermeneutisk tilgang. For Geertz er ideologi et slags foreløbig kort over en problematisk virkelighed. Den tilbyder os en skabelon eller plan for tilrettelæggelsen af sociale og psykologiske processer. De retninger, som forklarer ideologien i kraft af materielle interesser eller psykiske spændinger, mangler ifølge Geertz en forståelse for, hvordan symbolske systemer opererer. De tager ikke i betragtning, at symbolet kan udlede sin styrke fra dets evne til at opfatte, formulere og formidle sociale realiteter, der undviger videnskabens tempererede sprog, at symbolet kan udtrykke mere komplekse betydninger end dets læsning lægger op til.

I denne artikel vil jeg bruge begge forståelser af ideologien. Dvs. at for mig kan ideologien fungere som et orienteringssystem i forhold til problematiske virkeligheder: hvordan kan det være, at de unge i Mellemamerika og i Mexico går ind i bander, der er ekstremt voldelige og er parate til at risikere livet for det? Eller hvorfor begiver unge fra disse områder sig ud på en rejse fuld af risici for at komme ind i USA? Men dette orienteringssystem kan også gå uden om vigtige sider af den problematiske virkelighed, som er dens fortolkende genstand.

Men film er ikke kun repræsentation og ideologi. Ofte indeholder de en utopisk dimension. Faktisk mener jeg, at Geertz' forståelse bringer os nærmere denne dimension. Stuart Hall gjorde allerede i "Notes on deconstructing The Popular" opmærksom på, at vi i populærkulturens frembringelser kan observere en dobbelt bevægelse. De samme produkter, der udtrykker de herskende gruppers drømme, indeholder ofte elementer af modstand og oprør i forhold til disse drømme. (Hall, 1981)

Film som medie har mange muligheder, når det gælder om at få os til at tænke, overveje om forestille os en bedre fremtid på en kritisk måde. Appellen af billedets ornament, lysende display, en verden af eventyr og rejseafstand. Desuden har de fantastiske teknologiske muligheder, der forbedrer den magiske fortælling, som kan have et utopisk indhold. Filmen kan som en dagdrøm, åben, med en fantastisk opfindsomhed forudse, hvad der er latent. Den udgør et forskønnende spejl.

### **Casper, Smiley og La Mara Salvatrucha**

Filmen tegner et billede af den berømte og berygtede bande gennem personer, miljøer og situationer og er centreret omkring to hovedkarakterer. Den ene "Casper" eller Willy, som han også kaldes, er medlem af banden La Mara i byen Tapachula i det sydlige Mexico. Han bliver kaldt Casper af sine "homies" (kammerater) i banden, mens han overfor folk udenfor og især overfor de piger, han kommer i kontakt med og for at beskytte dem, giver sig til kende som Willy. I begyndelsen af filmen ser vi Casper, der roligt og sørgmodigt betragter et efterårslandskab, mens han ryger en cigaret. Det er som om hans karakter er præget af en vis stoisk ro, der kendetegner en person, som har affundet sig med det liv han lever. Der er noget meditativt over situationen, som landskabet og musikken understreger. Vi lægger mærke til tatoveringerne på hans arme og mave og, da han resolut rejser sig, ser vi, at han også har dem på ryggen. Der er adskillige tatoveringer, men de virker ikke frygtindgydende, som dem vi ser hos bandens leder, Lil'Mago. Stilheden og den rolige stemning brydes brat, da Casper kommer ud på gaden, hvor musikken og gadelarmen markerer, at vi er i det sydlige Mexico. Kameraet fokuserer på hans ansigt og en ny tatovering under hans højre øje. Vi kan ikke afkode disse tegn, fordi vi ikke kender La Maras koder. For de indviede er det imidlertid ikke vanskeligt at afkode tegnet, der står for, at han har dræbt en modstander eller fjende.<sup>1</sup>

Videre ser vi Casper komme ind i en kollektiv taxa og få penge af chaufføren. Det samme sker, da han modtager penge fra ejeren af en kiosk. Vi ved det ikke med sikkerhed, men vi kan slutte os til, at pengene gives for beskyttelse, og at La Mara lever af det. Filmen beskriver livet i banden som værende hårdt og brutalt, regeret af selvskabte regler og med en rig symbolverden. Fra de

tatoverede kroppe og ansigter til det specielle kropsprog, som "los homies" anvender.<sup>2</sup>

Casper har et forhold til en pige, der hører til i et andet kvarter, Marta. Han skjuler dette forhold for banden og dens leder Lil' Mago. Dels fordi banden er i krig med banden fra det kvarter, hvor Marta bor, og dels fordi lederen vil kræve sex med hende, hvis hun skal være en del af banden. Forholdet mellem Casper og Marta er risikabelt, det indeholder en potentiel og farlig konflikt mellem Casper og bandens leder. Desuden er Casper en slags mentor for drengen Smiley. Begge lyver overfor banden for at skjule, at Casper tilbringer sin tid med Marta. Modsætningerne mellem Casper på den ene side og Lil'Mago og banden på den anden kommer til udtryk/udløses for første gang, da bandens leder indkalder Smiley til indvielsesritualet, som går ud på, at drengen skal gennemgå en kollektiv afstraffelse. De andre medlemmer sparker og tildeler ham hårde slag, mens lederen tæller til 13. Da sidstnævnte ikke er tilfreds med styrken af slagene gentager han det samme tal. Mens Lil'Mago nyder situation og kræver at ritualet gennemføres til punkt og prikke, ser vi som tilskuere, at Casper føler ubehag, noget som muliggør en identifikation mellem tilskuerne og ét af bandemedlemmerne.

La Mara viser ingen nåde overfor medlemmerne af andre bander. Således tvinges drengen Smiley, efter at han har overstået indvielsen, til at dræbe et medlem af en anden bande ved at skyde ham i hovedet for at gøre sig fortjent til et våben. Bagefter bliver liget parteret og hundene får kødet. Lil'Mago trøster Smiley og fortæller ham, at smerten vil foretage sig, men at La Mara er der for evigt. Nu vil drengen indgå i et fællesskab uden grænser: "Nu er du med i en familie og har mange tusinde brødre. Uanset hvor du tager han, er der nogen, der sørger for dig."

Konflikten mellem Lil'Mago og Casper eskalerer, idet lederen forsøger at voldtage Marta, og da hun gør modstand og forsøger at flygte bliver hun slået ihjel. Til Caspers spørgsmål om, hvor hun er, nøjes han med at svare: "Djævelen tog hende". Efter denne episode beordrer lederen Casper og Smiley at deltage i plyndringen af de illegale emigranter fra Mellemamerika, der har krydset grænsen til Mexico, på deres rejse mod USA. Her forenes de to hovedpersoners historier.

### Sayra og rejsen mod Nord

Sayra er en ung pige fra Tegucigalpa, Honduras. Hun bor sammen med sin bedstemor. Faderen, der har stiftet familie i USA, er blevet udvist og møder igen datteren, som han ikke har set, siden hun var barn. Han vil gerne have sin bror og datteren med til New Jersey, hvor hans nye kone og to små døtre bor. Sayra er en meget selvstændig og selvbevidst ung pige. Denne information bliver gentaget mange gange i filmen. Således svarer hun sin onkel, at hvis hun ville tage nordpå, kunne hun gøre det alene. Onklen understreger over for hende, at i Honduras er der ikke nogen fremtid for hende: "Du har ingen muligheder, Sayra". De tre tager sted, og vi ser dem gå mange timer gennem plantager for til sidst at krydse en flod på grænsen mellem Guatemala og Mexico. Da de kommer ind i Mexico, bliver mange af dem straks anholdt af politiet, som tager alt hvad de har af værdi med sig og tvinger dem til at tage tøjet af. Alligevel lykkes det for faren, som har prøvet det hele før, at gemme nogle penge. Mens de venter på toget, fortæller faren Sayra, at af alle de immigranter, der starter rejsen, når halvdelen aldrig frem. Toget med immigranterne på taget sætter i gang og kører gennem smukke og drømmeagtige landskaber. Vind og vanddråber indikerer, at et uvejr nærmer sig. Næsten samtidig med den voldsomme regn begynder Lil'Mago, Casper og Smiley at overfalde de rejsende. Mens de tre er i gang med vold at tage penge og ejendele fra immigranterne, opdager Lil'Mago den smukke Sayra og forsøger at voldtage hende, mens faren og onklen er afmægtige vidner. Situationen bliver alligevel for meget for Casper, som har friske minder om voldtægten af hans kæreste, og han slår lederen ihjel med sin machete. Dette er *the point of no return* for ham. Han ved udmærket, at han fra det øjeblik er dødsdømt; La Maras kodeks kræver det. Derfor sender han Smiley tilbage, for at denne sidste ikke skal dele hans skæbne. Nogle emigranter forsøger at slå Casper ihjel, da han falder i søvn, men Sayra advarer ham. Der opstår et bånd mellem de to, og på trods af farens advarsler bliver Sayra ved med at hjælpe manden, der har reddet hende. Da Casper også forsøger at slippe væk fra Sayra, for at hun ikke skal komme til at dele hans skæbne, flygter hun fra faren og onklen og følger efter Casper, fordi hun har forelsket sig i ham. Resten af filmen ser vi Casper og Sayras vilde flugt tættere og tættere forfulgt af La Mara, der har et netværk i alle byer. Ved slutningen lykkes det for Sayra med hjælp fra Casper at



krydse grænsen til USA og få kontakt med sin papfamilie i New Jersey. Rejsen slutter lykkeligt for hende, som symbolet på de mange illegale immigranter, der har held til at komme ind i det forjættede land. Casper bliver indhentet, og det er Smiley, der dræber sin tidligere mentor, fordi han selv er under anklage, idet han ikke hævne mordet på lederen med det samme. At opspore og slå Casper ihjel er den pris, han skal betale for, at banden accepterer ham igen og for at blive fuldt medlem. Vi ser, hvordan han ved slutningen af filmen får en smertefuld, men æresfuld tatovering med bogstaverne MS i underlæben som anerkendelse af hans bedrift.

Sayras onkel og far er i filmen symboler på de illegale immigranter. Onklen bliver fanget og deporteret tilbage til Honduras af det mexicanske politi, mens faren dør, idet han flygter fra det samme politi og falder ned imellem vognene i toget, en skæbne som også i virkeligheden rammer illegale immigranter.

### **Repræsentation, ideologi og utopi i filmen**

Filmene skildrer La Mara som en bande, der har skabt en parallelverden, 'Destroyer' hedder det sted i filmen, hvor banden huserer, og det er en udmærket metafor for La Maras virkning. I denne verden findes der antikke indvielsesritualer, hvor adgangen til fællesskabet går gennem smerten. Lederen og de andre medlemmer er grusomme og ubarmhjertige. For dem er det ikke nok at mishandle og henrette medlemmer af andre bander, de giver deres kød som mad til hundene og viser på den måde barskhed og foragt. De afpresser, stjæler og voldtager. Medlemmerne rekrutteres som børn, som vi ser det gennem karakteren Smiley, og banden kommer til at udgøre en stor familie med medlemmer på tværs af landene (Mellemamerika, Mexico og USA). Man kan altid regne med fælleskab og beskyttelse, hvis man tilhører La Mara. Men prisen er høj: afstraffelse eller døden, hvis man bryder reglerne eller ikke adlyder lederen. Der er ikke plads til et privatliv. Ritualerne, reglerne, de tatoverede kroppe, den sadistiske vold, afpresningen af folk, krænkelsen af kvinder, afstraffelsen af børn og tyveri fra immigranterne, alt dette forekommer som noget fremmed, uforståeligt og ofte frastødende for den almindelige tilskuer. Men historien virker, fordi vi kan identificere os med Casper og delvis med Smiley. De utopiske elementer i filmen udtrykker sig gennem Caspers ubehag ved ritualerne og gennem hans handlinger: han bryder med reglerne på

grund af sin kærlighed til en pige fra et andet kvarter og dræber til sidste lederen, fordi han forsøger at voldtage en ung pige. Hvis Casper i filmens univers er den, som bærer fortællingen set fra et sociologisk perspektiv, er han en undtagelse, idet han er et atypisk og oprørsk medlem.

Filmen virker også, fordi den viser andre sider af La Mara. Vi ser de unge og deres kvinder i gang med at spise eller høre musik sammen, og selv om lederen kan være grusom, er han i filmen omsorgsfuld overfor sin søn som han ofte bærer i armene; og desuden er han engageret i medlemmernes liv. For drengen Smiley betyder bandens accept og anerkendelse alt.

Hvis Casper er undtagelsen mht. de prototypiske medlemmer af La Mara i den sociale verden, gælder det samme for Sayra, når man refererer til immigranterne. Hun fremstilles som en stærk og selvstændig ung kvinde med egne meninger og, som ikke er bange for at trodse sin far og onkel og forlade dem. Fukanaga har ønsket at gøre op med det billede af latinokvinder, der fremstiller dem som passive, uselvstændige og hvis formål med livet er at tage sig af mændene og tilfredsstille deres behov. Sayra repræsenterer således et håb om en bedre fremtid for kvinderne i Mellemamerika og Mexico.

Skuespillerne er alle latinos og taler spansk med socio- eller regionale dialekter, mange af dem er uden erfaringer fra filmverden. Dette skaber sammen med Fukanagas research hos La Mara og immigranterne et værk, der forekommer realistisk og troværdigt.

### **Filmen og den sociale verden**

Den farefulde rejse, som emigranterne begiver sig ud på, er et af de centrale temaer. Det forekommer mig malplaceret at klassificere denne rejse, som de illegale emigranter fra Mellemamerika foretager fra deres hjemland til USA gennem Mexico, som en dannelsesrejse (Philipsen, 2010). Det er på sin plads at huske, at migranter og flygtninge er med til at give globaliseringen dens karakter af bevægelighed, men denne bevægelighed er af en helt anden karakter end den, som forretningsfolk, akademikere, studerende eller fodboldspillere praktiserer. Derfor vil jeg snarere bruge det sociologiske begreb "risiko" for at forstå fænomenet.

På den rejse, som migranterne fra Mellemamerika påbegynder for at nå frem til USA gennem Mexico, møder mennesker, der

udgør en trussel eller fare, og som kommer til at skade dem fysisk og psykisk, bringer dem i fare eller ødelægge deres projekt. Man kan anskue rejsen som en fortælling, hvor vi kan se forskellige aktører og scenarier for os. Fra det øjeblik, hvor migranterne forlader deres hjem, findes der modstandere, der ønsker at påføre dem skader. Vi kunne inddele dem i officielle og private. De første er myndighederne i Mexico på forskellige niveauer, kommunalt, føderalt og nationalt. De presser penge ud af migranterne, bestjæler dem og sætter dem i fængsel uden vand og mad. (Ruiz 2003) I filmen ser vi, hvordan Sayra, hendes far og onkel bliver fanget og tvunget til at tage deres tøj af og aflevere alle deres værdigenstande til det mexicanske politi. De private modstandere er banderne, som La Mara Salvatrucha, der opererer på begge sider af grænsen, og andre bander som stjæler eller voldtager, nogle gange (som det vises i *Sin nombre*) begge ting samtidig. De mest udsatte blandt de illegale migranter er børn og kvinder. De risikerer at blive bortført og solgt til adoption eller til prostitution i Mexico eller USA. (Ruiz, 2003:15)

Desuden vil migranterne på deres odysse møde andre forhindringer, der uden hensigt kan påføre dem skader og tab. Grænseområdet mellem Guatemala og Mexico kendetegnes af en tæt flora, floder og bjerge som migranterne skal krydse og overvinde, og ved at gøre det udsætter de sig for fare. Faunaen udgør også en risiko i form af slanger og moskitoer der er årsagen til malaria og den gule feber. Endelig ved at rejse i fragttøget risikerer de at miste en legemsdel eller at blive klemt.

Når vi ser på den socioøkonomiske baggrund i disse lande, kan vi bedre forstå de to fænomener, som filmen *Sin Nombre* præsenterer os for, og de motiver, folk har for at emigrere eller for at leve det barske og usikre liv, som medlemmerne af La Mara lever. I El Salvador udgør de unge næsten halvdelen af befolkningen og  $\frac{3}{4}$  af børnene lever i fattigdom. (DeCesare, 1998:5). I Honduras lever 47,7 % i ekstrem fattigdom med indtægter under 60 dollars om måneden. Kvinderne i Honduras er mere udsat for fattigdom, tidlige graviditeter, diskrimination i og uden for familien og for seksuel chikane inden og udenfor uddannelsesinstitutionerne (Nihil Olivera :5). Med denne baggrund in mente virker det lidt ironisk at hævde, at de unge piger, som Sayra repræsenterer i filmen, rejser til USA på dannelsesrejse, sådan som Philipsen hævder i sin analyse af filmen.

### Transnationale bander i en globaliseringstid

*Sin Nombre* fremstiller La Maras vold som et samfundsfænomen, der eksisterer og trives i Mellemamerika og i den sydelige del af Mexico. Emigrationen til USA, hvis årsager kun hentydes (ingen fremtid for de unge), og den hårdhændede behandling af immigranterne i Mexico fremstilles som problematikker, der også er afgrænset til de ovennævnte lande. I den sociale verden er begge fænomener tæt knyttet til USA, og de amerikanske regeringer har via deres politik haft en betydelig rolle mht. La Maras udvikling og de risici som immigranterne udsættes for. Man kan ikke forstå den betydning som ungdomsvolden har fået uden at sætte den i relation til de diskurser, der har skabt social frygt og en legitimering af nødvendigheden af at være *tough in crime*. Disse diskurser har været med til at dæmonisere og forenkle fænomenet ungdomsvold. Desuden har de bidraget med bearbejdning af den offentlige mening hen imod en accept af autoritære løsninger, der krænker menneskerettighederne og skader demokratiet. (Reguillo, 2005) La Mara er delvis et produkt af disse politikker, og immigranter lider under dens effekter. Ved at udelade disse sammenhænge i sin repræsentation af disse to samfundsfænomener reproducerer filmen dominerende samfundsdiskurser.

Ungdomsvolden og banderne i Mellemamerika har som baggrund de politiske nederlag, som venstreorienterede samfundsprojekter oplevede i Latinamerika i 70'erne og 80'erne. De blev erstattet af neoliberale eksperimenter, som betød at staten trak sig tilbage, og barske finansielle og økonomiske politikker blev gennemført. I denne kontekst afspejlede de nye former, som ungdomskulturen tog i deres søgen efter identitet, referencer, tilhørsforhold, som de ikke kunne finde i traditionelle institutioner, såsom skolen, kirken og familien. Disse tilbød ikke passende alternativer til den krise, som samfundet oplevede. Som prototype startedes ungdomsbanderne i Mellemamerika af unge, der i midten af firserne protesterede for at kræve billigere transport i de store byer. Deres medlemmer var unge arbejdere eller studerende, som plyndrede butikker og forretninger.

Bander og kliker udviklede sig i fattige storbyer i Mellemamerika, som havde få moderne enklaver, og hvor de protestantiske sekter voksede, især blandt de unge. Mange var funktionelle analfabeter, og der var store arbejdsløshed blandt dem. Banderne tilbød de unge et alternativ til den usikkerhed, som den nyliberale samfunds-

orden og vilde kapitalisme havde skabt. De unge fandt hos dem en alternativ socialisering, tilhørsforhold, levevej og en parallel symbolsk og værdimæssig verden, hvor ære, fælleskab, solidaritet, mod og respekt var nøgle tegn. På denne måde var de et svar på det eksisterende politiske vakuum og et alternativ for de skuffede unge.

La Mara Salvatrucha, der hærger i Mellemamerika (El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala) og den sydlige del af Mexico i dag, har sine rødder i USA. Den opstod blandt børn af flygtninge fra borgerkrigen i El Salvador; en borgerkrig, hvor USA støttede alliancen mellem militæret og oligarkiet, der i 1980'erne bekæmpede et bondeoprør, der tog form af en guerillabevægelse. De børn, der kom til Los Angeles sammen med deres forældre som flygtninge, havde set familiemedlemmer eller venner blive mishandlet og henrettet af militæret og voksede op i familier med forældre, der havde overarbejde, ofte med traumer og/eller alkoholproblemer. Ofte ignorerede eller undgik fællesskabet dem. I banden fandt de beskyttelse imod volden i hjemmet og imod de etablerede og organiserede afroamerikanske og mexicanske bander.

I 1992, efter optøjerne og urolighederne i Los Angeles, begyndte politiet at have en "get tough"-tilgang til banderne, der blev betragtet, som dem der var med til at fremme urolighederne. Den kriminelle lavalder blev sat ned, og børn og unge kom nu i fængsel. Efter endt fængselsophold begyndte man at deportere dem til Mellemamerika, selv om de nogle gange var født i USA eller havde amerikansk statsborgerskab. Samtidig blev sanktionerne skærpet, således at selv små forbrydelser som tyveri eller spirituskørsel kunne medføre udvisning. Som resultat af denne politik blev omkring 20.000 unge, der var vokset op i Los Angeles's slumkvarterer udvist til Mellemamerika. De blev sendt til lande, som de knapt kendte, og mange af dem talte kun engelsk eller *Spanglish*. Den mest oplagte mulighed for dem var at tilslutte sig de fungerende bander. Som følge heraf voksede narko kriminalitet i området betydeligt og samtidig eskalerede volden.

La Mara er blevet mere udviklet og sofistikeret i forhold til den type af våben de besidder (AK-47) og til deres kriminelle aktiviteter: narko, biltyveri, lejemord, beskyttelse og transport af immigranterne, m.fl. (Reguillo, 2005; Arana, 2005).

Fukanagas repræsentation og fortælling konstruerer for os en foreløbig fortolkning af presserende sociale problemer. Denne re-

præsentation er ideologisk i den forstand, at han ikke kommer ind på den rolle, som USA har haft i Mellemamerika: i borgerkrigene, undertrykkelse, bevarelsen af ulighederne, etableringer af nye liberale politikker der har svækket staterne. Ved ikke at forholde sig til den del af den sociale virkelighed naturaliserer eller eksotiserer Fukunaga La Maras vold. Ligeledes får vi i filmen intet at vide om USA's pres på Mexico siden 1980'erne for at slå ned på migranterne fra andre lande, der rejste gennem Mexico til USA. Det vil sige at USA's immigrations politik og apparat møde immigranterne allerede i Mexicos sydlig grænse og ikke kun i grænsen mellem Mexico og USA hvor grænsepatruljer er blevet firedoblet i de sidste årtier og hvor siden 1995 er mere end 5000 lige af immigranter blevet fundet. Det er relativt nemt for de amerikanske eller europæiske tilskuere at forstå og føle med de stakkels migranter fra Mellemamerika der i deres rejser gennem Mexico blev bestjålet og mishandlet af den mexicanske politi og banderne, men *Sin Nombre* undgår at stille spørgsmålstegn til USA's rolle i immigranterne skæbne og ungdomsbanders udvikling.

### Afsluttende betragtninger

*Sin Nombre* er et kulturelt objekt skabt af Cary Fukunaga. Den udgør en repræsentation ved at indeholde historier og billeder, der kommer til at påvirke vores forståelse af den aggressive og farlige La Mara Salvatrucha og også af de illegale emigranter fra Mellemamerika, som rejser gennem Mexico til USA. Som fortælling virker filmen, fordi to forskellige skæbner bliver forenet i en rejse, som afgørende ændrer to unge menneskers liv. Den ene er Casper, det medlem af banden, der gør oprør og dræber lederen og betaler med livet for det. Den anden er Sayra, en ung pige fra Honduras, der sammen med sin far og onkel vil ind i USA. Projektet lykkes for hende takket været Casper, der virker som hjælperen.

Gennem filmen forstår vi, hvordan banden fungerer, dens værdier, normer og ritualer. Vi følger karakteren Casper forstår hans konflikter med lederen Lil'Mago, som han senere slår ihjel. Vi indser den betydning, banden har for drengen Smiley, der fra at være Caspers ven ender med at slå ham ihjel. Vi kommer også til at forstå, hvordan La Mara udgør en parallel verden i forhold til det samfund der omgiver den. Men vi får ikke noget at vide om, hvorfor disse unge accepterer et liv med vold og risici. Det samme gør

sig gældende mht. migranterne. Vi kan godt føle med dem og sætte os ind i, hvordan det må være at gå mange timer gennem uendelige plantager, krydse floder, blive bestjålet og chikaneret af politiet, rejse i dage på taget af et fragttog angrebet af bander og forfulgt af andre politikfolk. Men filmen giver os næsten ingen viden om, hvorfor disse mennesker indlader sig på en så farefuld rejse, og hvad det er der driver dem til det. Ved at gøre det fungerer filmen ideologisk, idet den naturaliserer disse samfundsfænomener: som tilskuer sidder man tilbage med det indtryk, at alt det, som de repræsenterer, må være et produkt af mellemamerikanernes og mexikanernes kulturelle programmering.

Til gengæld indeholder filmen også utopiske elementer i form af de værdier og handlinger, som vi associerer med hovedpersonerne. Caspers ubehag og tøven stillet overfor den ekstreme vold i individers ritualerne eller elimineringen af modstandere. Hans oprør og henrettelse af lederen på grund af sidstnævntes forkærlighed for at voldtage piger, hans hjælp til Sayra for at hun kan realisere sit mål mm. Sayra for sit vedkommende repræsenterer en ny type af "latina", en ung pige med sine egne og stærke meninger, som tør trodse faderens eller onkelens ideer eller beslutninger. Hendes mod, der viser sig i den beslutning, hun tager ved at følge den mand, der reddede hende, og som hendes fælleskab frygter og foragter, og også i den beslutsomhed, som gør, at hun er den eneste i familien, for hvem det lykkes at krydse grænsen til USA. I den forstand udgør hun et symbol for dem, der realiserer utopien.

### Notes

- 1 Se <http://mx.answers.yahoo.com/question/index?qid=20070717214149AA1C8S7>
- 2 Homies stammer fra "home boys": drengene der tilhører kvarteret.

### Referencer

- Arana Ana (2005) "How the Street Gangs Took Central America" i *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 84, N° 3.
- Dargis Manohla (2009). "Desperate Lives Crisscross in Train-Hopping Journey" *The New York Times*, March 20.
- De Cesare, Donna (1998). "The children of war" i *Nacla Report on the Americas*, Vol. 32 Issue 1.

- Eagleton, Terry, *Ideología. Una Introducción*. Barcelona : Paidós, 2005.
- Eco Umberto, *La Estructura Ausente. Introducción a la semiótica*. Barcelona : Lumen, 1968 / 1999.
- Eco, Humberto, *Tratado de Semiotica General*, Barcelona : Lumen. 1977.
- Gaines, Jane M. (2000) "Dream / Factory" I Christine Gledhill & Linda Williams, *Film Studies*, London : Arnold.
- Hall Stuart (1981) "Notes on deconstructing 'The Popular'". I Samuel, R. (ed.), *People's history and socialist theory*. Boston, MA: Routledge and Kegan Poul.
- Hall Stuart (ed.), *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, London: Sage, 1997.
- Hansen, Kim Toft, *Mord og metafysik – Det absolutte, det guddommelige og det overnaturlige i krimien*, Aalborg Universitetsforlag, 2012.
- Geertz, Clifford, *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York : Basic Books, 1973.
- Griswold Wendy, *Cultures and Societies in a Changing World*, California: Pine Forge Press, 2008.
- Laguarda Paula (2006). Cine y estudios de género: Imagen, representación e ideología. Notas para un abordaje crítico" i *La aljaba* v, 10.
- Mannheim, Karl, *Ideology and Utopia. An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge*, London : Routledge, 1960.
- Nihil Olivera Mauricio (1998). "Honduras, una sentencia de pobreza" i <http://www.comparte.org/docs/Dossier%20Honduras.pdf>
- Nevins, Joseph (2009). "The Dangers of Not Thinking Politically: A Review of Sin Nombre" i <http://dissidentvoice.org/2009/05/the-dangers-of-not-thinking-politically-a-review-of-sin-nombre/>
- Philipsen Heidi (2010). "Home – out – homie". I 16:9, 8. Årgang, nummer 36.
- Reguillo Rossana (2005). "La Mara: contingencia y afiliación con el exceso" i *Nueva Sociedad* 200.
- Ruiz Olivia (2003) "La Migración centroamericana en la frontera sur: un perfil del riesgo en la migración indocumentada internacional" i <http://imprasc.net:29572/PerfilesNacionales/Documents/M%C3%A9xico/F06.pdf>
- Rudzki-Weise Jannis (2010). "Without a Name – Latino Representation in Fukunaga's Sin Nombre" i [www.grin.com/ Document Nr. V163359](http://www.grin.com/DocumentNr.V163359).



Shohat Ella & Stam Robert, *Multiculturalismo, cine y medios de comunicación*, Barcelona: Paidós, 2002, (1994).

## Writing the Mists of Memory

The Narrative Journeys of Henri Michaux and Nicolas Bouvier

*Lénia Marques*

*is a Lecturer in Imagineering at the Academy for Leisure, NHTV Breda University of Applied Sciences (The Netherlands). She holds a PhD in Comparative Literature from 2007 at the Universidade de Aveiro (Portugal). In 2012 she was co-editor of Intercultural Crossings: Conflict, Memory and Identity (P.I.E. Peter Lang). Her current research focuses on Comparative Literature, Cultural Tourism and Cultural Projects and Management. Recent publications include papers on literature and the arts, travel literature, literary tourism and creative tourism.*

The narrative journeys of Henri Michaux and Nicolas Bouvier are the fruit of complex and dynamic processes that deal in first instance with memory. If imagination plays an important role in their writing, and mainly in Michaux's, the blanks in the memory, these holes that make episodes misty are important not only in the forgetfulness they represent, but also by the re-construction exercise they motive in a more or less inventive way. The act of writing is here understood as an act appropriation and transformation of time and of space, with resource to Deleuze and Guattari's notions such as rhizome, lines of flight, (de)/(re)territorialisation, and smooth and striated spaces.

Beyond the difficulties and often the pain inherent to the act of writing lies the significant change of the writer who experiences therefore a metamorphic process through the exercise of writing and memory.

Henri Michaux (Namur, 1899 – Paris, 1984) and Nicolas Bouvier (Geneva, 1929-1998) are two travellers who write about their experiences between the real and the imaginary.<sup>1</sup> Each journey motivates new experiences and consequently provokes significant changes at various levels. Writing is subsequent to travel and it entails, therefore, a mnemonic effort. Memory has indeed a main role in the act of

storytelling and writing becomes not only a filter of experiences, but also an exercise of re-construction that follows its own course, more or less independently of the real experience that belongs to the past.

In this paper, I propose to analyse the metamorphosis motivated by some journeys of the writers, enhancing the difficulties, often the pain, inherent to the act of writing. Firstly, we will look into the travelling and analyse how stories come to life, in which context and with which motivations, pointing out the differences between the physical and geographical journeys and those that are more mental and imaginative. Afterwards, we will look into the threads of memory and the necessary presence of forgetfulness as survival but also as a sphere for creativity in the appropriation and transformation of time and space. Finally, we will look into the challenge and resistance of both writers to the boundaries imposed by language and memory, understanding how mental geographies look for constant deterritorialisations.

## 1. Stories of travel

Travelling is an act inherent in the humanity that marks the evolution which makes our species what it is today. These journeys have always had different objectives and have therefore served distinct purposes. The primitive cave paintings portraying the adventures of hunters are the first written Western signs that bear witness to great stories of journeys. For centuries the same need for storytelling, in particular surrounding journeys, has continued: in distinct ways and through different means though the need for sharing and dissemination in space and time seems to be similar.

Henri Michaux and Nicolas Bouvier are two European Francophone travellers of the 20th century whose writing skills particularly emerge from the panorama of the travel literature of their time.<sup>2</sup> Their stories of travel reflect their own personal paths as travellers, artists and, of course, human beings. Their nomad spirit was attracted to the East with Michaux having a special connection to China while Bouvier to Japan.<sup>3</sup> Whilst both adventurous and contemporaries they had never met although only 30 years separated them. Michaux was a reference to Bouvier and *Ecuador* was one of the latter's most prominent bedside books. Often he recited by heart the verses written by Michaux depicting a poetical way of departing: "Emportez-moi dans une caravelle, / Dans une vieille et

douce caravelle” (Michaux, 1967a, p. 171).<sup>4</sup> In Michaux’s works, the downfall and the idea of an endless unshaped journey of defeat are recurrent images since his first travel narratives. Already in *Ecuador*, which is presented as a frustrated attempt of a travel journal, one can read the following preface: “Un homme qui ne sait ni voyager ni tenir un journal a composé ce journal de voyages. Mais, au moment de signer, tout à coup pris de peur, il se jette la première pierre. Voilà” (Michaux, 1929, Préface).<sup>5</sup> *Ecuador*, in fact based on a real physical experience of travelling, is published in 1929 which is more than twenty years apart from the journey that proved essential in Nicolas Bouvier’s life and work. In 1953, the Swiss writer decides, together with his painter friend, Thierry Vernet, to travel towards East. The decision is made and Bouvier described the point of departure as follows: “Nous avons deux ans devant nous et de l’argent pour quatre mois. Le programme était vague, mais dans de pareilles affaires, l’essentiel est de partir” (Bouvier, 2001, p. 12).<sup>6</sup>

This journey will end about four years later in Japan and it will be described in roughly three narratives with different characteristics: *L’Usage du monde* [*The Way of the World*] (1963), *Le Poisson-Scorpion* [*The Scorpion-Fish*] (1981) and *Japon* [*Japan*] (1967), which became later *Chronique japonaise* [*Japanese Chronicles*] (1975). Other journeys and narratives have been present in Bouvier’s life, however this first long journey would act as a marker until his last days.

The case for Michaux was a bit different. He also travelled a lot, but after his second work based on a physical experience of travel, which gave birth to *Un Barbare en Asie* [*A Barbarian in Asia*] [1933], he abandoned the idea of writing based on particular trips (with more or less traditional or trendy characteristics). Therefore, narrating real journeys, places and people was cast off and from that moment on he dedicated his time and writing to imaginary worlds. However, these imaginary places and people, such as the Émanglons or the Poddemaïs, are inspired and nourished by the geographical journeys actually done by Michaux. It is in this sense that Jérôme Roger points out that the narratives of imaginary places, such as *Voyage en Grande Garabagne* [*Voyage to Great Garaban*] (1936), *Au pays de la Magie* [*In the Country of Magic*] (1941) or *Ici, Poddema* [*Report from Poddema*] (1946),<sup>7</sup> can be read “à la lumière de l’époque où génocides, grandes purges et autres purifications ethniques révélèrent un système d’esclavage généralisable à l’ensemble de l’humanité” (Roger,

2000, p. 107).<sup>8</sup> The characters of these imaginary places and the anonymous narrator are essential pieces in the transference of emotions, pain and dilemmas. As Michaux states in *Passages* [*Passages*]:

Mes “Emanglons”, “Mages”, “Hivinizikis” furent tous des personnages-tampons suscités par le voyage. (Plume disparut le jour même de mon retour de Turquie où il était né.)

[...] C’est pourquoi le pays étranger était une occasion, une provocation à personnages, auxquels dès lors je remettai l’affaire, celle de jouir et de souffrir, des gens et des choses étrangères et hostiles. Eux-mêmes étaient composés pour s’en fichier un peu et remuer tout sens dessus dessous. Ainsi les mages (du *Pays de la Magie*) furent commencés le lendemain de mon arrivée à Rio-de-Janeiro [sic], me séparant si bien de ces Brésiliens, avec qui je ne trouvais pas le contact [...]. (Michaux, 1950, pp. 161-162)<sup>9</sup>

In Michaux, the imaginary comes to make the real bearable and is also a way to interpret and integrate the differences. In Bouvier, the real journeys are in fact the proper object of writing, although in *The Scorpion-Fish* magic and supernatural elements also come onto the scene making this work a narrative with glimpses of a dark novel. Regardless of whether the journeys and places were real or imaginary the writers’ imaginaries were always fed by real experiences. However, this leaves unanswered the ways in which time and space are articulated, organized and transposed through memory into the act of writing.

## 2. Time, space and memory design

The moment between the actual travelling and the act of writing is lived in a kind of limbo. It is a moment of passage which entails different emotions, attitudes and expectations although it is always different from moment to moment, trip to trip. The journey is no longer the same. It is another journey that begins with writing: “Il [the written journey] a vécu sa vie” (Michaux, 1967b, Préface).<sup>10</sup> Hence the written journey presents itself differently to the geographical journey, even though both are experienced and led by the same subject. In the same way, when the object is the written

journey, time is no longer measured in terms of the length of time of the physical act of travelling, but rather through the relationship between the subject writer and the narrative in a very particular timeframe: “Il date, ce livre” (Michaux, 1967b, p. [11]).<sup>11</sup>

The same feeling immediately comes to the surface in Bouvier’s first book. By the end, when seemingly having some problems and doubts about the timing and the manner of ending his narration, he is confronted with an ambivalent feeling and the need of telling everything or simply being silent. He faced the impossibility of telling everything and moreover the impossibility of sharing his exact emotions, dialogues and perspectives on those episodes. Once again, time is quite important since it is a part of the contextual framework of both travelling and writing: “*Et puis pourquoi s’obstiner à parler de ce voyage? quel rapport avec ma vie présente? aucun, et je n’ai plus de présent*”<sup>12</sup> (Bouvier, 2001, p. 407). The difficult dilemma between what has been lived and what is being lived of the *same* journey causes anguish and leads to an inescapable void. The narrative becomes then a “*récit fantôme*” (Bouvier, 2001, p. 407),<sup>13</sup> a place where memory seeks to rebuild the episodes in order to tell them as they were (or as they are remembered). Nevertheless, despite the numerous notebooks, memory can be a dark and terrible place that closes upon the subject, which strives harder and harder to “*revenir au Château des Paiens, à ce trou de mémoire*” (Bouvier, 2001, p. 407)<sup>14</sup> and faces only with “*ces souvenirs qui ont séché*” (Bouvier, 2001, p. 408).<sup>15</sup> Significant experiences which lose life, mobility and thereby all the meaning they seemed to have before the attempt to put them into writing.

If Michaux’s artistic attitude is positioned in an everlasting relentless countercurrent, similar memory holes seem to strike him, namely in the attempts of telling his physical travelling experiences. In what he calls a “*Préface à quelques souvenirs*”, situated near the end of *Ecuador*, he states: “*Voyant une grosse année réduite à si peu de pages, l’auteur est ému. Sûrement il s’est passé encore bien d’autres choses. / Le voilà qui cherche. Mais il ne rencontre que brouillards. / Alors pour masquer son embarras, il prend une voix de pédagogue*” (Michaux, 1929, p. 181).<sup>16</sup>

The imprints in memory are not similar for everyone nor are they the same for every person involved in the exact same experience. Memory has its own space and time, and each subject devel-

ops strategies to evoke memory. At the same time, memory holes that both writers complain about are oblivion strategies for human beings to be safe. Forgetting is an integral and internal process of safeguarding, or more accurately, as argues Nietzsche in his *The Genealogy of Morals*:

the utility [...] of the active forgetfulness [...] is a very sentinel and nurse of psychic order, repose, etiquette; and this shows at once why it is that there can exist no happiness, no gladness, no hope, no pride, no real present, without forgetfulness. [...] But this very animal who finds it necessary to be forgetful, in whom, in fact, forgetfulness represents a force and a form of robust health, has reared for himself an opposition-power, a memory, with whose help forgetfulness is, in certain instances, kept in check. (Nietzsche, 2003, pp. 34-35)

In fact, the need of the writer to remember represents an effort and is often indeed a painful act. If we continue with Nietzsche's thoughts, we can stress what he considers to be "an axiom of the oldest (unfortunately also the longest) psychology in the world" (Nietzsche, 2003, p. 37), that is that the human being has an "instinct which found in pain its most potent mnemonic" (Nietzsche, 2003, p. 37).

Often enough this pain is not only psychological, but also physical. The body participates in the travelling experience as well as in the writing experience. Michaux had health problems since before *Ecuador* and still he risked his life in the mountains and later in other places, such as the Amazonia. Bouvier had several problems on his journeys and he severely felt his long walks in his legs. In the writing process, the body is also compromised and its memory is also more or less an active part of the act of writing.

Memory is also in this sense a present evocation of the past. If, on the one hand, memory is always related to a present moment, and in discourse complies with the present of narration, on the other hand, "[t]he process of remembering integrates present, past and future in a single task" (Achugar, 2008, p. 7).

The mists are therefore part of the process and they lead to a choice entailed by the act of writing itself: either one keeps the mist,

or chooses oblivion or yet one reconstructs that particular episode. Often writing seems an impossibility; rewriting through an exercise of revisited memory far more: “Ici, barbare on fut, barbare on doit rester” (Michaux, 1967b, p. 14).<sup>17</sup> Michaux refuses then to touch his text. At the time, as he states in the preface, when travelling through India and China, he had, so he states, the impression those people “me parurent mériter d’être réels” (Michaux, 1967b, p. 13),<sup>18</sup> that is, to be depicted as accurately as possible on paper. To some extent, Bouvier’s attitude regarding his stay in Ceylon is the opposite, since the place, as are the people, do not seem to be worthy of incorporation through writing. All the atmosphere of Ceylon is like a dream; hazy and untouchable, a bit like the figure of Père Álvaro or of the great grocer-Circe in *The Scorpion-Fish*, which lead the reader right into the heart of magic. It is indeed because of this general impression of blurriness, both in the ambience and in the inner image, that Bouvier takes his time to be able to write about his stay in Ceylon. He feels he has to wait like a vase which has to be filled until he can no longer stand to keep it to himself and has to break his silence, no matter how painful that can be. For this reason, this particular act of writing becomes possible only 23 years later, with Debussy playing uninterruptedly, and with a perpetual flow of whisky, in order to recreate, as far as it would be possible, the thorny and weighty atmosphere of Ceylon.<sup>19</sup> It is in this way that Bouvier will seek to awaken the episodes in his memory in order to transpose them into words. The text was, in his own words, “overworked” and its structure was perfectly thorough in detail, from the number of chapters to the revelations in each of them. Until his last days, he was seeking the liberty regarding this part of his life. Michaux, always in the countercurrent, was also seeking new forms of getting free from his (and others’) limitations.

The relationship between real travelling and writing is a complex one (Martin, 2005; Jakubec, 2010) which are characteristic of both authors. However, as we have discussed, this complex and difficult process gives birth and originates the creative act. It is the interstices of real, imaginary and memory that creativity arises. These holes of memory and the consequent effort of re-construction are the driving force for new forms of inventiveness in writing, but also in painting (for Michaux). On the other side of the game played by memory, Bouvier uses photography beyond a mere means



to help memory in the writing act after the travelling episodes. Photography is also a panacea for all the difficulties of language (Marchetti, 1994; Guennoc, 2006; Guyon, 2008). Furthermore, painting and photography appear in the artistic development of these authors, contributing to the management of time and space in the memory mainly as potential escape routes. Pushing themselves constantly to their limits, Michaux and Bouvier juggle with the real, the imaginary, awareness and ghostly images (Dupuis, 2010) in a field of inventiveness where immediacy and memory exercises struggle to gain artistic expression.

### 3. The Metamorphosis of (de)territorialisation

The willingness – or the need? – to defy the limits, unearth emotions and build constantly renewed and enriched identities, made both writers look further down in their outer space. The exploration of new uncomfortable spaces outside the familiar corresponds to a deep state of *dépaysement*, consisting in both exterior and interior displacement. For Bouvier, writing is also a construction of identity (Laurel, 2006); a path that has to be taken, full of obstacles to be faced and fears to be confronted. This permanent departure from the familiar territory makes them outsiders, sometimes in their own spaces, like in the paper where Michaux's figures emerge. They seem to come to life, and start occupying the territory of the page they jump out of and make their creator an outsider vis-à-vis his own work (Michaux, 1985, p. 84). In this sense, there is also a metamorphosis of the author, originated by his own works. When the creative act comes to its end, the creator has to disappear, like in Barthes' death of the author (Barthes, 1984). This process described by Michaux would therefore be the performed death of the author; a death that is not an end in itself but it is a part of a more complex process of metamorphosis. The fear of disappearance is also present since *Ec-uador*: "Je compte sur toi, lecteur, sur toi qui me vas lire, quelque jour, sur toi lectrice. Ne me laisse pas seul avec les morts comme un soldat sur le front qui ne reçoit pas de lettres. Choisis moi [sic] parmi eux, pour ma grande anxiété et mon grand désir. Parle-moi alors, je t'en prie, j'y compte" (Michaux, 1929, p. 81).<sup>20</sup> The writer / artist turns up to become an outsider that has to be annihilated and, in this sense, it also represents a loss – from being a creator the writer has to grieve over his inner self prior to the creative act. It is interesting to

note, however, that in Bouvier's works the word struggles to come up and beat the imposing silence. Even when they fill in pages, often many years after the real journey that originated them, the subject seems to be hiding and disappear behind the episodes and the characters that live in them. The poetics of disappearance (Hambursin, 1997; Ridon, 2002) takes shape, bearing witness to the biggest danger of them all, the death of narrative by birth. In fact, this becomes clearer when we look at Deleuze and Guattari's rhizomatic model, where different types of line emerge. In fact, both the writing and the inherent identity construction processes surrounding it can be seen in the dynamic composition of the rhizome:

the rhizome connects any point to any other point, and its traits are not necessarily linked to traits of the same nature; it brings into play very different regimes of signs, and even nonsign states. The rhizome is reducible neither to the One nor the multiple. It is not the One that becomes Two or even directly three, four, five, etc. It is not a multiple derived from the One, or to which One is added ( $n+1$ ). It is composed not of units but of dimensions, or rather directions in motion. It has neither beginning nor end, but always a middle (milieu) from which it grows and which it overflows. It constitutes linear multiplicities with  $n$  dimensions having neither subject nor object, which can be laid out on a plane of consistency, and from which the One is always subtracted ( $n-1$ ). When a multiplicity of this kind changes dimension, it necessarily changes in nature as well, undergoes a metamorphosis. (Deleuze & Guattari, 2004, p. 23).

This horizontal chaotic structure – the rhizome – is the nourishing battle field for different types of line: “First, a relatively supple line of interlaced codes and territorialities [...]. Second, a rigid line, which brings about a dualist organization of segments [...]. Third, one or several lines of flight, marked by quanta and defined by decoding and deterritorialization” (Deleuze & Guattari, 2004, pp. 244-245). One should however take into account that in their different actions they can be parallel, complement themselves or collide, therefore “[i]t would be more accurate to say that there is

a space in which the three kinds of closely intermingled lines co-exist” (Deleuze & Guattari, 2004, p. 245).

The lines of flight express then the gestures that seek for deterritorialisation, for penetrating unknown spaces outside the familiar zones of comfort. This however implies conflicts, confrontations, struggles, battles and defeats where the risk can be death itself. The journey described in *Le Poisson-Scorpion* is a clear witness of the strength of the urges to defy the limits and enter the zones of silence: in doing so, Bouvier had severe health problems and almost went mad. When passing it to writing, no matter how hard and painful the process was, there an exercise of internal organisation, which corresponds, at least to a certain extent, to a reterritorialisation.

The narrative becomes also multiplicity, which is “composed of heterogeneous terms in symbiosis, and [...] is continually transforming itself into a string of other multiplicities” (Deleuze & Guattari, 2004, p. 275).

This kind of transference between different spaces as well as the symbiosis and transformations are at the heart of the complex relationship between smooth and striated spaces, in the terminology of Deleuze and Guattari. Indeed, “sedentary space is striated, by walls, enclosures, and roads between enclosures, while nomadic space is smooth, marked only by ‘traits’ that are effaced and displaced in the trajectory” (Deleuze and Guattari 2004, p. 420). Consequently, one could not be without the other since the creation of nomadic spaces (smooth spaces) is limited and aroused, to some extent, by the borders of the sedentary spaces (striated spaces) (Deleuze and Guattari 2004, p. 524). The most important element in the functioning of the metaphorical rhizome, a lively nomadic multiplicity (which can be incarnated, for example, in the writing or in the physical journey), is the interactions, or the “passages” (a keyword in Michaux’s work):

What interests us in operations of striation and smoothing are precisely the passages or combinations: how the forces at work within space continually striate it, and how in the course of its striation it develops other forces and emits new smooth spaces. [...] Movements, speed and slowness, are sometimes enough to reconstruct a smooth space.

Of course, smooth spaces are not in themselves liberatory.  
(Deleuze and Guattari, 2004, p. 551)

The nomadic space is a free desert zone; it is the space where the traveller goes and finds whatever he can, with all the inherent risks of that adventure. Writing however, if it can be felt as a creative act and as a space of free will, most of the times imposes its own rhythm and rules on the writer. In that sense, it constitutes a striated space in which the nomadic self has necessarily become reterritorialised. In the process, there are therefore different degrees and permanent movements in the sense that between deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation, there is detachment and appropriation; input and output; familiar and unfamiliar; structure and chaos; life and death. By memory and writing, the unfamiliar becomes familiar; at the same time, the mists of memory allow new forms of deterritorialisation in what they create further unfamiliar spaces. Reterritorialisation happens afterwards, in the moment in which the familiar (and striated) space will be rearranged and adapted to the new elements gained outside its borders by the challenges represented by the lines of flight. Though, in nomadic space, the reterritorialisation never happens fully nor it replaces completely deterritorialisation because the latter is ceaseless in these smooth spaces (Deleuze and Guattari 2004, p. 420).

Hence, for Michaux, the escape gate, and his main source and expression for inner lines of flight, was drawing and painting. As he comprehensively discusses in *Émergences Résurgences* [*Emergences Resurgences*], he found in painting and drawing a freedom impossible to get from writing, with its established and rigid symbols and codes (Michaux, 1972). In the painted trace he found spontaneity, immediate action with a minimal intervention of the mind, contrarily to writing, which was formed in the mind prior to appearance on paper. The consciousness, the constant awareness and the embedded habits related to language were considered limitations in Michaux's view. That is also the reason that he invented several illegible alphabets and symbols (Parish, 2007; Aubert, 2008; Kawakami, 2011). As for Bouvier, which sees in photography a quicker possibility for apprehending the exterior world than writing, the tendency to what Charles-Albert Cingria defined as "surexactitude"<sup>21</sup> (1968, p. 216) follows him as a permanent chain

in time and space. For this reason, Bouvier felt this mandatory need for sedentariness when writing (Bouvier, 2004, pp. 1300, 1380), because, eventually, as Michaux states, the author “est revenu chez lui après chaque voyage. Il n’a pas une résistance indéfinie” (Michaux, 1967c, p. [7]).<sup>22</sup>

These adventures, misadventures, conquests and fatigues; the constant adaptations, challenges and changes, make them new beings, with renewed identities amongst the multiplicity of the self. They live in a complete schizo world, not in the mental illness sense, but as Deleuze and Guattari defend. As Brian Massumi puts it, in this context “schizophrenia as a positive process is inventive connection, expansion rather than withdrawal. Its twoness is a relay to a multiplicity. From one to another (and another...). [...] Not aimlessly. Experimentally. [...] Schizophrenia is the enlargement of life’s limits through the pragmatic proliferation of concepts” (1992, p. [1]). It corresponds then to a constant need for change and for rebuilding a disquiet self. This is the process that puts Michaux and Bouvier on the move. And whenever physical motion is an impossibility, the mind has its strategies to work on it:

Une habitude très mienne. Voici les circonstances: c’est quand je suis étendu et que néanmoins le sommeil ne vient pas. Alors je me comble. Je me donne en esprit tout ce qu’il me plaît d’obtenir. Partant de faits personnels toujours réels et d’une ligne si plausible, j’arrive doucement à me faire sacrer roi de plusieurs pays, ou quelque chose de ce genre. Cette habitude est aussi vieille que ma mémoire. (Michaux, 1929, p. 49)<sup>23</sup>

The constant need for deterritorialisation is what makes Michaux king of his own properties,<sup>24</sup> a habit that he dates back to his childhood and which keeps on existing until his last days.

The journeys can therefore be elements of change or simply play as catalysts in the inner metamorphosis of the writers. Each journey is unique, whether it is in the geographical and physical motion or whether an imaginary activity. Each step is part of the necessary dislocation: it is difficult, risky but yet the only possible way of living. Writing is just another type of journey which entails other emotions, while metamorphoses continue to occur.

## Concluding remarks

The journey is multiple, as is identity. In the process of travelling, whether by its lively experience or whether by the nourishing of writing that it represents, metamorphosis is a constant phenomenon. The articulation between the self, the exterior and the arts is composed and developed as a rhizomatic structure in which the subject switches over and over again from striated spaces to smooth ones and vice-versa. From this analysis it comes into view that the evocation of memory is often painful, even when regarding its blanks spaces and their correspondent re-construction in the actual act of writing. Dislocations, with their implied particular appropriation of time and space, are often the occasions for renewed perspectives and new discoveries; as is the difficulty of unravelling the real external world. This is what is behind the deleuze-guattarian concept of rhizome, which constitutes a fruitful model that gives account of the connections, dynamics and risks, in this case, inherent to the act of evoking memory in the act of writing. Moreover, beyond the risks and the pain, with the metamorphosis, a promise of a better – or at least different – *afterwards* surfaces.

Similarly to other places, Michaux's invented Poddema, is again a narrative journey that proposes to challenge limits, as it is indeed a cruel and figurative portrayal of a torn humankind. A grain of hope is however always present waiting to blossom, because metamorphoses are possible and, as the Phoenix, humankind represented in Poddema can be reborn from its own ashes: "Un du Conseil des pots m'a dit: 'Ne nous jugez pas: vous avez vu Poddema sous un signe. Elle a vécu sous d'autres. Elle vivra sous d'autres encore. Métamorphose! Métamorphose, qui engloutit et refait des métamorphoses. Chez nous, un moment ouvre un océan de siècles'" (Michaux, 1967c, p. 240).<sup>25</sup>

## Notes

- 1 This paper was supported by the Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia (FCT/MCTES). The author is grateful to Maria Sofia Pimentel Biscaia and the peer-review committee of the journal for their readings and comments of this paper.
- 2 One should note however that, as artists, their expressions go further beyond writing: Michaux's drawings, paintings and fabulous invent-

ed signs are as important as his writing pieces; Bouvier's photographs are another means of achieving and seizing alterity and of expressing his inner-subjectivity.

- 3 Dans son étude, Charles Forsdick (2006) compare l'Asie dans l'oeuvre de Nicolas Bouvier et de Roland Barthes. Pour Michaux, il s'agit encore d'une autre perspective (André-Acquier, 1987; Kawamaki, 2000; Bawin, 2008; Laügt, 2008, 63-89).
- 4 "Carry me away into a Portuguese *boat* of once, / Into an old and gentle Portuguese *boat* of once" (Siegel, 1968, p. 66).
- 5 "A man who knows neither how to travel nor how to keep a journal has put together this travel journal. But at the moment of signing he is suddenly afraid. So he casts the first stone. Here" (Michaux, 2001, Preface).
- 6 "We had two years in front of us, and money for four months" (Bouvier, 2007, p. 12). Thierry Vernet will also register his impressions in the correspondence with family during his adventure with his friend (Vernet, 2006). See Topping (2010) for the analysis of the dialogue between the text of Bouvier and the Chinese ink drawings by Vernet in *L'Usage du monde*.
- 7 The three titles were gathered in 1948 and published under the title of *Ailleurs [Elsewhere]*.
- 8 "in the light of a time where genocide, big purges or other ethnic purifications revealed a system of generalized slavery to all humankind." My translation. For further reflection on collective memory, history and modernity, see Huyssen (2003).
- 9 "My 'Emanglons', 'Magi', 'Hivinizikis' were all buffer-characters provoked by a trip. (Plume disappeared the very day I got back from Turkey where he had been born.)  
[...] That's why the foreign country was the occasion, the provocation for characters, to whom I gave the job from then on – both of having pleasure and of suffering from foreign, hostile, people and things. The characters themselves were composed so as not to care and turn everything topsy-turvy. Thus the Magus (from the 'Land of Magic') was begun the day after I arrived in Rio de Janeiro, successfully separating me from the Brazilians: I was having such a hard time relating to them" (Michaux, 1994, p. 331).
- 10 "It has lived its life." My translation.
- 11 "It is old, this book." My translation.

- 12 "But then why insist on talking about this journey? What bearing does it have on my life at present? None; anyway, I no longer have a present" (Bouvier, 2007, p. 307).
- 13 "ghostly narrative" (Bouvier, 2007, p. 308)
- 14 "back to the Pagans' Castle, back to that hole in my memory" (Bouvier, 2007, p. 308).
- 15 "these memories which have withered on the stalk" (Bouvier, 2007, p. 308).
- 16 "Preface to some recollections  
Seeing a huge year reduce to so few pages the author is astonished. Surely there must have been lots of other things.  
So he rummages around. Nothing. Or, if not nothing, mists.  
Finally to mask his embarrassment he assumes a professorial voice" (Michaux, 2001, p. 123).
- 17 "Here, once a barbarian, always a barbarian." My translation.
- 18 "it seemed to me they deserved to be real." My translation.
- 19 In his interviews with Irène Lichtenstein-Fall, he discusses this a bit further (Bouvier, 2004, pp. 1329-1331).
- 20 "I am counting on you, oh future reader. Do not leave me alone with the dead, like a soldier at the front who gets no mail. Choose me from among them if only for my great desire and concern. Speak to me, then please, I am counting on you" (Michaux, 2001, p. 58).
- 21 "surexactness"
- 22 "returned home after each journey. He doesn't have an indefinite resistance." My translation.
- 23 "A habit all my own. Here is how it works. It's when I'm stretched out and for some reason sleep doesn't come. So I just stuff myself. I give myself mentally whatever U would enjoy possessing. Starting from a set of personal and always real facts (which are themselves most plausibly arranged), I manage by and by to arrive at a point where I am crowned king of several countries, or something of the sort. As a habit it goes back to my earliest memories" (Michaux, 2001, p. 38).
- 24 It seems the same principle lies beneath the writing of *Mes Propriétés* [*My Properties*] (Michaux, 1967b, pp. 95-101).
- 25 "One member of the Council of old fellows told me: "Do not take judgment: you have seen Poddema under one sign. It has lived under others. It will live under still others. Metamorphosis! Metamorphosis which engulfs and creates new ones. Here one moment opens an ocean of centuries.'" My translation.



## References

- Achugar, M., 2008. *What We Remember: The Construction of Memory in Military Discourse*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins B.V.
- André-Acquier, G. (1987). L'appel de l'Orient dans l'œuvre d'Henri Michaux. *Littératures*, 16, printemps, pp. 95-102.
- Aubert, N., (2008). L'un écrit, l'autre pas. Cristian Dotremont et Henri Michaux. In: L. Brogniez (dir.), 2008, *Écrit(ure)s de peintres belges*. Bruxelles: P.I.E. Peter Lang, pp. 189-202.
- Barthes, R., 1984/1968. La mort de l'auteur. In: R. Barthes, 1984, *Le Bruissement de la langue*. Paris: Seuil, pp. 63-69.
- Bawin, J., 2008. Henri Michaux ou les narrations d'un peintre-poète en Asie. In: L. Brogniez (dir.), 2008, *Écrit(ure)s de peintres belges*. Bruxelles: P.I.E. Peter Lang, pp. 179-188.
- Bouvier, N., 1996/1981. *Le Poisson-Scorpion*. Paris: Gallimard.
- Bouvier, N., 2001/1963. *L'Usage du monde*. Paris: Payot, 2001.
- Bouvier, N., 2007. *The Way of the World*. Trans. Robyn Marsack. London: Eland.
- Bouvier, N., 2004. *Routes et déroutés. Entretiens avec Irène Lichtenstein-Fall*. In: N. Bouvier, 2004, *Ceuvres*. Paris: Gallimard, pp. 1249-1388.
- Cingria, Ch.-A., 1968. Surexactitude. In: Ch.-A. Cingria, 1968, *Ceuvres complètes*, V, Lausanne: L'Âge d'Homme, p. 216.
- Deleuze, G. and Guattari, F., 2004. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Trans. B. Massumi. London: Continuum.
- Dupuis, S. (2010). La chambre-matrice du 'Poisson-Scorpion' de Nicolas Bouvier, ou comment on devient romancier. *Europe: Nicolas Bouvier – Kenneth White*, 88, 974-975, pp. 148-159.
- Forsdick, C., 2006, '(In)connaissance de l'Asie': Barthes and Bouvier, China and Japan. *Modern & Contemporary France*, 14, 1, 63-77.
- Gorrara, C. and Topping, M., 2008, Photography and the cultural encounter in François Maspero's Balkans-Transit and Nicolas Bouvier's Chronique japonaise. *The Journal of Romance Studies*, 8, 1, pp. 61-75.
- Guennoc, J.-F., 2006. *Chambres noires, chambres claires*. La photographie chez Nicolas Bouvier: Un usage inquiet du regard et du monde. In: C. Emerson and M. Scott (eds.), 2006. *Artful Deceptions: Verbal and Visual Trickery in French Culture / Les Supercheries littéraires et visuelles: la tromperie dans la culture française*. Oxford: P.I.E. Peter Lang, pp. 49-62.

- Guyon, L., 2008. 'C'que c'est beau la photographie!'. In: J.-P. Montier, L. Louvel, D. Méaux et Ph. Ortel (eds.). *Littérature et photographie*. Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, pp. 487-495.
- Hambursin, O., 1997. Voyage et exercice de disparition: les dangers du *Poisson-Scorpion* de Nicolas Bouvier. *Lettres Romanes* 51, 3-4, pp. 275-287.
- Huyssen, A., 2003. *Present Pasts, Urban palimpsests and the politics of memory*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Jakubec, D., 2010. Les écritures du voyage. *Europe: Nicolas Bouvier – Kenneth White*, 88, 974-975, pp. 103-112.
- Kawakami, A., 2000. Barbarian Travels: Textual Positions in *Un barbare en Asie*. *The Modern Language Review*, 95, 4, pp. 978-991.
- Kawakami, A., 2011. Illegible Writing: Michaux, Masson, and Dotremont. *The Modern Language Review*, 106, 2, pp. 388-406.
- Laügt, E., 2008. *L'Orient du signe: Rêves et dérives chez Victor Segalen, Henri Michaux et Emile Cioran*. Bern: P.I.E. Peter Lang.
- Laurel, M. H. A., 2006. De *L'Usage du monde* comme itinéraire identitaire. *Cadernos de Literatura Comparada* 14/15, *Textos e Mundos em deslocação*, t.1. Porto: Edições Afrontamento / Instituto de Literatura Comparada Margarida Losa, pp. 185-207.
- Martin, J.-P., 2005. *Henri Michaux*. Paris: Gallimard.
- Marchetti, M., 1994. Voyage, mémoire et représentation dans l'œuvre de Nicolas Bouvier. In: Y. Bridel (coord.). *La Suisse ouverte: Nicolas Bouvier*. Cahiers francophones d'Europe Centre-Orientale, 4, A.E.F.E.C.O.
- Massumi, B., 1992. *A User's Guide to Capitalism and Schizophrenia: Deviations from Deleuze and Guattari*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.
- Michaux, H., 1929. *Ecuador, journal de voyage*. Paris: Gallimard.
- Michaux, H., 1950. *Passages*. Paris: Gallimard.
- Michaux, H., 1967a. *La Nuit remue*. Paris: Gallimard.
- Michaux, H., 1967b/1933. *Un Barbare en Asie*. Paris: Gallimard.
- Michaux, H., 1967c/1948. *Ailleurs*. Paris: Gallimard.
- Michaux, H., 1972. *Émergences-Résurgences*. Genève: Skira.
- Michaux, H., 1985. *Déplacements, dégagements*. Paris: Gallimard.
- Michaux, H., 1994. *Darkness Moves: An Henri Michaux Anthology, 1927-1984* (selected, translated and presented by David Ball). Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Michaux, H., 2001. *Ecuador, a Travel Journal*. Transl. Robin Magowan. Evanston: The Malboro Press / Northwestern.

- Nietzsche, F., 2003. *The Genealogy of Morals*, New York: Dover Publications.
- Parish, N., 2007. *Henri Michaux: Experimentation with Signs*. Amsterdam: Rodopi.
- Ridon, J.-X., 2002. Pour une poétique du voyage comme disparition. In C. Albert, N. Laporte, and J.-Y. Pouilloux (eds.), 2002, *Autour de Nicolas Bouvier. Résonances*. Genève: Zoé, pp. 120–135.
- Roger, J., 2000. *Henri Michaux: poésie pour savoir*. Lyon: Presses Universitaires de Lyon.
- Siegel, E., 1968. *Hail, American Development*. Definition Press.
- Topping, M., 2010. Travelling Images, Images of Travel in Nicolas Bouvier's *L'Usage du monde*, *French Studies* (special issue on "New Ekphrastic Poetics", ed. by S. Harrow), 64: 3 (July 2010), pp. 302-16.
- Vernet, T. 2006. *Peindre, écrire. Chemin faisant*. Lausanne: L'Âge d'Homme.

## A Drinking Problem just like Grandpa's

*Mikkel Jensen*

*holds an MA in English and History from Aalborg University and works as a teacher. He occasionally reviews books at kulturkapellet.dk and recently published another article on Douglas Coupland in the journal Culture Unbound.*

Mikkel Jensen's article "A Drinking Problem just like Grandpa's" is a close reading of a single short story from Douglas Coupland's 1994 short story cycle *Life After God*. The story, "Little Creatures", portrays a gloomy drive a father takes with his child up to meet the child's grandfather, referred to as "the golf-wino". In this story the journey is represented as two parallel narratives of development as both the father as well as the child faces some truths either about themselves and/or the world which neither of them is ready for. Seeing how the short story chronicles a drive from an urban center through a western Canada countryside, the article comments on – with specific reference to pastoral literature – how this story marks Coupland's departure from idealizing rural locations.

In 1991 Douglas Coupland hit the literary stage hard with his debut novel *Generation X*. Featuring sneeringly ironic narrators who appeared to be somewhat detached from the many stories they tell each other throughout the novel, the novel would soon gain attention for its ironic, distanced and rather world-weary characters, and Coupland's writer persona would soon come to be associated with the tone of these jaded 20-somethings he portrayed. How-

ever, it wouldn't take long before he took a sharp left into new stylistic territory in subsequent publications, and as a consequence he was excoriated, "presumably for attempting be serious and to express depression and spiritual yearning when his reviewers were expecting more postmodern jollity" (Greenberg, 2010: 7). Using an entirely different narrative tone meant that many people had trouble reconciling their image of the supposedly hyper-ironic Coupland with the new Coupland – pathos driven and seemingly painfully sincere – one could meet in the short story cycle *Life After God* (1994).

Coupland's debut overtly thematized *Bildung* and formation of character and one researcher has even noted that its literary mode – the generational novel – is a subset of / or pastiche of the *Bildungsroman* genre (Sørensen, 2001: 10) and though the short story format seems too limited to contain elaborate portrayals of a *Bildungsreise*, *Life After God* nevertheless shows Coupland once again focusing on themes of character formation and life crises. This is perhaps particularly so in the first short story "Little Creatures" which chronicles a 30-year-old father who, accompanied by his young child, drives up from Vancouver to the city of Prince George in western Canada. The story starts *in media res* after the father has been living out of suitcase in the preceding month after an ugly break up between him and the child's mother having "angry re-priminating phone calls with You-Know-Who", i.e. the mother (Coupland, 1999: 3). The break up is obviously a divorce with lawyers being involved and this situation has clearly made the father distraught; he is constantly either thinking about the divorce rather explicitly or is obviously trying to keep his mind off of it by thinking of seemingly random subjects such as "what would buildings look like if they had been built by animals." He even discusses the breakup with his child in roundabout ways which the child fortunately doesn't seem to understand – at first. During a break from driving they stand in silence watching two bighorn sheep on a mountain ridge only to soon resume their drive:

I thought of my own likes. I like dogs because they always stay in love with the same person. Your mother likes cats because they know what they want. I think that if cats were double the size they are now, they'd probably be il-

legal. But if dogs were even three times as big as they are now, they'd still be good friends. Go figure (14).

The comparison the narrator draws between himself and dogs illustrates how he understands himself as a loyal person. That loyalty, however, is contrasted with the mother who isn't explicitly said to be disloyal, as the narrator leaves it at stating that cats (meaning *her*) "know what they want." This parallel reveals how the narrator feels betrayed by the "disloyal" mother whom he can't stop thinking or talking about. Stating that triple sized cats would be illegal (as opposed to dogs) only clarifies how the father bitterly considers his former partner – and perhaps more importantly here; the child's mother – to be untrustworthy.

This passage also seems to destabilize the ontological status of the narration: is this direct speech or stream of consciousness? The narrator states that that he thought of his own likes, indicating that he is summarizing his thoughts, but the remaining part of the section reads more like a transcript of what he says to his child. As Sørensen notes there is "obviously a secondary narratee in the story, as much of the narrator's discourse is not directed at his child, but at an intended reader who will understand the wider implications" of what the narrator says, meaning that a part of the discourse is understandable within the diegetic world of the story whereas other parts are directed at an extra-diegetic readership (Sørensen, 2004: 10). Thus the summarizing way of mentioning his own likes means that the reader is to understand this cat-dog comparison metaphorically, as a way of giving the reader insight to the parents' break up. This comparison is made roughly half-way through the story and there is no indication that the child understands what the father is *actually* (i.e. metaphorically) talking about. The child's innocence does, however, seem to be compromised at story's end.

As a whole, the short story's portrayal of the drive is metaphorical for character formation, and as one may expect there are "dangers" present in this journey. However, that element of danger is not something encountered during the journey, but it is rather figured as an element which has been there all along. The big-horn sheep offer no peril, and it is only the father's absentminded talking which endangers the child, and in this way the short story's journey is metaphorical for the pitfalls of growing up or even parenting.

### Bedtime Stories

At the end of the long drive, the two principal characters are about to go to sleep when the child asks the father to tell some bedtime stories. At this point the father is exhausted both emotionally from the ongoing divorce, as well as physically from his chaotic way of living in the preceding month which only is exacerbated further by the 12 hour drive on the way to the grandfather's home. The child, however, refuses to settle down before hearing a story and due to being exhausted the father doesn't really manage to improvise any suitable bedtime stories for his child. Three stories are told, the first of which is the story about "Doggles – the dog who wore goggles"<sup>1</sup> (18). Apart from the rhyming title, the father doesn't manage to come up with anything lighthearted or humorous to add to the story and he – somewhat tragically - cannot really come up with anything for Doggles to do in the story:

You persisted and so I said to you, "Well, Doggles was supposed to have had a starring role in the *Cat in the Hat* series of books expect..."

"Except what?" you asked.

"Except he had a drinking problem," I replied.

"Just like Grandpa," you said, pleased to be able to make a real life connection.

"I suppose so," I said. (18 – 19)

To tell a child a bedtime story about a fictional dog, who misses out on career in a book series due to alcoholism, is black humor (and inappropriate) to say the least and the bleak narration of the entire story thus switches upside down here to a tragic, almost gallows-like humor. This dark humor, however, quickly turns to sadness in the following line as the reader sees the child's most immediate reaction to this piece of information, which isn't to ask "What's a drinking problem?" but instead to say "Just like Grandpa". Having been conditioned to make this knee-jerk parallel due to the father's free discussion of the grandfather's alcoholism, the child isn't consoled by any of the other bedtime stories s/he is told as they all involve heartbreaking fates too tragic to tell a child, a fact the father realizes only too late "feeling suddenly more dreadful than you can imagine having told you ... stories of these beautiful little creatures

who were all supposed to have been a part of fairy tale but who got lost along the way" (22). To the reader these stories come to reflect father's life and one sees a man who has met his measure of disappointment and adversity – a life story which he sugarcoats very poorly when talking to his child.

A characteristic visual trait of *Life After God* is its many drawings. "Little Creatures" alone contains 17 different drawings, which in some instances seem to reflect the child's understanding of what the father is telling him/her. This reading is supported by their simple and almost childlike style which thus would seem to reflect the child's immaturity. This innocence, however, is put at risk by the father's unstable behavior. When, at the end of the story, the child demands to be told some bedtimes stories these cheerful drawings reflect the innocence which may be compromised and therefore lost at the end of the story. As such they serve as contrasts to the bedtime stories which reflect the father's disappointment with his own life – how it went south due to circumstances outside of his control. Metaphorically speaking it seems that in the end the father finally "sees" these drawings, i.e. is reminded of the child's innocence and how s/he isn't ready for these tragic stories and this realization is what makes him feel "more dreadful than you can imagine."

### **"What is it that makes us us?"**

As mentioned, to keep his mind off of the divorce on the drive up the grandfather's home, the father ponders the differences between humans and animals trying to identify some defining human traits: "What is it that makes us us?" he asks (12). His mind wanders pondering how buildings would look if they had been built to accommodate other kinds of animals, and to some readers this way of thinking could be read as an almost childish trait – and the thoughts can indeed seem silly at an initial glance.

While this could be read as a way of characterizing the father as immature or (merely just underlining how distraught he is), I would suggest that this aspect yields even more insight in terms of characterization. When the father thinks of what buildings built to accommodate animals would look like, the reader is again called upon to be a second narratee, though in a slightly different way from what I described earlier, where the reader was to understand the wider implications of the things the father tells his child. In the first case both



the reader as well as the father knows what is really the subject of the talk. In this case, however, the reader is to understand even more than the father does. It is clear that the father doesn't arrive at any useful insights of what makes humans human: "The only activities I could think of that humans do that have no other animal equivalent were smoking, body-building and writing" (12). According to the Danish historian of ideas Johannes Sløk, the defining human trait, however banal it sounds, is the fact that we have a history – this is the defining difference which sets apart from other animals (Sløk, 2008: 18); a lion's life today is identical to that of a lion living 200 years ago (aside from its worsened living conditions). On this historically determined cultural aspect of human life Sløk notes that "The cultural pattern one is born into becomes that guiding force for behavior which the human being doesn't hold in its nature"<sup>2</sup> (Sløk, 2008: 18-19, my translation). And an awareness of personal history and development is exactly what the narrator of the story is missing, which he is sadly unaware of. And Coupland highlights this absence of temporal thinking by having the narrator make such an outlandish outline of what it is to be human.

Another crucial difference which sets humans apart from other animals is that which all but defines the protagonist's life at this particular point in time, i.e. the emotional and sophisticated social aspects that are particular to humans, and the fact that the father doesn't even consider this shows his crisis. By so clearly not considering how he ended up in his sad situation, the father's naïve observations on "human nature" reveal how he still is yet to gain some perspective on his situation, which could offer him some introspective insight. The reader may also infer from the fact that the father doesn't recognize humans' fundamental difference (history) from animals, is because he doesn't think in these temporal, diachronic dimensions suggesting that he doesn't reflect on the past (other than the bitter experience of his wife being disloyal to him), which then draws attention to the fact that he expresses his feelings about the divorce without really dwelling upon the events that led up to and caused the break. Not contemplating the events leading up to the divorce suggests that the father hasn't managed to digest the traumatic events and turn them into a narrative, which he can use as an interpretative and explanatory tool to make sense of the situation he finds himself in, and as such *Life After God* acknowledges the idea

expressed in *Generation X* that people need their lives to “become stories, or there’s just no way to get through them” (Coupland, 1991: 10). And though Coupland doesn’t always condone his protagonists’ actions or priorities, he often portrays them empathetically as is the case here, where the father’s flawed reasoning and unsuitable parenting are perhaps best understood psychologically as a portrayal of a lost individual in distress.

### **A trip to the countryside**

As a whole, “Little Creatures” is a story about growing up and parenting, and its journeys of development are figured physically in the drive the two characters take through western Canada. Here, the story’s portrayal of a journey mirrors the transitions both the narrator and his child go through, and as such the rural setting they enter is an external manifestation of this development. Seen in this perspective, the mountains they pass on their way symbolize how the father sees his future as an insurmountable task. A journey offers, by definition, an unstable setting, and this underlines the story’s transitional and unstable situation, and all in all this setting illustrates the precarious waters of prematurely exposing a child to stories and ideas it isn’t ready for.

As a story portraying people living in an urban center who travel to the country side, “Little Creatures” invokes the old literary format known as the pastoral. In its earliest forms the pastoral form was contingent on the presence and portrayal of the “simple” shepherd; “No shepherd, no pastoral” the American critic Leo Marx said about this format which has been known for its idealizing (though often quixotic and condescending) portrayals of a “simple” rural life (quoted in Gifford, 1999: 1). However, in a more inclusive usage the term refers “to any literature that describes the country with an implicit or explicit contrast to the urban” (Gifford, 1999: 2). The important thing to notice here is how Coupland earlier had used this sort of geographic contrast as a core idea in *Generation X*, in which different places signify “psychological choices” (Sørensen, 2001: 250). In *Generation X*, the three protagonists live in self-imposed exile in the middle of nowhere, which can well be read as that novel attributing the pastoral setting with a certain potential in so far as this space represents a locus in which the characters can make some sense of their lives. So though it is debatable whether “Little Crea-

tures" is a pastoral per se, the fact that Coupland had earlier embraced pastoral ideas establishes this literary mode as a relevant context in which to discuss "Little Creatures" by virtue of it portraying a journey through a rural setting in order to thematize character formation, which also was a central theme in *Generation X*.

In this perspective it is interesting how there in "Little Creatures" is absolutely nothing pastoral or idyllic about the portrayal of the rural setting the characters end up in. The pastoral way of seeing the dichotomy of *city* >< *land* as a metaphor of *depravity* >< *purity* is negated, as both the home and away settings only offer tragic and challenging circumstances for both the young child and the father: At home there is the messy divorce and away there is the alcoholic grandfather. As mentioned, *Generation X* is a form of *Bildungsroman*, meaning that it by definition portrays developments of character – traditionally in an edifying manner; and this is a perspective in which we can identify a development in Coupland's writing. In "Little Creatures" with the child's innocence being compromised and the father realizing his wrongdoings, the character developments aren't uplifting (only sad) and as such driving to a rural setting is figured as a meaningless venture for identity formation and emotional recuperation. In other words, "Little Creatures" then serves as Coupland's deconstruction of the notions of pastoral idealism, which had characterized *Generation X*.

Sørensen notices that the rural wilderness of *Generation X*, far removed from hectic urban centers, was portrayed as a form of identity reservoir which the characters could turn to in their search for meaning and identity (Sørensen, 2001: 258-270) and as mentioned this way of attributing rural settings with such a psychological potential is readdressed in "Little Creatures". This could seem to signal an increasingly jaded Coupland, though one also could see this as a mature development as *Life After God* abandons the "dreamland" of Mexico one finds in *Generation X*, meaning that the portrayal of contemporary life is now approached without the "fix-all" solution of pastoral romanticism, as "Little Creatures" disenchant the literary topography of the rural locations. So though while there are no easy fixes "in the world" there may be solutions in the word: the tone of *Life After God* is often sad and sometimes painfully sincere and this seems to be where Coupland goes to find the hope he once saw in his idealized version of the hotel in Mexico where

people could use stories to pay for lodging. The place where Coupland gets his hopefulness thus seems to have changed from idealized places to a new tone in his fiction. Sørensen has noted that generational texts operate with "potential 'free spaces' where the cultural choices of the characters can unfold" (Sørensen, 2005: 21) but Sørensen has also noted elsewhere that the characters of *Life After God* seek elsewhere than "generational, familial and religious" narratives "to create cohesion in their lives" (Sørensen, 2004: 10). As such Coupland's use of the idealized rural free space seems more prevalent in his earlier narratives which engaged more strongly in a generational discourse.<sup>3</sup> So while there has always been a hopefulness to be found in Coupland's fiction, *Life After God* embodies the notion that hopefulness may well lie in a narrative sincerity that wasn't very prevalent in his earlier work.

At one point in *Generation X*, the character Dag says: "I don't know ...whether I'm just upset that the world has gotten too big – way beyond our capacity to tell stories about it" (Coupland, 1991: 5). Seen in this light, "Little Creatures", then, is Coupland's move away from trying to create narratives on grander issues and with "Little Creatures" surfing the harrowing emotional traumas of close familial relationships with the father realizing his shortcomings as a parent, this story seems to be a concrete way of turning to the intimate sphere. And though Coupland would eventually pick up his own challenge to really write about the immense issues of contemporary life (such as environmental concerns in *Generation A* (2009)), *Life After God*, at least in part, now stands as an introvert intermezzo dealing with sadness, life crises and interpersonal relationships. Though while a title as *Life After God* certainly invites readings focusing on spiritual themes (which especially Andrew Tate has focused on (Tate 2002 & 2007)), this short story cycle, however, does contain other aspects other than spiritual ones prevalent in the final story "1000 Years (Or Life After God)".

Ethical concerns, however, are very much present in the story, as the way the father in "Little Creatures" jeopardizes his child's innocence is figured as a cautionary tale. In this sense Coupland's mode of postmodern literature<sup>4</sup> continues the moral vein which has been present from the earliest days of postmodern literature, perhaps most strongly noticeable in the atheistic "postmodern moralist" Kurt Vonnegut (Davis, 2006). In Coupland's own vein of post-

modern moralism, however, this morality seems to be concerned with the issues of the intimate sphere, because even though Coupland abandons solutions offered by believing in an idealist version of a rural setting, he does affirm that morality and even moralist literature has a role in this cultural setting, though the world he portrays sometimes seems rather bleak. As Sørensen puts it, Coupland is best described as a cautious though sometimes wavering optimist (Sørensen, 2001: 135). The moral vein in Coupland's writing, however, isn't rooted in any grand narrative in spite of the fact that the narrator of the final short story of *Life After God* seeks religion; the moral message isn't spelled out as much as it is demonstrated. That the father's behavior robs his child of innocence is something that this character realizes by himself and though his thoughts are the product of Coupland's imagination, the validity or authority of this moral message isn't grounded in authorial authority but very simply in its artistry; in its way of conveying this message. That the message can be moral in a believable manner is thus fully contingent on whether the reader accepts and believes in the father's disappointment with himself and doesn't dismiss it as mere bathos. As Louis Greenberg has noted, Coupland generally strives for psychological realism (Greenberg, 2010: 17), and seeing that this short story's use of the dramatic method of *showing* (rather than narrating) the inner lives of its characters, the moral potential or appeal of this story thus lie in the believable and plausible mode of Coupland's characterizations, and thus it does not depend on the (fallacious?) validity of any grand narrative.

### **In Closing**

The fact that the father realizes that he had "forgotten that his role is to protect the innocence of his child" (Sørensen, 2004: 11) shows that he is capable of assessing how he should have protected his offspring from these realities. Sadly, that realization comes much too late as the narrator refers to the child's grandfather as "the golf wino" already in the very first sentence of the short story, suggesting that the child already is aware of what a golf wino is and that his/her grandfather is one. As such, the innocence the child may seem to lose had, in fact, already been compromised at the beginning of the story, and dismally the father's self-awareness comes much too late. As such, the double tragedy of the story lies in the

father realizing how he has exposed his child to something it isn't ready for, and the child coming to see the father at his most fragile state at a time when the father should have protected his child from seeing the emotional despair of his life and ongoing divorce. As such, they both face some truths either about themselves and/or the world which neither of them is ready for.

With the ugly break-up as the background for this story, its portrayal of a journey as a metaphor for transition also serves as a disenchantment of the rural locale, which was new to Coupland's fiction when *Life After God* was published in 1994. The hope this pastoral romanticism would have offered as consolation is absent and the psychological realism of the short story centers on the not very self-aware protagonist, whose distress is demonstrated to the reader through his haphazard thinking about his life, as well as through his discussing too grown-up issues with his child. As such, this despair and emotional exhaustion sets a bleak initial tone for the rest of this short story collection which still is yet to receive serious detailed analytical criticism (Sørensen 2004 being an exception), which does seem a relevant endeavor seeing how Coupland's output continues to remain interesting, a prime example being 2003's *Hey Nostradamus!*.

## Notes

- 1 At the top of the page where the story of Doggles' begins, there is a drawing of a frisky, happy dog wearing goggles.
- 2 "Det kulturelle mønster man fødes ind i, bliver *den* retningsgivende vejledning for adfærd, som mennesket ikke ejer i sin natur."
- 3 By 1995 it seems that Coupland had had enough of the Generation X media frenzy and tried to put it behind him (see Coupland, 1995 and Sørensen, 2001: 153-157). I have argued that Coupland would later comment on generational literature and *Generation X* in his novel *Miss Wyoming* (2000) and that that novel can be read as Coupland's treatment of, and reconciliation with, what happened with the Generation X phenomena in the early 1990s (see Jensen, 2011).
- 4 As Mark Forshaw has noted "Coupland has never been a postmodern writer in the sense that we think of Paul Auster, for example, or Donald Barthelme, as being postmodern writers. Nevertheless, he is a novelist who writes *about* postmodernity and he has done so of late with increasing distaste for both its cultural and its economic manifestations" (Forshaw, 2000: 53).

## References

- Coupland, D., 1991. *Generation X*, New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Coupland, D., 1995. Generation X'd. You were born in the 60s. Does that mean you have to pay for it for the rest of your life?, *Details*, June issue.
- Coupland, D., 2003/1994. *Life After God*, London: Scribner.
- Coupland, D., 2003. *Hey Nostradamus!*, London: HarperCollins.
- Coupland, D., 2009. *Generation A*, London: William Heinemann.
- Davis, T.F., 2006. *Kurt Vonnegut's Crusade: or, how a postmodern harlequin preached a new kind of humanism*, Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Forshaw, M., 2000. Douglas Coupland: In and Out of 'Ironic Hell'. *Critical Survey*, 12, 3, 39-58.
- Gifford, T., 1999. *Pastoral*, London: Routledge.
- Greenberg, L., 2010. *Faith at the Edge: Religion after God in four novels by Douglas Coupland*, Johannesburg: University of the Witwatersrand. Available at: <http://wiredspace.wits.ac.za/bitstream/handle/10539/10459/Louis%20Greenberg%209100531P%20PhD%20-%20FINAL.pdf>
- Jensen, M., 2011. Miss(ed) Generation: Douglas Coupland's *Miss Wyoming*. *Culture Unbound*, 3, pp. 455-474. Available at: <http://www.cultureunbound.ep.liu.se/v3/a29/cu11v3a29.pdf>
- Sløk, J., 2008. *Gud, Menneske, Kosmos*, Copenhagen: Gyldendal.
- Sørensen, B., 2001. *Labelling a Generation – Generationing the Text*, Aalborg: Institute for Language and International Cultural Studies.
- Sørensen, B., 2004. Youth and Innocence as Textual Constructs in the Short Stories of J.D. Salinger and Douglas Coupland. *OASIS 62*, Odense: SDU Press.
- Sørensen, B., 2005. Images of Europe: Readings in the Transatlantic Topography of Generational Texts. *Transatlantic - Cultural Text Studies 2* (eds. Andrea Birch & Camelia Elias), Aalborg: Aalborg University Press, 21-39.
- Tate, A., 2002. 'Now – Here is my Secret': Ritual and Epiphany in Douglas Coupland's Fiction. *Literature & Theology*, 16, 3, 326-338.
- Tate, A., 2007. *Douglas Coupland*, Manchester: Manchester University Press.

## The Travails of Sal Paradise

Jack Kerouac's *On the Road* as  
Narrative Psycho-Geography

*Bent Sørensen*

*teaches American literature and culture in the Department of Culture and Global Studies, Aalborg University, Denmark. He has published extensively on American literature and culture, for instance Poe, Kerouac and the Beats, Raymond Federman, And Jonathan Lethem. Articles have appeared in The Explicator, Philament, Orbis Litterarum, Literary Research and Contemporary Critical Studies..*

In Jack Kerouac's 1957 novel *On the Road*<sup>1</sup>, the central observing character, Sal Paradise, is caught in a double bind. He is explicitly searching for 'kicks' and an elusive essence of being, which the novel terms "IT," by traveling incessantly across the American continent, discovering its foreignness from within through encounters with eccentric others (eulogized in the novel's most famous passage as "the mad ones"<sup>2</sup> and primarily embodied in his most frequent travel companion, Dean Moriarty); yet simultaneously Sal secretly pursues a more conventional project of self-realization, namely finding the right girl to settle down with.

Paradise ultimately fails on both counts in the novel, and his psycho-geography can be mapped very directly onto the movements of his physical journeys, as lack of movement and the idea of settling down – with or without a woman – very quickly leads to him suffering a sense of dread and impending death.

This theme represents one of two unresolvable paradoxes in Kerouac's life and writing, namely his desire for constant motion while simultaneously requiring order and stability, and his desire to valorize deviance and madness positively in others, while deeply fearing it within himself. The journeys in *On the Road* are thus a metaphor for socially triggered psychological travails<sup>3</sup>



## Paradise Lost?

Jack Kerouac's novel *On the Road* features two central characters with such overdetermined names as "Sal [short for 'Salvatore'] Paradise" and "Dean Moriarty". Contrary to what one might expect with one angelic and holy-sounding name and another echoing the evil criminal mastermind of Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories, as well as another young, dead [James] Dean, these two are not embroiled in any Miltonian antagonistic struggle, but are each other's best friends, soul mates, even missing halves. Yet they do not escape betrayals and separation from each other at the end. In the early parts of the novel Sal is a protagonist looking for new beginnings and displacing a past that has made him miserable, sick, weary, even dead. Sal narrates:

I first met Dean not long after my wife and I split up. I had just gotten over a serious illness that I won't bother to talk about, except that it had something to do with the miserably weary split-up. And my feeling that everything was dead. With the coming of Dean Moriarty began the part of my life you could call my life on the road. (Kerouac, 1957:7)

This ominous beginning, setting the agenda of psychological travails from the very onset of the novel, is clearly similar to another American 1950s fictional beginning, namely that of J.D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* which famously parodies the conventions of the *Bildungsroman* in the following words: "If you really want to hear about it, the first thing you'll probably want to know is where I was born, and what my lousy childhood was like, and how my parents were occupied and all before they had me, and all that David Copperfield crap, but I don't feel like going into it." (Salinger, 1951:5)

Holden, the protagonist of Salinger's novel, has the same desire to bury his past in a territory beyond speech that Sal expresses. Of course, both narrators are caught in the insoluble paradox of having to say that they don't want to say certain things, thereby already saying too much. Both narrators come to learn that there is no escaping from their illnesses, misery, lousy childhood and other 'Copperfield'-like psychological baggage.

Kerouac's protagonist is also similar to the most famous Lost Generation anti-hero, Ernest Hemingway's main character of *The*

*Sun Also Rises*, Jake Barnes, in his “feeling that everything was dead” (Kerouac, 1957:7). Sal is also finished with the life of a married man, (although his sexual apparatus is not permanently damaged by any war as Barnes’ was) and ready to embark on another life (on the road), but this time with another man as the most important figure in his life. He does attempt a form of heterosexual domesticity with Terry, a Mexican girl, but rather perfunctorily dumps her after a week or so of mixing with this “Fellahin” member of the salt of the Earth, “a Pachuco wildcat” (Kerouac, 1957: 86), and other “wild-buck Mexican hotcat[s]” (88).

Other than this fling with the exotic Other, the domesticity in Sal’s life is represented by his aunt, on whom he can always rely for shelter from “life on the road” and financial aid to get off the road and come home. Sal is less definitively wounded than Barnes, since he has a safer, more conventional refuge available to him, and while he, like Barnes, claims to be the happiest when among his male friends, in reality he is better off with the maternal figure in his life, his aunt. Still, the similarity remains that a male-bonding, moving utopia is constructed by Kerouac’s novel (life on the road becomes “the road is life” (199), only to be undermined by Sal’s actual experiences on said road.

Looking now at the role of Dean, as he is introduced in the initial Kerouac quote, it is evident that he is presented both as a direct substitute for the wife of Sal, first as the direct successor in time “not long after” (Kerouac, 1957:7), and also much in the same manner that one would expect the next woman to enter Sal’s life, as the remedy, albeit temporary, of Sal’s depression and existential crisis. Secondly, the sound of the phrase “the coming of Dean Moriarty” seems to signal a rather portentous event, not unlike some religious comings or even second comings, certainly signifying new beginnings. Yet, the past tense narration inevitably activates a feeling in the reader that the “life you could call my life on the road” is already past and over at the time of telling, a *gestalt* which the completed reading of the novel indeed bears out.

After the temporal setting of the past desiring erasure, and the future (perfect) waiting to be lived by Sal has been established, the whirlwind narrative of Sal’s many roads begins. The rest of the novel is taken up with motion and talk as the protagonists pendulate back and forth across the North American continent in search for

something indefinable known to them and us only as “IT”, the thing to have, or “kicks”, sensuous enjoyment. After several futile east-west-east crossings, through a gallery of minor characters which tend to either be representatives of the common man, down and out or downright bumming around, or of more ‘primitive’ races such as Mexicans or African Americans, the characters embark on the ultimate road which is to take them south into the unspoiled heart of darkness, here represented by the Mexican jungle. This quest also ends in sickness and betrayal, and the characters then separate and Sal is left to muse over the state of God (“don’t you know that God is Pooh Bear?” (291), and realizing that “nobody, nobody knows [echoing a well-known negro spiritual] what’s going to happen to anybody” (291), and that lost fathers can never be found.

### Coast to Coast Fever

As will be apparent from a glance at a list of the road trips<sup>4</sup> in *On the Road*, the eleven stages of the motion of the novel take the protagonist, Sal Paradise, five times all the way across the USA from New York to San Francisco or the other way, from west to east. Further crossings are planned and aborted, or are too uneventful to be represented in the narrative, and overall the feeling one gets from thinking schematically about the novel is one of dizziness at the back-and-forth motion of its protagonists. Only once is the rigorous swing of the eastward/westward pendulum replaced by a penetration into the south in the drive to Mexico City – a trip which will be discussed in depth later.

What is significant about all these trips and all these roads is the manner in which travelling versus non-travelling is figured in the text. All the ends and beginnings of trips are prefigured by feelings of a liminal nature, as if the apocalypse is catching up with Sal if he does not keep moving. It starts in Denver at the end of his first big road trip where he engages in a major party with his newfound Denver friends. At the end of the night, Sal announces in his narratorial voice, quite out of the blue: “Everything seemed to be collapsing.” (55) This turns out to be the prelude for his leaving Denver to push along to the West Coast: “My moments in Denver were coming to an end, I could feel it when I walked her [Rita, a character Sal has a brief unfulfilling fling with] home, on the way back I stretched out on the grass of an old church with a bunch of hobos, and their talk made me want to get back on that road.” (56)

The exact same symptom reveals itself when Sal reaches California, and finds Terry, the Mexican girl whose life he imposes himself on. He spends some time with her relatives, who never accomplish anything, and again in his narratorial voice he announces: "Everything was collapsing. That night we slept in the truck. Terry held me tight, of course, and told me not to leave." (95) Of course, he leaves: "I told Terry I was leaving. She had been thinking about it all night and was resigned to it. [...] She just walked on back to the shack, carrying my breakfast plate in one hand. I bowed my head and watched her. Well, lackadaddy, I was on the road again." (97) The desire for domesticity that Sal tries to live out in practice in this episode turns out to be as suffocating as any he might find with a white, middle-class all-American girl, and he is mandated to again attempt the travails of the road as a cure.

At the end of part II Sal has similar emotional or psychological symptoms before leaving. The perpetual duality of departure and anticipated arrival at a new goal stages itself again: "What is that feeling when you're driving away from people and they recede on the plain till you see their specks dispersing? - it's the too-huge world vaulting us, and it's good-bye. But we lean forward to the next crazy venture beneath the skies." (148) There is sadness in departure, but it is quickly drowned out by the excitement of the next "crazy" thing in waiting. Of course, that turns out to be another disappointment: "What I accomplished by coming to Frisco I don't know. Camille wanted me to leave; Dean didn't care one way or the other. [...] It was the end; I wanted to get out" (168). Ultimately, none of the locations have delivered on their promise of 'kicks' or craziness in the positive valorisation of the novel. All that arrival has produced is the desire to depart, all that departure produces is the desire to arrive elsewhere again.

This parade of emotions continues: "It was the Denver night; all I did was die. Down in Denver, down in Denver, all I did was die" (170), and therefore he runs from Denver back to Dean in San Francisco: "[F]or there was nothing behind me any more, all my bridges were gone and I didn't give a damn about anything at all." (171) "Everything fell apart in me." (172)

No sooner has Sal arrived in San Francisco before he starts making plans to depart for Italy with Dean, by way of New York, and the whole thing starts over again. The motion of the characters in

the novel gradually reveals how the significance of specifics of location is becoming emptied out by the constant desire for motion away from/ towards something perpetually postponed, an enlightenment that is never found in the novel. One coast is very much like another, one town along the road is very much like another, one encounter on the road is very much like any other, and in fact the whole of the USA is much the same in this figuration. There is wilderness everywhere.

This is strikingly shown to us in an allegorical scene where Sal meets “the Ghost of the Susquehanna”, a little hobo character who is irredeemably lost in the American night. He wishes to go from Pennsylvania to “Canady”, but somehow gets lost along the way. Sal sees him:

[P]oor forlorn man, poor lost sometimeboy, now broken ghost of the penniless wilds. I told my driver the story and he stopped to tell the old man.  
‘Look here, fella, you’re on your way west, not east.’  
‘Heh?’ said the little ghost. ‘Can’t tell me I don’t know my way around here. Been walkin this country for years. I’m headed for Canady.’ (101)

It is impossible to convince the old man that he is on the wrong road. Sal is of course none the wiser himself, although he believes to know the difference between going east and going west, but in reality what the old man knows is that it makes no difference where you go and which road you take to go there. Sal manages a summation of sorts: “I thought all the wilderness in America was in the West until the Ghost of the Susquehanna showed me different. No, there is a wilderness in the East” (101). And it is possible to get lost in that, and everywhere. This ties in with the figuration of Los Angeles as a jungle: “[I] examined the LA night. What brutal, hot, siren whining nights they are! [...] LA is the loneliest and most brutal of American cities; New York gets god-awful cold in the winter but there’s a feeling of wacky comradeship somewhere in some streets. LA is a jungle.” (82-83)

Thus, America has many wildernesses and jungles, some more human than others, but all wild. Later we shall see how images of the Mexican jungle tie in with this. America makes Sal ill, it makes

him lonely, it fragments him, and at the same time he needs it to live. At the end of one of his round-trips from coast to coast Sal says in summation:

Suddenly I found myself on Times Square. I had travelled eight thousand miles around the American continent and I was back on Times Square; and right in the middle of a rush hour, too, seeing with my innocent road-eyes the absolute madness and fantastic hoorair of New York with its millions and millions hustling for ever for a buck among themselves, the mad dream - grabbing, taking, giving, sighing, dying, just so they could be buried in those awful cemetery cities beyond Long Island City. The high towers of the land - the other end of the land, the place where Paper America is born. (102)

While Sal positions himself as the returned outsider who sees things with greater innocence and is outside the general hustling, it is clear from the following scene that he is no such thing. First, he attempts to grab a cigarette butt from under the feet of the crowds of people, and then he has to hustle a Greek minister to get bus fare to go the last bit of the way home. If he has any innocence, New York quickly takes it out of him with its tempo and mad rush.

Both coasts and their metropolises are figured in *On the Road* as brutal constructs that rob a person of his humanity, but on the other hand all chances at meaningful human relations offered to Sal in the middle, between coasts and urban wildernesses, are rejected because of his ever imminent collapse of self, which can only be postponed through new movement. However, even the final major journey of the novel ends in sickness and betrayal of friendship, despite its entailing even greater travails and greater joys (the protagonists come closer than before to finding "IT") than the preceding travels.

### Southward-Ho

In *On the Road's* Mexican segment, Sal and Dean take off southward, "Officially, Sal, to get a Mexican divorce, cheaper and quicker than any kind." (Kerouac, 1957:246) This, however, seems purely incidental once the trip gets under way, but is worth remembering as the first ascription of quality to Mexico - that it is freer in terms of

marriage legislation and cheaper to navigate than the States. As the trip gets under way it is figured explicitly as a good occasion for storytelling, and the protagonists, Sal, Dean, and their friend Stan, take turns telling their life stories. However, the trip is beset with omens of fear, starting with a strange bug that bites Stan, and makes Sal wonder:

[H]ow can homely afternoons in Colorado [...] produce a bug like the bug that bit Stan Shepard? (252)  
Here we were, heading for unknown southern lands, and barely three miles out of hometown [...] a strange feverish exotic bug rose from secret corruptions and sent fear into our hearts. [...] It made the trip seem sinister and doomed. We drove on. (253)

The trip is figured apparently quite traditionally as beginning in “homely” Colorado, and moving towards “unknown southern lands”, but there is a reversal in that the sinister bug of fear comes from “hometown” and “secret corruption”, so perhaps the trip is not “doomed” but an escape to healthier climes. As the trip and the story-telling progresses through Texas, the men encounter signs that Mexico has already begun. The heat is “absolutely tropical”, and you “had the feeling all this used to be Mexican territory indeed.” (255) The houses seem fewer and different: “We entered town in a wilderness of Mexican rickety southern shacks” (255).

Thus, the borderline between the USA and Mexico seems not to follow the actual border, but Mexico stretches up north into Texas, both historically and at the present of telling. Mexico is figured as a “wilderness”, which as has already become clear is not an unusual figuration of place in this text. In San Antonio the dichotomy of USA and Mexico is depicted along class differences. The clinic they go to for Stan’s bug bite is “near downtown, where things looked more sleek and American” (256), yet the clinic is “full of poor Mexican women, some of them sick or bringing their little sick kids. It was sad. I thought of poor Terry and wondered what she was doing now.” (256) An unsurprising dichotomy of sleekness and American-ness versus sickness, poverty, and Mexican-ness is established.

What is more interesting is the joy that especially Dean feels as he ‘digs’ the streets of “Mexican San Antonio” (256). He loves the crazy-

ness and madness he interprets out of the Mexicans they encounter, and this raises his appetite for further movement south: "I never knew this mad San Antonio! Think what Mexico'll be like! Lessgo! Lessgo!" (257). Madness in the usual (for Beat texts) positive valorization is ascribed to the Mexicanness of San Antonio, which coupled with the sexual charge Dean gets from the place, means that the quest for the unknown south, becomes loaded with sexual and psychic energy, just as the 'going' itself gets sexualized through anticipation. "And now we were ready for the last hundred and fifty miles to the magic border" (257).

The border still gets invested with "magic" or transcendental qualities, as the act of crossing becomes established as tantamount to a sexual entering of Mexico, a long anticipated climax to the trip. This theme is heavily played out in the description of Laredo, the border town as an American libido: "Laredo was a sinister town that morning. [...] It was the bottom and dregs of America where all the heavy villains sink, where disoriented people have to go to be near a specific elsewhere they can slip into unnoticed." (258)

The crossing itself is heavily symbolic, and yet tellingly empty of signification: "But everything changed when we crossed the mysterious bridge over the river and our wheels rolled on official Mexican soil [...] Just across the street Mexico began. We looked with wonder. To our amazement, it looked exactly like Mexico." (258) This is indeed a rich scene. Not only is the bridge "mysterious", and the wheels synecdochally<sup>5</sup> standing in for the first touch of the wonder that is Mexico, finally reached after long postponement of desire, but Mexico looks exactly like Mexico! The scene of course refers to the stereotypical index of Mexico the average American will have in mind, which is "fellows in straw hats and white pants [...] lounging" (258).

These stereotypes have specifically been lodged in Sal's mind from his experiences with Terry's relatives who always seem ready to lounge and loaf and put off getting rich till *Mañana* (89-91), but here they are to be put to the test. It turns out that the Mexican cops are exactly like waiters or hustlers in the USA. One of them says, embodying this stereotype: "Welcome Mehico. Have good time. Watch you money. Watch you driving. I say this to you personal, I'm Red, everybody call me Red. Ask for Red. Eat good. Don't worry. Everything fine. Is not hard enjoin yourself in Mehico." (259)



Thus blessed, the trio once more get the impatient urge to penetrate further into the south. Dean cannot wait: "And think of this big continent ahead of us with those enormous Sierra Madre mountains we saw in the movies, and the jungles all the way down and a whole desert plateau as big as ours and reaching down to Guatemala and God knows where, whoo! What'll we do? What'll we do? Let's move!" (259-260)

It is clear that for Dean the significance of Mexico is always seen in a comparison with the America he knows, and that in itself what matters is less the place than the movement first towards it and then through it. This never changes for Dean, but for Sal the significance of place is just about to dawn on him in the otherness of Mexico. He first muses over the difference of roads as he drives while the others are sleeping:

[T]he road ran straight as an arrow. Not like driving across Carolina, or Texas, or Arizona, or Illinois; but like driving across the world and into the places where we would finally learn ourselves among the Fellahin Indians of the world [...] These people were unmistakably Indians and were not at all like the Pedros and Panchos of silly civilized American lore [...] they were not fools, they were not clowns; they were great, grave Indians and they were the source of mankind and the fathers of it. (263-264)

Sal can make the comparisons between "civilized American lore" and the observation of greater authenticity that he personally makes, unlike Dean who still expects the "enormous Sierra Madre mountains" to look like they do in American movies, expecting a one to one equivalence between mediated representation and reality. Sal desires what he startlingly formulates as to "learn ourselves among the Fellahin", and is apparently on a quest for enlightenment as well as a quest of regression into the sources and fatherhood of mankind. This heavy romanticization of the Indian other as more original and primordial than civilized American man is a core formulation of the 'Beat' ethos, which includes this anti-intellectual striving.

The attainment of the goal of enlightenment also presupposes a letting go of the super-ego and American uptightness for Sal. He

achieves this in the key jungle scene, which involves the assimilation of bugs into the body, now without the sinister implications of the American bug-scene:

We took off our T-shirts and roared through the jungle bare-chested. [...] Thousands of mosquitoes had already bitten all of us on chest and arms and ankles. Then a bright idea came to me: I jumped up on the steel roof of the car and stretched out flat on my back. [...] For the first time in my life the weather was not something that touched me, that caressed me, froze or sweated me, but became me. The atmosphere and I became the same. Soft infinitesimal showers of microscopic bugs fanned down on my face as I slept, and they were extremely pleasant and soothing. (276-277)

Thus, the bugs are no longer sinister and poisonous, but rather mingle with Sal's body and become part of him as he becomes part of them. The jungle welcomes him and takes away all his bodily discomfort. Everything is entirely benevolent and he becomes one with nature, reverting to the same level of primitiveness that his idolized Fellahin have as their birthright. This Romantic notion of becoming one with the world as one living breathing organism is an essential image of the novel and of the Beat ethos of striving for 'it-ness', and Sal has to go to a renewing, ancient location to achieve it. At the end of the night Sal is rewarded with a vision in a highly allegorical scene involving a ghostly white horse, "immense and almost phosphorescent and easy to see" (278), trotting directly towards Dean. The horse seems sent for Dean to bestow some form of blessing upon him, and Sal as usual is there to witness the event and testify to us about it. He wonders: "What was this horse? What myth and ghost, what spirit?" (278)

These questions remain unanswered as the trio again are urged to move on by their desire to see more and go further. But the next day Dean is offered the promised enlightenment Sal has announced from the beginning of the novel: "Somewhere along the line I knew there'd be girls, visions, everything; somewhere along the line the pearl would be handed to me." (14) Since Sal has such confidence that the world is his oyster, it is not surprising that such events in-

deed unfold, and that they do so in Mexico. What is noteworthy is that they come to pass for Dean, and not at such for Sal, who is once more consigned to observer status. The trio meet some children that wish to sell them rock crystals. Dean wants one (“no bigger than a berry”), “the sweetest and purest and smallest crystal she has personally picked from the mountain for me” (281). He exchanges the crystal for a wristwatch, and as the “pearl” now has been handed to him: “He stood among them with his ragged face to the sky, looking for the next and highest and final pass, and seemed like the Prophet that had come to them.” (281) As they leave the children follow them, and Dean muses: “‘Would they try to follow the car all the way to Mexico City if we drove slow enough?’ ‘Yes’, I said, for I knew.” (281)

This crucial exchange is Sal’s high point of knowledge and certainty in the world, but it is not an insight pertaining to himself. He has seen the coming of Dean as the prophet among the Fellahin, and by witnessing the act of the handing on of the pearl, he has to an extent personally partaken in it. Dean has been his prophet all along, and as he would follow Dean “all the way”, he knows that others would too. This epistemological certainty is the height of affirmation of purpose in the novel, and it is not incidental that it takes place in primitivity, in Mexico, and that it takes place in view of the “next and highest and final pass”. Thus, place is represented in liminal and apocalyptic terms in the Mexico scenes of *On the Road*, especially in this last scene where visions and girls (albeit in a purified and sexually immature version) become unified with the gift of the ‘pearl’.

However, when the travellers reach Mexico City, Sal falls ill and is summarily abandoned there by Dean who follows his libido back to the US in search of new girls and more sex. Sal makes his way home alone, as single as ever and now newly friendless as well.

### Conclusion

Ultimately, *On the Road* does not indicate any permanent escape from the “miserable weary split-up[s]” of the opening quote (Kerouac, 1957:7), but at best a passing of time while waiting around to grow old and die. This world-weariness is contradicted throughout the novel by the breathlessness and insistence of the prose it is narrated in, which occasions us to query whether the haste of the nar-

rative might not be a large-scale displacement of the fear of old age and death. The themes of questing (for meaning), remembering, talking, and suffering are inscribed in a wistful eulogy to madness as the ultimate state of illumination.

In this scheme of things the man who knows time and has 'it' is also the harbinger of "the end" - in both senses, as 'the goal' and 'the conclusion', presumably. Thus, it is Dean who has a full-fledged religious philosophy complete with salvation, resurrection and an afterlife, while Sal Paradise is temporarily 'lost' as to the meaning of this philosophy. He might eventually have been initiated into it, and also transcend it as any disciple must do to become his own master. Sal, however, chooses to renounce the church of 'it', and instead follow the path of the Beatific, the path that leads to knowing that "God is Pooh Bear", that all is suffering, and that the road may be life, but also that all roads come to an end, and that all human beings come to the end of the road (the last time Sal meets Dean, "Dean couldn't talk any more and said nothing" (290), having also lost it all, life, time, 'it').

The novel refuses to be resolved into a neat and tidy message about its central concerns and instead ambiguously captures the anxiety of many white middle-class males in 1950s America – the fear of conventionality is only trumped by an even greater fear of going mad if the structures of everyday life and peer recognition are transgressed too much. Sal's psycho-geography equally remains in limbo – standing still is tantamount to death, but movement leads to illness and betrayal, as travel and travail melt into one.<sup>6</sup>

## Notes

- 1 The experiences described in the novel date back to Kerouac's road trips in 1947, and composition began in 1948. The final draft of the novel was composed in a frenzied 3-week-period in 1951, but the version that came out of those sessions was edited considerably before eventual publication in 1957. The 1951, so-called scroll version of the manuscript has recently been published, but as 95 % of all Kerouac criticism addresses the 1957 version, this is also the edition I refer to in this article.
- 2 The full quote reads: "The only people for me are the mad ones, the ones who are mad to live, mad to talk, mad to be saved, desirous of

- everything at the same time, the ones who never yawn or say a commonplace thing, but burn, burn, burn like fabulous yellow roman candles exploding like spiders across the stars and in middle you see the blue centrelight pop and everybody goes 'Awww!'" (11)
- 3 Travels and travails are of course etymologically linked in the most intimate of manners, cf. OED: "The sense-development (of 'travail') has not followed the same course in French and in English. Thus English has not developed the simple sense 'work', for which the Old English word has lived on. On the other hand, French has not evolved the sense 'journey' = French *voyager*, which appeared early in Anglo-Norman, and has become the main sense in English, and is differentiated by the spelling 'travel', while the more original senses, so far as they continue in use, retain the earlier spelling 'travail'."
- 4 There are in all 11 roadtrips, told or described, in *On the Road*:  
 pt. I (Buses and hitchhikes): 1. Trip to Denver. Sal solo; w. Eddie; w. bums ("Everything seemed to be collapsing", p. 55); 2. (Denver to San Francisco) Sal solo: "uneventful", p. 58; 3. San Fran. to Southern California. Sal solo; w. Terry ("Everything was collapsing", p. 95); 4. Back to New York. Sal solo; Ghost of the Susquehanna  
 pt. II (The Hudson): 5. Virginia to N.Y. and back to Virginia, and back to N.Y. Sal/Dean w. Marylou & Ed; Sal/Dean w. "my aunt"; 6. N.Y. via New Orleans to San Fran. Sal/Dean w. Ed; Sal/Dean w. Marylou & hitchhikers ("the too-huge world vaulting us, and it's good-bye", p. 148) ("It was the end; I wanted to get out", p. 168)  
 pt. III (Gas-share: Fag-Plymouth; The Caddie): 7. (N.Y. via Denver to San Fran.) Sal solo. Largely untold. ("all I did was die", p. 170) ("my bridges were gone", p. 171); 8. San Fran to New York: via Denver: Sal/Dean w. fag ("nauseas", p. 210), via Chicago: Sal/Dean w. jesuit college boys, via Detroit: Sal/Dean ("horror-hole at dawn", p. 231) (Plan to go to Italy (Sal/Dean) abandoned)  
 pt. IV (The '37 Ford): 9. N.Y. to Denver. Sal solo; w. Henry. Told in brief; 10. Denver to Mexico City (via Gregoria whorehouse) Sal/Dean w. Stan (illness)  
 pt. V: 11. Home: plans to go to San Fran. (Sal/Dean w. Laura) abandoned; Dean goes alone.
- 5 A synecdoche is a rhetorical figure where the part stands for the whole. In this case the wheels of their car stand for the whole carload of travelers about to set foot on foreign soil. Because the car is their preferred

means of transport, it is to be expected that 'wheels' and not 'feet' will be the first part of theirs to touch Mexico.

- 6 The paper above owes much to the great Danish-based American Beat scholar Gregory Stephenson, whose truly ground-breaking volume *The Daybreak Boys* (1990) was one of the very first attempts to wrest Beat Studies out of the biographical mire it had been stuck in till then. Of the many other Beat scholars the author has exchanged ideas with over a decade of working with the ideas of the Beat psycho-geography, he would like to single out the work of Glenn Sheldon on the figuration of Mexican space in the poetry of the Beats in his book *South of Our Selves* (2004), as well as Erik Mortenson's recent study, *Capturing the Beat Moment: Cultural Politics and the Poetics of Presence* (2010). The above piece does not refer explicitly to these highly praiseworthy volumes, for the simple reason that they use other terminologies, not consistent with the present author's neo-Freudian reading of space and character-narration in *On the Road*.

## References

- Hemingway, Ernest. 1926. *The Sun Also Rises*, Scribners: New York.
- Kerouac, Jack, 1978/1957. *On the Road*, Penguin: New York & London.
- Mortenson, Erik, 2011. *Capturing the Beat Moment: Cultural Politics and the Poetics of Presence*, Southern Illinois U. Press: Carbondale
- Oxford English Dictionary*. [online] Available at: <http://www.oed.com> [Accessed 31 December 2011].
- Salinger, J.D., 1951. *Catcher in the Rye*, Little Brown & Co.: New York.
- Sheldon, Glenn, 2004. *South of Our Selves*, McFarland: Jefferson, North Carolina
- Stephenson, Gregory, 1990. *The Daybreak Boys*, Southern Illinois U. Press: Carbondale
- Sørensen, Bent, 2009. Beat Dreams. Jack Kerouac's *Book of Dreams*. In Dimitrijevic et al. eds. 2009 *Psychoanalytic Encounters: Interdisciplinary Papers in Applied Psychoanalysis: A Report on Knowledge*, Belgrade University Press: Belgrade.

## Heading South in Search of Female Development

D.H.Lawrence's *The Lost Girl*

*Minjeong Kim*

*received her Ph.D in English from the State University of New York at Binghamton. Her research interests are, broadly defined, twentieth century British and Anglophone literatures, postcolonial theory, globalization, and gender and sexuality studies.*

In this essay, I examine the ways in which D.H.Lawrence's 1920 novel *The Lost Girl* describes its female protagonist Alvina Houghton's journey to southern Italy. This novel introduces the motif of journey as part of the female Bildungsroman structure. Alvina travels to Pescocalascio, repudiating the patriarchal restrictions in her parochial British hometown of Woodhouse and pursuing development outside home. But the colonial fear and anxiety about what lies outside European civilization inform the narrative view of the untrodden southern Italian town of Pescocalascio. Where European civilization begins to fade out and sinister primitivism opens its jaw, our female protagonist becomes lost. Hence the representation of Italian primitivism in the novel frustrates Alvina's pursuit of development, but the foreign landscape and the presence of the colonial Other within Lawrence's text disrupt the Bildungsroman's self-contained, teleological structure.

Yesterday Italy was at her best, such brilliant sun and sky...I shall go further south –feel I want to go further and further south – don't know why.

(Lawrence's letter, 18 November 1919)

In *Maps of Englishness* (1996), Simon Gikandi, noting that the motif of journey appears frequently in European writers' work in the years between the two world wars, relates it to the prevalent sense of crisis. These writers think that to overcome the "state of terminal crisis" in Europe, what is needed is literary pilgrims who travel to "a possible sanctuary for the lost souls of civilization" and use its energy for the purpose of re-vitalizing European civilization (Gikandi, 1996, p. 179). The work of D.H. Lawrence can be understood in a similar way. Through his writing career, Lawrence traveled extensively, to escape from and find an alternative to capitalist industrial modernity paralyzing British society. But "as early as 1918, Lawrence had traveled very little yet, and his experience of the world was still limited to Europe" (Ceramella, 2004, p. 31). It is not surprising, then, that young Lawrence moved "further and further south" within the European continent, imagining that Italy, a country located at the southern end of Europe, would provide a viable remedy by which to ameliorate the ills of northern European society.

Recognizing the importance of Italy in Lawrence's oeuvre, many critics have analyzed the writer's relation to the southern European country.<sup>1</sup> Yet no one has examined in depth Lawrence's Italian novels in connection to the colonial discourse of primitivism. This essay is an attempt to read a Lawrence's literary text set in southern Italy through the lens of primitivism. The word "southern" is important. The development of the tourist industry in the second half of the nineteenth century transformed southern Europe into one of the most popular destinations for British travelers by the beginning of the twentieth century. But where does "southern" Europe refer to, precisely? In her recent analysis of the history of British travel writing, Sharon Ouditt argues that to the British travelers, southern Europe typically ends in northern Italy: "[E.M.] Forster's 'south' is barely beyond Tuscany. Byron's Childe Harold gets no further than Rome, and 'nobody travels south of Rome'" (Ouditt, 2006, p. 123).

When viewed in the analytical light that Ouditt provides, a remarkable fact about Lawrence's 1920 novel is that it describes its female protagonist Alvina Houghton's trip to Pescocalascio, a region south of Naples and located between present day Atina and Picianisco. A few critics have attempted to reclaim this "curious, powerful, and ultimately ambivalent fiction" (Balbert, 1990, p. 381) from its



long neglect,<sup>2</sup> but the novel's representation of "primitive" southern Italy has received insufficient critical attention. My essay is divided in two parts. In the first part, I will define *The Lost Girl* as a female Bildungsroman text and show that Lawrence introduces the motif of the Italian journey as part of a female Bildungsroman plot. It is important in Lawrence's masterplan for his female Bildungsroman text that his heroine does not grow up according to the pattern of development which designates a youth's social assimilation as the goal of education. In other words, Alvina's journey abroad is instigated by the awareness that women's development requires freedom from the patriarchal status quo. As I will explain in the second half of this essay, however, Lawrence's plan to describe women's development outside Britain comes to a halt, as Alvina encounters in her Italian husband Ciccio's hometown Pescocalascio unrestrained primitivism. Our female protagonist becomes lost amongst the Italian landscape, and Lawrence fails to achieve what he aims to achieve: the description of a successful pattern of female Bildung. Nonetheless, *The Lost Girl* makes an important intervention in the tradition of the early twentieth century British female Bildungsroman: Alvina's inability to return home and thus the absence of the typical ending of the Bildungsroman disrupt the genre's self-contained, teleological structure.

### **"Something Better than the Suffrage"**

Phillip Herring observes that *The Lost Girl* "begins as the story of the decline and fall of Manchester House, prophesying the destruction of the mercantile class [in England]" but "ends by dramatizing the way in which extraordinary people escape the prison of environment to build, or begin to build, a society of two" (Herring, 1979, p. 11). A succinct summary of the novel as it may be, Herring's statement does not make it sufficiently clear that Alvina Houghton constitutes the focal point of Lawrence's narrative. In its barest outline, *The Lost Girl* describes Alvina's struggle in a small, provincial town called Woodhouse and her search for development. The novel opens by describing Alvina's father James Houghton. A muddle-headed dreamer, James starts a number of businesses which don't cater to the cheap, bigoted taste of the villagers. His enterprises keep failing, and meanwhile, his daughter Alvina finds herself caught between the rigid expectations of re-

spectable middle class women, her father's dwindling economy which makes it impossible to meet those expectations, and her indefatigable desire for a life not circumscribed by patriarchal normalcy. She dates with a number of men in town and tries a couple of careers, but none satisfies her. A turning point in the narrative as well as in Alvina's life is provided when one day, an itinerant theatrical company called the Natcha-Kee-Tawaras visits Woodhouse to perform at James Houghton's theatre. This visit provides our heroine with a chance to meet Ciccio, the Italian member of the theatrical group. She is irresistibly attracted to the enigmatic man from the south of Italy, and always in search of a new life outside home, Alvina marries Ciccio and leaves with him for his Italian hometown.

Making a woman character the protagonist of his novel and focusing on her attempt to escape from patriarchal restrictions, Lawrence responds to the growing feminist effort for women's development and the literary demand of the female Bildungsroman. Some explanation is necessary to make this point clear. The expanding opportunities for education and employment as well as the achievement of women's suffrage in 1928 allowed British women to break free from a domestic life and establish a public identity for the first time in British women's history. And these changes gave rise to the expectation for a genre which represents the formation of female subjectivity. The female Bildungsroman seems to fit the bill, at first glance: since its conception at the end of the eighteenth century, the Bildungsroman has been understood as a genre primarily concerned with the description of an individual's subjectivity formation. Typically, the Bildungsroman portrays the male protagonist's development, but the genre can be appropriated to describe a woman's development.

However, simply replacing a male protagonist with a female protagonist does not warrant the birth of a new genre. The male protagonist is just one symptom of the male orientation which informs the Bildungsroman text in entirety. The female protagonist and her pattern of development, therefore, inevitably collide with the Bildungsroman's male assumptions. The most conspicuous collision concerns the goal of the youth's development. As Franco Moretti explains in his *The Way of the World*, the Bildungsroman narrates the youth's assent to the existing social order. At the beginning of a

Bildungsroman text, the youth's desire for individuality and his society's expectation of normalcy are in conflict with each other, but as the youth internalizes social expectations and accepts them as his own, he reconciles with society and is successfully assimilated into it. The achievement of individual freedom by means of joining larger collectives, or the process of becoming "a subjected subject," to use Louis Althusser's words, (Althusser, 1972, p. 181) marks the completion of the youth's development.<sup>3</sup>

The problem of the female Bildungsroman, then, lies in the contradiction between the Bildungsroman's demand of a disciplined citizenry committed to the reinforcement of the hegemonic status quo and the female protagonist's refusal to accept the status quo. Put differently, the modern woman in pursuit of development *criticizes* the patriarchal imperatives of society and *refuses* to reconcile with them. Attempting to gain freedom from patriarchal society, therefore, the female protagonist of a Bildungsroman text disrupts the internal order and the ideology of the Bildungsroman genre.

When viewed in this light, Lawrence's explanation of what he attempts to portray in *The Lost Girl* deserves our attention. The novel draws upon "Elsa Culverwell," a twenty-page story that Lawrence composed in December 1912, and in the letter that he sent to his friend shortly after finishing the story, Lawrence proclaims a plan to develop the story into a novel. Introducing this plan, he writes, "I shall do my work for women, better than the suffrage" (Lawrence, 1912/2002, p. 490).

In this statement, Lawrence reveals his awareness of the limitations of women's pursuit of development within patriarchal society, on the one hand, and the contradictions of the female Bildungsroman, on the other. It escapes the scope of this essay to discuss in full the political and cultural significance as well as the limits of the women's suffrage campaigns. True, the achievement of women's right to vote helps to build "a new woman-centered political culture and agenda" (Purvis and Holton, 2000, pp. 6-7). Yet Lawrence seems to suggest that women's enfranchisement indicates women's *participation* in existing society and as such, is not ultimately conducive to their development. The following passages from *The Lost Girl* demonstrate this point. When Alvina is desperate to find something better the suffrage, the driving engine of her quest is her "extraordinariness."

But we protest that Alvina is not ordinary. Ordinary people, ordinary fates. But extraordinary people, extraordinary fates. Or else no fate at all. The all-to-one-pattern modern system is too much for most extraordinary individuals. It just kills them off or throws them disused aside.

...There was no hope for Alvina in the ordinary. If help came, it would have to come from the extraordinary. Hence the extreme peril of her case. Hence the bitter fear and humiliation she felt as she drudged shabbily on in Manchester House, hiding herself as much as possible from public view. Men can suck the heady juice of exalted self-importance from the bitter weed of failure – failures are usually the most conceited of men: even as was James Houghton. But to a woman, failure is another matter. For her it means failure to live, failure to establish her own life on the face of the earth. And this is humiliating, the ultimate humiliation. (Lawrence, 1920/1968, p. 98)

When the narrative stresses Alvina's extraordinariness, its meaning is made clearer when we note that the passage above is preceded by Alvina's declaration of a refusal to work. In the face of her father's ever-decreasing income, she meditates for a moment the prospect of work, only to find the idea "hideous" (95):

She rebelled with all her backbone against the word job. Even the substitutes, *employment* or *work*, were detestable, unbearable. Emphatically, she did not want to work for a wage. It was too humiliating. Could anything be more *infra dig* than the performing of a set of special actions day in day out, for a life-time, in order to receive some shillings every seventh day. Shameful! A condition of shame. (Lawrence, 1920/1968, p. 96)

Lawrence makes no direct reference to women's suffrage in the novel, but he makes his thought on the issue clear by describing his extraordinary heroine's refusal to work. It helps us at this point to briefly study Virginia Woolf's argument on women's work as expressed in *Three Guineas* (1938). In this essay, Woolf argues that the franchise, the political cause for which the daughters of educated

men have struggled for the past 150 years, is “in itself by no means negligible” (Woolf, 1938/2006, p. 19), but it doesn’t gain its full significance until the right to vote is “mysteriously connected with another right of such immense value to the daughters of educated men” (Woolf, 1938/2006, p. 19). Here Woolf is referring to women’s right to earn their living, made possible or facilitated by the Sex Disqualification Act of 1919. According to Woolf, the truly important stepping stone for women’s development is provided, when women enter the workplace: with “the sacred sixpence that she had earned with her own hands herself,” a working woman is enabled to “issue from the shadow of the private house, and stand on the bridge which lies between the old world and the new world” (Woolf, 1938/2006, p. 20).

However, Lawrence seems to think that women’s work raises the same question as women’s enfranchisement, insofar as both indicate women’s participation in the male-oriented social order. By means of unhesitatingly defining job, work and employment as “a condition of shame,” our heroine declares that she does not accept extension of male privileges to women – women’s rights to work and to vote – as a method of female development. For Alvina’s development, something radically different is needed.

At the opening pages of the novel, it is not yet clear what Lawrence envisions as better than the suffrage and how he is going to represent it. Instead, Lawrence’s narrative repeatedly emphasizes and celebrates Alvina’s unconventionality. For example, when she plays the piano at her father’s theatre and flirts with her father’s business partner Mr. May, Miss Pinnegar thinks that her protégée tarnishes her reputation irreparably. In the narrator’s words, our heroine becomes “déclassée: she had lost her class altogether” (135). But Alvina cannot care less about what ordinary people call “a disgrace” (116). Instead, “she rather liked it. She liked being déclassée. She liked feeling an outsider” (135). Alvina is convinced and the narrative convinces the readers that stepping outside the grids of the given order constitutes the first step toward “stand[ing] on her own ground” (135). In this process, Lawrence affirms the idea that he insinuates in the letter – that is, the woman protagonist of the female Bildungsroman attempts to change the exiting social order, instead of conforming to it, to make room for her development.

Upon the arrival of the Natcha-Kee-Tawaras in Woodhouse, the novel focuses on the troupe's most exotic member Ciccio. The Italian man and the motif of journey that he mobilizes seem to answer Alvina's call for an extraordinary help.

### **Towards Italy, which "Savagely and Triumphantly Refuses Our Living Culture"**

Stressing the impossibility of Alvina's development within the domestic sphere, Lawrence turns his gaze abroad. This turning of the gaze makes the writer engage one of the principal codes of the Bildungsroman, or the motif of journey. In *Season of Youth* (1974), Jerome Buckley abstracts "the broad outlines of a typical Bildungsroman plot": "a child of some sensibility grows up in the country or in a provincial town, where he finds constraints, social and intellectual, placed upon the free imagination....He therefore, sometimes at a quite early age, leaves the repressive atmosphere of home (and also the relative innocence), to make his way independently in the city (in the English novels, usually London). There his real "education" begins, not only his preparation for a career but also – and often more importantly – his direct experience of urban life" (Buckley, 1974, p. 17). The educational aspect of journey is observed in a similar practice in reality. As James Buzard explains his book *The Beaten Track* (1993), from the seventeenth to the early nineteenth centuries, the Grand Tour constituted the dominant form of trips to the European continent. Typically, young unmarried men from privileged backgrounds went to the continent "in the fraternal company of tutors and friends" (Buzard, 1993, p. 130) for the purpose of enhancing their classical minds and getting them to be familiar with "the sources of civilization" (Buzard, 1993, p. 110). The young travelers understood the Grand Tour as "a finishing stage in the process of education and maturation, undertaken before they thought of marrying and filling the niches assigned to them in their society" (Buzard, 1993, p. 130).

When Alvina travels to Ciccio's hometown in Italy, her journey to European south appears to reverberate the notion of educational travel as discussed by the two critics. But her travel is significantly differentiated from the usual pattern of travel as described in the Bildungsroman: the youth of the Bildungsroman returns home, once his education outside home is complete. The youth's

return to the fold at the conclusion of the Bildungsroman is closely related to his subjectivity formation. Because he grows to be a subject interpellated by and subject to the Subject, the youth, once aberrant, must return to the centered whole structured and orchestrated by higher authorities. The Bildungsroman's self-contained teleological structure becomes complete when the young man is relocated into a proper place vis-à-vis the center. However, the conclusion of *The Lost Girl* betrays the expectation of the Bildungsroman's circular structure. Lawrence's woman character gets lost amongst the foreign landscape of Italy and is unable to return home.

Lawrence's novel begins to anticipate the denouement of the narrative as soon as Alvina establishes a rapport with Ciccio. In her first meeting of the Italian man, she feels as if "a great instinctive good-naturedness came out of him" (157), but she also finds him threatening, unintelligible, and enigmatic:

He smiled into her eyes as if she understood. She was a trifle nervous as he smiled at her from out of the stable, so yellow-eyed and half-mysterious, derisive. Her impulse was to turn and go away from the stable. But a deeper impulse made her smile into his face, as she said to him:

"They like you to touch them."

"Who?" His eyes kept hers. Curious how *dark* they seemed, with only a yellow ring of pupil. He was looking right into her, beyond her usual self, impersonal.

"The horses," she said. She was afraid of his long, cat-like look. Yet she felt convinced of his ultimate good-nature. He seemed to her to be the only passionately good-natured man she had ever seen. She watched him vaguely, with strange vague trust, implicit belief in him. In him – in what? (Lawrence, 1920/1968, p.159-60)

Alvina's response to Ciccio demonstrates an uncomfortable admixture of hope to find in him a source of her development and dread of his animalistic behaviour. And over the course of the narrative, Ciccio's threat to Alvina intensifies, particularly after James Houghton's death. Upon the learning of the unfortunate news, Ciccio "gives [to Alvina] the faintest gesture with his head, as of summons towards

him" (197), and this gesture kills the Englishwoman bereft of fatherly protection:

Her soul started, and died in her. And again he gave the slightest, almost imperceptible jerk of the head, backwards and sideways, as if summoning her towards him. His face too was closed and expressionless. But in his eyes, which kept hers, there was a dark flicker of ascendancy. He was going to triumph over her. She knew it. And her soul sank as if it sank out of her body. It sank away out of her body, left her there powerless, soulless....

Her eyes were wide and neutral and submissive, with a new, awful submission as if she had lost her soul. She looked up at him, like a victim. (Lawrence, 1920/1968, p. 197)

Commenting about the passage above, Peter Balbert raises a question. First, he notes that an emphasis on an organic vision and a cosmic consciousness which transcends barriers between individuals informs Lawrence's oeuvre. But there is, Balbert maintains, something in Alvina's response to Ciccio's first kiss that goes "beyond the requirements of Lawrence's organic vision" (Balbert, 1990, p. 393): "there is something predatory and silently conniving in Ciccio, something that does take advantage of the limitations of others – in short, something that is not justified by a reference to Alvina's long-awaited, necessary wedding in the darkness. Here and throughout the novel Ciccio remains too unknown, brooding, and inarticulate to fully convince us of the value of his transforming murder of Alvina. For Alvina's assassination appears to negate not only her will but also her energy" (Balbert, 1990, p. 394).

To Balbert, Ciccio's enigmatic charm remains an unresolved mystery. But I think that we can resolve the question that Balbert leaves unresolved by means of focusing on the southern Italian setting of the novel and also on early twentieth century northern Europeans' understanding of the south of Italy. As I mentioned at the beginning of this essay, despite the increasing popularity of travel to the European south, Italy south of Rome remained an unexplored territory. If so, southern Italy marks the end of European civilization and is dangerously close to the world of non-European barbarity.



To support my claim on the meaning of southern Italy as a portal to a non-European world, I'd like to briefly discuss Thomas Mann's 1921 novella *Death in Venice*. Mann's view of Venice illuminates and is illuminated by Lawrence's view of southern Italy. The protagonist of Mann's text Gustave Aschenbach, "too occupied with the tasks set for him by his own ego and the European spirit he represented" (Mann, 1921/1995, p. 4), travels to Venice, to relax and to recuperate. In this itinerary toward south, the choice of Venice is a result of compromise: Aschenbach wants to visit a region antithetical to the rigid asceticism prevailing in northern Europe, but he also wants to avoid going "all the way to the tigers" (Mann, 1921/1995, p. 5). But the tigers that Aschenbach wants to avoid ultimately overtake him in the form of a cholera, which originates in India and sweeps Venice during the time of Aschenbach's visit to the city. Recently, postcolonial scholars have shown that the narrative trajectory of Mann's text points to the moment when the fear of the colonial Other's assault of Europe reinforces the danger of Italy as a space of European liminality. For example, Edward Said convincingly argues in *Culture and Imperialism* that *Death in Venice* reveals Mann's awareness that "Europe, its art, mind, monuments, is no longer invulnerable" (Said, 1994, p. 188). Then, one of the places in which the colonial Other's impingement on the European metropolitan consciousness begins is Venice, "a southern city but not quite a truly Oriental one, a European but most definitely not a really exotic locale" (Said, 1999, p. 50).

I suggest that we understand the character Ciccio and Alvina's trip to southern Italy by situating them in the contexts established by Said's postcolonial reading of *Death in Venice*. Indeed, Ciccio is characterized with reference to the primitive figure residing at the colonial peripheries. His origin in a colonial backwater and his movement to the European center first and later back to his point of origin establish a ground for a post colonial reading of the novel. Observing that the narrative concern with Alvina's attempt to overcome patriarchal restrictions at the beginning is gradually replaced by the descriptions of the sinister forces of the Italian man Ciccio and his country, critics, such as Philip Herring, have considered *The Lost Girl* as a failed or immature work by Lawrence. In the novel, however, the two elements are closely related – that is, the extraordinary woman's search for an extraordinary venue for develop-

ment invites and becomes conjoined with the colonial discourse of primitivism. If Woodhouse has nothing helpful for Alvina's development, she should locate a source of development outside the home boundaries. And, in the colonial mapping of the world marked by a descending order of place from the European civilization to the non-European primitivism, "extraordinary" may be a euphemism for all that lies outside the European center: non-European, pre-modern, barbaric and primitive.

Lawrence's narrative shows that Alvina's choice to locate a source of development outside Woodhouse turns out an unwise one. She daringly travels to Pescocalascio, but it is an European heart of darkness, or to use the narrator's words, one of the "negative centres, [or] localities which savagely and triumphantly refuse our living culture" (350). The following passage poignantly describes Italian primitivism's threat to annihilate our English girl as well as her sense of entrapment in the negative center. Looking at some flowers in Pescocalascio, Alvina thinks:

And yet their red-purple silkiness had something pre-world about it, at last. The more she wandered, the more the shadow of the by-gone pagan world seemed to come over her. Sometimes she felt she would shriek and go mad, so strong was the influence on her, something pre-world, and it seemed to her now, vindictive. She seemed to feel in the air strange Furies, Lemures, things that had haunted her with their tomb-frenzied vindictiveness since she was a child and had pored over the illustrated Classical Dictionary. Black and cruel presences were in the under-air. They were furtive and slinking. They bewitched you with loveliness, and lurked with fangs to hurt you afterwards. (Lawrence, 1920/1968, p. 372)

All she can do in the face of the "dark repulsiveness" that her new town creates is to "avoid the inside of this part of the world" (371). But this is an exhausting, and the narrative implies, losing battle. Alvina's initial struggle for development is reduced to a battle for mere survival by the end of the novel, and Lawrence's ambitious goal to describe a successful pattern of female development is not accomplished. Not surprisingly, the novel ends abruptly. The out-

break of World War I enlists Ciccio and leaves Alvina, pregnant with a child, alone in the middle of the sinister Italian landscape. She begs her husband to promise to her that he will come back at the end of the war. He does promise, but our female protagonist is not assured. The novel concludes by describing Ciccio's departure, and the future of Alvina hangs in the air.

In this essay, I have tried to show that the travel motif in Lawrence's novel is introduced as part of the writer's attempt to produce a female Bildungsroman text that does not signify women's participation in patriarchal society. The girl who pursues development via "something better than suffrage" fails to develop, however, despite her fearless journey to southern Italy. Nonetheless, it is not my intention in this essay to dismiss *The Lost Girl* for its lack of female Bildung. I'd like to conclude this essay, by emphasizing instead that Lawrence's novel makes an important intervention in the form of the Bildungsroman. I have argued earlier that the youth's education to be a subjected subject is essential for the Bildungsroman's self-enclosed, teleological structure. To the contrary, Lawrence, by describing Alvina's failure to return to the fold, fractures the Bildungsroman's closed structure. Aschenbach in *Death in Venice* perishes in Venice, but Alvina survives the contact with non-European primitivism. Yet the Bildungsroman structure used to describe her search for development seems to receive a more serious blow. When the colonial Other enters the horizon of the Bildungsroman narrative, the representative European genre of education is unable to maintain its form intact. As an open-ended female Bildungsroman text, *The Lost Girl* anticipates the writing of the postcolonial female Bildungsroman by later generations.

### Notes

- 1 See, for instance, George Donaldson and Mara Kalnins, *D.H.Lawrence in Italy and England* (1999, St. Martin's Press: New York); Jeffrey Meyers, *D.H.Lawrence and the Experience of Italy*. (1982, University of Philadelphia Press: Philadelphia).
- 2 Examples include Peter Balbert and Julian Moynahan. See Moynahan's discussion of *The Lost Girl* in his *The Deed of Life: The Novels and Tales of D.H.Lawrence* (1963, Princeton University Press: Princeton).
- 3 For the dual meaning of the subject and its implication for the Bildungsroman, see Joseph Slaughter, *Human Rights, Inc.: the World Novel, Narra-*

*tive Form, and International Law* (2007, Fordham University Press: New York), and Fredric Jameson's essay "On Literary and Cultural Import-Substitution in the Third World: The Case of the Testimonio" from *The Real Thing: Testimonial Discourse in Latin America* (1996, Duke University Press: Durham).

## References

- Althusser, Louis, 1972. *Lenin and Philosophy, and Other Essays*, Monthly Review Press: New York.
- Balbert, Peter, 1990. Ten Men and a Sacred Prostitute: The Psychology of Sex in the Cambridge Edition of *The Lost Girl*. *Twentieth Century Literature: A Scholarly and Critical Journal*, 36, 4, pp. 381-402.
- Buckley, Jerome, 1974. *Season of Youth: The Bildungsroman from Dickens to Golding*, Harvard University Press: Cambridge.
- Buzard, James, 1993. *The Beaten Track: European Tourism, Literature, and the Ways to Culture, 1800-1918*, Clarendon Press: Oxford.
- Ceramella, Nick, 2004. Lorenzo's Quest for the Mediterranean Sun. *D.H.Lawrence and the Literary Genres*, eds. Simonetta de Filippis and Nick Ceramella. Loffredo Editore: Napoli.
- Gikandi, Simon, 1996. *Maps of Englishness: Writing Identity in the Culture of Colonialism*, Columbia University Press: New York.
- Herring, Phillip, 1979. Caliban in Nottingham: D.H.Lawrence's *The Lost Girl*. *Mosaic*, 12, pp. 9-19.
- Lawrence, D.H, 2002. *The Letters of D.H.Lawrence: Volume 1 1901-1913*, ed. James T. Boulton. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge.
- , 2002. *The Letters of D.H.Lawrence: Volume III Part 2 1916-21*, eds. James T. Boulton and Andrew Robertson. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge.
- . 1920/1968. *The Lost Girl*, The Viking Press: New York.
- Mann, Thomas, 1921/1995. *Death In Venice*, tr. Stanley Appelbaum. Dover Publications: Mineola.
- Moretti, Franco, 2000. *The Way of the World: The Bildungsroman in European Culture*, Verso: New York.
- Ouditt, Sharon, 2006. 'Elemental and Permanent Things': George Gissing and Norman Douglas in Southern Italy. *Studies in Travel Writing*, 10, pp. 123-140.
- Purvis, June and Sandra Stanley Holton, 2000. *Votes for Women*, Routledge: New York.

Said, Edward, 1999. Not All the Way to the Tigers: Britten's *Death in Venice*. *Critical Quarterly*, 41, 2, pp. 46-54.  
---, 1994. *Culture and Imperialism*, Vintage Books: New York.  
Woolf, Virginia, 1938/2006. *Three Guineas*, A Harvest Book: Orlando.

# The great flood-gates of the wonder-world flung open

Om rejsens tema i *Moby Dick*

**Rasmus Grøn**

*Adjunkt ved Institut for Kommunikation ved Aalborg Universitet. Medlem af forskningsgruppen MÆRKK (Markedskommunikation og Æstetik: Reception ift. Kognition og Kultur). Har skrevet Ph.d. afhandlingen: Oplevelsens rammer: Former og rationaler i den aktuelle formidling af skønlitteratur for voksne på danske folkebiblioteker (2010).*

## Indledning

Den 21. oktober 2011 udkom den første danske oversættelse af Herman Melvilles hvalfangerroman *Moby Dick* (1851) i 56 år.<sup>1</sup> Melvilles klassiker er, blandt meget andet, også en af verdenslitteraturens store rejseromaner, og jeg vil i det følgende søge at bidrage til dens tiltrængte reaktualisering gennem en analyse af *rejsens tema* i *Moby Dick*.

*Moby Dick*, som blev negligeret af sin samtid (Higgins & Parker, 1995), men siden kanoniseret som amerikansk nationalepos, har levet store dele af sit liv i forskellige illustrerede udgaver, skåret ned til sit basale, suspensefyldte plot: Jeg-fortælleren Ishmael tager hyre på hvalfangerskibet Peqoud under ledelse af den mystiske kaptajn Ahab, hvis egentlige mål med rejsen er at få hævn over Moby Dick, en legendarisk hvid kaskelothval, som berøvede Ahab hans ene ben under en tidligere jagt. Romanen kulminerer i en afsluttende konfrontation, hvor Moby Dick torpederer skibet, som går ned med alle mand undtagen Ishmael.

Men denne enkle, lineære plotstruktur modsvarer af en digressiv, encyklopædisk detaljerigdom, hvor handlingen uddybes, ud sættes, afbrydes og afspores af essayistiske, leksikale og anekdotiske passager (Howard, 2006). Det gør *Moby Dick* til et yderst komplekst værk, der med cetologien som omdrejningspunkt sammenvæver en lang række 'verdner' (litteraturens verden, mytens og religionens verden, politikens verden etc.) i et æstetisk *multivers*, hvilket skaber:

*..an extraordinary feeling of totality - of immensity, range, inclusiveness - in "Moby Dick". The simple geographical vastness is unmissable, but the oceans of history are trawled as well. [...] Melville wants the whole world in - particularly the human world. (Tanner, 2000, pp. 63 & 64)*

Denne ambitiøse episke inklusivitet gælder også rejsen, som ud over at danne den naturlige ramme for hvalfangstprofessionen undergår en række symbolske tematiseringer i romanen. Men rejsen udgør samtidig, som antydnet i citatet ovenfor, grundprincippet for romanens modus operandi, der forbinder tematiske, historiske, psykologiske og kompositionelle lag i *Moby Dick*. Artiklens første afsnit vil beskrive hvordan romanen iscenesætter rejsen som romantisk amerikansk kulturprojekt, men samtidig etablerer et moderne erfaringsrum, hvor dette projekt tømmes for metafysisk indhold. Det vil i anden og tredje afsnit danne udgangspunkt for en analyse af romanens hovedpersoner, Ahab og Ishmael, som repræsentanter for to komplementære erfaringsperspektiver på rejsen som *eksistentielt, subjektivt projekt*. Og i artiklens sidste afsnit påvises det, hvordan relationen mellem disse to subjektpositioner danner baggrunden for såvel den *kompositionelle* spænding mellem plot og digression i *Moby Dick* som romanens genre- og udsigelsesforhold.

De flertydige sammenhænge mellem karakter, komposition og udsigelse i *Moby Dick* er et naturligt, genkommende tema i romanens meget omfattende receptionshistorie. Artiklens nye bidrag til denne reception vil være at forstå disse sammenhænge som et produkt af den konsekvente og paradoksale *komplementaritet*, den samtidige uforenelighed og gensidige afhængighed, som kendetegner relationen mellem Ahab og Ishmaels erfaringsperspektiver.

Artiklen bygger primært på et bredt udvalg af den eksisterende Melville-forskning, men vil, grundet de formelle rammer for artiklens omfang, ikke introducere særskilt til denne reception. Referencer til passager i *Moby Dick* er af pladshensyn kun anført med sidetal.

## Rejsens labyrint

Det kan synes paradoksalt, at *Moby Dick* er udnævnt til amerikansk nationalepos, da romanens fortælling former sig som en rejse væk fra det nationale territorium. Romanens indledende kapitler finder

sted i dette territoriums udkant, mens hovedparten af handlingen (kpt. 22-135) udspiller sig på havet, under hvalfangerskibet Pequods ufuldendte jordomrejse. Men havet konstitueres i romanen primært gennem sin metaforiske relation til landet, der afsætter koordinaterne for erfaringsrummet i *Moby Dick*. Vand og land beskrives her som to modsatrettede livsformer: hvor landet knyttes til det domestiske, trygge og overfladiske, forbindes havet med det fremmede, erfaringen og mysteriet. Havet er i *Moby Dick* dog ikke blot noget, man bevæger sig på, men er som det flydende element også en metonymi for selve rejsens bevægelse, og kernen i relationen mellem vand og land skal findes i romanens grundlæggende dikotomi mellem stasis og bevægelse, det fikserede og det flydende. Denne dikotomi udgør også formlen for romanens modernitetskritik, som præsenteres med et billede af storbyens folkemængde fortabt i oceanisk længsel:

*Posted like silent sentinels all around the town, stand thousands upon thousands of mortal men fixed in ocean reveries. [...] But these are all landsmen; of weeks pent up in lath and plaster - tied to counters, nailed to benches, clinched to desks. How then is this? Are the green fields gone? What do they here? (pp. 93-4)*

*Moby Dick* blev skrevet kort efter at man var trængt gennem til Stillehavet og havde underlagt sig hele kontinentet, og det amerikanske samfund indledte transformationen fra en nybyggerkultur til moderne industrikultur. Men hermed var verden også blevet afmystificeret: eventyret var forbi, de store vidder ("the green fields") forsvundet, og erstattet af et klaustrofobisk samfundsrum, der fremstår som en trussel mod den individuelle frihed og identitet. Med verbernes gentagne konnotationer af indespærring og fastnagling ('tied', 'nailed', 'clinched') knyttes det moderne samfundsliv til en tilstand af tvungen fiksering, hvor subjekterne er reduceret til anonyme og gensidigt isolerede gestalter ('sentinels').<sup>2</sup> Heroverfor fremstilles havet som det ubundne element, og den oceaniske rejse som den emanciperende åbning af rummet mod rejsen som eventyr. Havet bliver et ekspansivt udfoldelsesrum for subjektet, der – med den emphatiske fremhævelse af pronomenet 'I' – svulmer på bølgen af havets 'magnanimity':



*Gaining the more open water the bracing breeze waxed fresh; the little Moss tossed the quick foam from her bows, as a young colt his snortings. How I snuffed that Tartar air! - how I spurned that turnpike earth! - that common highway all over dented with the marks of slavish heels and hoofs; and turned me to admire the magnanimity of the sea which will permit no records.*  
(p. 155)

Med denne dyrkelse af 'landlessness' (p. 203) som ideal livs- og erfaringsform får rejsens tema i *Moby Dick* tillige en specifik amerikansk karakter. I den europæiske roman står subjektet også ofte fremmedgjort over for det moderne samfundsmaskineri, men her er subjektet samtidig "society-bound" (Kaul, 1963, p. 57); det er altid allerede integreret i samfundet, som determinerer dets erfaringshorisont, hvorfor dets livsprojekt nødvendigvis må udfolde sig inden for rammerne af denne sociale orden. I den amerikanske roman fremstilles denne orden derimod traditionelt som en ydre, arbitrær konstruktion, som subjektet frit kan forlade. Den amerikanske romanhelts dannelsesprojekt er således knyttet til bevægelsen som transgression, hvor selvrealiseringen søges i rejsens frigørende bevægelse ned ad floderne, ind i skovene, ud på vejene, hen over havet. (Fiedler, 1960; Tanner, 1970) Og rejsens mytologi rummer i *Moby Dick* også en kollektiv, kulturel dimension som amerikansk myte. Det viser sig især i en omfattende "amerikanisering" af havets topos (Fussell, 1965), hvor modsætningen mellem vand og land modsvares af en gennemgående analogi mellem havet og prærien i romanens metaforik:

*The Nantucketeer, he alone resides and riots on the sea [...] to and fro ploughing it as his own plantation [...] He lives on the sea as prairie cocks in the prairie [...] and the distant ship revealing only the tops of her masts, seems struggling forward, not through the rolling waves but through the tall grass of a rolling prairie.* (pp. 159 & 601).

Med dette dobbelte landkort skaber romanen en symbolsk genåbning af det amerikanske rum, hvor de attributter, der omspandt Vesten genfindes i den oceaniske topografi. Havet bliver dér, hvor pioneråndens eksplorative patos kan fastholdes, som den ubundne

bevægelse og heroiske underlægelse af naturelementerne. *Moby Dick* rummer således komponenterne til rejsen som amerikansk mytologi. En rejse, som ikke orienterer sig mod en etableret hjemstavn, men er en fremtidsrettet bevægelse mod en ideal bestemmelse. For rejsens bevægelse er i høj grad en mental bevægelse; 'going to sea' er synonymt med 'going to see' i Melvilles rejseroman (Horsford, 1977, p. 72), hvor rejsen er et erkendelsesprojekt, hvis mål er at transcendere den materielle verden og trænge frem til den 'dybere' metafysiske sandhed bag denne verdens fysiske fremtrædelser. Og hvalen iscenesættes i romanen som inkarnationen af det metafysiske mysterium og det symbolske mål for den idealistiske stræben – ikke mindst romanens titelfigur:

*Chief among the motives was the overwhelming idea of the great whale himself [...] the great flood-gates of the wonder-world swung open, and in the wild conceits that swayed me to my purpose, two and two there floated into my inmost soul, endless processions of the whale, and, mid most of them, one grand hooded phantom, like a snow-hill in the air.* (p. 98; min markering).

Ligesom hvalfangerne udvinder den værdifulde spermacet af hvalens krop, fremstilles den ydre verden gennemgående som *a riddle to unfold, a wondrous work in one volume* (p. 455), hvis dybere mening man søger at aflæse. Denne semiotisering koncentrerer sig især om hvalen, hvis krop genkommende beskrives som: *..pleated with riddles [...]..all over obliquely crossed and re-crossed with numberless straight marks in thick array, something like those in the finest Italian engravings [...] These are hieroglyphical.* (p. 412) *Moby Dick* placerer sig her inden for amerikansk, metafysisk tradition med rødder i såvel puritanismens omni-eksegetiske verdensanskuelse som R. W. Emersons korrespondanceteori, hvor naturen beskrives som et panteistisk netværk af symboler, hvis indhold åbenbarer sig for menneskets intuition. (Emerson, 1982)

Men *Moby Dick* er samtidig en moderne roman, som afviser selve den metafysiske præmis for denne tradition: korrespondancen mellem sjælen og den besjælede topografi afskrives i romanen som fraværende, og dermed overskrives rejsen som transcendent erfaringsrum af en tabserfaring, som tømmer det for metafysisk substans.

Med kløften mellem verden og bevidsthed føres al erkendelse tilbage i bevidstheden: naturens symboler kan ikke **aflæses** som forbundne i en metafysisk tekst, men er en overflade af gådefulde, løsevne tegn, hvori subjektet **indlæser** sine fortolkninger (Horsford, 1977): *Signs and wonders, eh? Pity if there is nothing wonderful in signs, and nothing significant in wonders.* (p. 543) Sandheden forbliver et 'ungraspable phantom' i *Moby Dick*, hvor mening uophørligt produceres i subjektets hermeneutiske omgang med verden, mens denne mening samtidig forbliver bundet til det subjektive perspektiv, som producerer den:

*..and this round gold is but the image of the rounder globe, which, like a magician's glass, to each and every man in turn mirrors back his own mysterious self.* (p. 541)

Naturen bliver en spejlsal, hvor læsningens drift mod en ideal sandhed bag tegnet uophørligt dementeres, idet den kastes tilbage på subjektets relative optik, og menneskets erkendelses- og erobningsfremstød mod verden undergraves af en markant impotens i mødet med havets dødbringende kasterende kraft (p. 380). En kraft, som ikke bunder i en besjælet maliciøsitet, men i dets urørlige fremmedhed og indifferens som meningstom formation og erfaringsrum (Poulet, 1956). En verden, som synekdochisk inkarneres i hvalens anatomi som en tavs, ansigtsløs mur (p. 454). Det gælder frem for alt *Moby Dick*, hvis jomfruelige hvidhed bliver en projekionsflade for menneskets kontingente symboliseringer, 'a dumb blankness, full of meaning' (p. 195) Det får stor betydning for rejsens semantik i romanen:

*Round the world! There is much in that sound to inspire proud feelings; but whereto does all that circumnavigation conduct? Only through numberless perils to the very point whence we started, where those that we left behind secure, were all the time before us [...]. But in pursuit of those far mysteries we dream of, or in tormented chase of that demon phantom that, some time or other, swims before all human hearts; while chasing such over his round globe, they either lead us on in barren mazes or midway leave us whelmed.* (p. 340)

*Moby Dicks* repræsentation af rejsens ekspansive rum for subjektets udfoldelse modsvares således af en klaustrofobisk indsnævring af dette rum. Subjektet er fanget i verden som gold labyrint, hvor rejsens bevægelse bliver en futil cirkularitet. Verden er ”an empty cipher”, et tomt kryptogram, hvorfor rejsens eksplorative patos er blevet tømt for indhold og reduceres til en ”sound”. Dermed bliver rejsen også præget af en evig provisionalitet, som dementerer muligheden for et erfaringens slutpunkt.

*Moby Dick* beskriver således en moderne tabserfaring, der i Georg Lukács’ romanteori defineres som selve den mentallistoriske forudsætning for romangenren (Lukács, 1916) Ifølge Lukács opstår romanen som den særegne æstetiske form for en moderne post-mytisk tidsalder, der er præget af en splittelse mellem verden og bevidsthed. I romanen fremstilles denne verden i en form, Lukács karakteriserer som en ”ironisk totalitet”, idet den gestaltet i en ambivalens mellem en æstetisk totalitet, der udtrykker en afrundet erfaring, og denne totalitets manglende forankring i en moderne, kontingent verden. Og denne romanens totalitet er en biografisk form, idet den er uløseligt knyttet til det moderne individs subjektive perspektiv og livsprojekt. Desuden må dette projekt tage form af en rejse, som det ’transcendentalt hjemløse’ subjekts søgen efter at realisere sin bestemmelse. De følgende sider vil kort belyse, hvordan rejsen – og romanen – tager form gennem de to rejsende protagonister i *Moby Dick*.

### Ahab og Rejsens mytologi

Når rejsen i *Moby Dick* mister sin progressive erfaringshorisont til fordel for en futil cirkularitet, truer det med at bekræfte ..*the endlessness, yea, the intolerableness of all earthly effort* (p. 155). Denne inerti afvises imidlertid af kaptajn Ahab, som fikserer den labyrintiske rejses famlen i viljestyret bevægelse med en konkret bestemmelse: *Moby Dick*, den hvide hval. I Melvilles ’bricolagemytologi’ (Franklin, 1963, pp. 62-68) fremstilles Ahab som et konglomerat af litterære, mytologiske og historiske referencer (Prometheus, Ødipus, Kristus, Faust, m. fl.), og Ahabs idealistiske hævnmission åbner netop for en remytologisering af erfaringen og fortællingen. Ahab bliver repræsentant for menneskets promethiske stræben efter at hele sin amputerede eksistens (Williams, 2006) ved at transcendere dens provisoriske kontinuum og trænge frem til det metafysiske mysterium

bag den materielle verdens gådebilleder. Og efter Pequods afrejse 'genopstår' Ahab fra sin kahyt og træder ind på fortællingens scene som inkarnationen af det mytiskes genkomst:

*He looked like a man cut away from the stake, when the fire has overrunningly wasted all the limbs without consuming them, or taking away one particle from their compact aged robustness.*  
(p. 218)

Med Ahabs hævnprojekt forvandles rejsen til en metafysisk quest, men denne mytologisering undergraves imidlertid af manglen på objektivet mandat, og udstilles som et psykologisk produkt, hvor Ahabs fortolkning af hvalen er en eksternalisering af *that demon phantom that swims before al human hearts* (p. 340), begærets dunkle mål, i et konkret objekt. Og hvalen forbliver i denne fortolkning et "phantom", et produkt af en narcissistisk projektion. Ahab bliver derved en falsk Prometheus, idet den metafysiske orden han revolterer imod, ikke har nogen eksistens uden for hans bevidsthed:

*..thy thoughts have created a creature in thee; and he whose intense thinking thus makes him a Prometheus; a vulture feeds upon that heart for ever; that vulture the very creature he creates.*  
(p. 303)

Drevet frem af Ahabs *narrow-flowing monomania* (p. 284) fører rejsens bevægelse til en markant indsnævring af erfaringsrummet. I sin hengivelse til en rent indre, abstrakt sandhed gennemtrænger Ahab ikke materialitetens mur, men bliver selv en mur, en uindtagelig solipsistisk fæstning – og fængsel. Denne vanviddets lukkede logik skaber en mental entropi, som eksternaliseres i **malstrømmens** implosive proces, der i romanen sættes som bevægelsesmetafor for Ahabs selvdestruktive monomane projekt:

*I'll chase him round Good Hope, and round the Horn, and round the Norway Malstroem, and round perdition's flames before I give him up.* (p. 261)

Ud over den eksplicitte benævnelse af malstrømmen, skitserer den bevægelse, som Ahab udtrykker med det manisk iterative "round"

i sig selv en malstrøms spiral, fra det gode håb, over det diabolske horn, gennem malstrømmen og ned i fortabelsens flammer. Ahabs revitalisering af rejsen som mytologisk projekt fører således ikke ud i transcendensen, men ind i malstrømmen, som forener cirkulariteten med faldet, ned i afslutningens uundgåelige udslettelse.

### Ishmael og rejsen som proces

Men ikke alt udslettes. Ishmaels fortælling, som udgør romanen *Moby Dick*, udspringer således af en genkomst fra den malstrøm, som ellers har trukket alt med sig i dybet. Og denne overlevelse antyder, at Ishmael repræsenterer en alternativ, moderne erfaringsposition, der transcenderer den selvdestruktive idealisme, som driver Ahabs romantiske projekt. En position, som tager udgangspunkt i den erkendelse, som Ahabs projekt er en fornægtelse af, nemlig af verden, ikke som uretfærdig og maliciøs, men som meningsstom og indifferent. Og Ishmael præsenteres som et subjekt uden metafysiske eller sociale forankringspunkter for sin identitet (p. 195), en hjemløs i livet. Et moderne subjekt, som ubundet af autoritære bestemmelser frit kan vagabondere i verden, men som samtidig er bundet til denne ubundethed, som "dømt til frihed". En ambivalent tilstand, som afspejles i Ishmaels diskurs, som veksler mellem melankolsk spleen og picaresk munterhed. Denne eksistentielle tilstand knyttes naturligt til rejsens søgende bevægelse: *I am tormented by an everlasting itch for things remote.* (p. 98). Med "tormented" understreges disharmonien som udgangspunktet for Ishmaels karakter; at Ishmael ligesom Ahab drives frem af en følt mangel i sin mentale økonomi. Men Ishmaels rejse er grundlagt på en erfaring af idealets tomhed, og dermed i eksistensens retnings- og formålsløshed. Hvor Ahab er subjektet, som på monoman vis fortaber sig i sin selvspejling i begærsobjektet, bliver Ishmael et moderne subjekt uden objekt, da ethvert potentielt begærsobjekt nødvendigvis må fremstå som kontingent. Rejsens drift kommer hos Ishmael derfor ikke til udtryk i en monoman fiksering af begæret, men differentierer sig i en diffus søgen mod "things remote", det fremmede og interessante. En inklusiv, encyklopædisk fascination af verdens perceptive rigdom, og de meningsfulde mønstre, som lader sig aflæse i verdens overflade gennem interaktionen mellem verden, sprog og bevidsthed. (Miller, 1995, p. 276) Ishmael er en 'committed relativist' (Kearns, 2006), for hvem den moderne splittelse åbner for en in-

hærent frihed, en subjektets ubundne fleksibilitet i en uafsluttelig søgen efter ekvilibrium med omverden. For Ishmael er verden en 'dumb blankness' – men den er samtidig 'full of meaning'. Ishmael beskriver selv sin metode således: *There are some enterprises in which a careful disorderliness is the true method* (p. 469). Der er ikke blot tale om uorden, men om en omhyggelig, metodisk mangel på metode og orden: en tentativ, usystematisk bevægelse, hvor tegnene væves sammen i stadigt nye, metaforiske mønstre og enhver sikker viden uophørligt relativiseres i romanens semantiske reversibilitet. I modsætning til Ahabs "ontological heroics" bliver Ishmaels position en "ontological ludics" (Tanner, 2000, p. 65), hvor fraværet af en immanent, transcendental orden åbner for en tentativ udforskning af verden, og bevidsthedens frihed til skabelse af provisoriske ordner ud fra relativismens sandhed: at alt lader sig forbinde, fordi intet er forbundet. Og Ishmaels diskurs skaber ikke et narrativt kontinuum, men er i stedet struktureret som enkeltstående situationer eller temaer, som bindes sammen af stadige tilbagehenvisninger, og bevæger sig ekskursivt fra plot til anekdote, dokumentation, myte, spekulation og tilbage til plot. Denne struktur afspejler Ishmaels livsbane som en rastløs bevægelse i en evig nutid af momentane intensiteter, ligesom romanens overflod af ord afspejler en kredsen om en virkelighed, som forbliver utilnærmelig. (Brodtkorb, 1965) Det bevægelsens mønster, som hermed aftegner sig med denne strategi, er ikke den målrettede rejse mod idealets slutmål, men derimod i hengivelsen til det uafsluttede og ubestemte; til eksistensen som en flydende, digressiv erfaringsproces, hvis vævende bevægelse ikke søger mod et erfarings slutpunkt, men derimod undvigelsen af et sådant slutpunkt, i en hengivelse til bevægelsens uendelige, dynamiske princip som den eneste mulige frihed.

Som moderne subjektivt erfaringsperspektiv er Ishmael en formgivende kraft, der formår at bringe den moderne virkelighed til erkendelse i en æstetisk form. Men konsekvensen af dette perspektiv er, at den narrative form forbliver "a little treatise on Eternity" (p.482) – den afgrænser ikke en ubegrænset virkelighed gennem den subjektive repræsentations intervention. Og dermed bliver den også en "eternal treatise", en uendelig, uafsluttelig fortælling. Og som en frit flydende gestalt finder Ishmaels identitet samtidig heller ingen fylde eller form i romanens fremstilling. Ishmael træder aldrig i karakter; han forbliver et perspektiv, knyttet til det sprog, hvorigennem

det anskuer verden; og selv om Ishmael kan siges at handle i og gennem sproget, tager han ikke form i dette sprog gennem en fuld, biografisk repræsentation. Ishmaels identitet forbliver papirtynd, så at sige; der kommer aldrig kød på hans sproglige krop.

### Rejsen og romanens form

Ahab og Ishmael lader sig således anskue som repræsentanter for romanens to bærende kompositionsprincipper, der samtidig skaber to forskellige figurationer af rejsens bevægelse. Ahab er *plottets* centralgestalt, da romanens narrative bevægelse udfoldes omkring Ahabs hævnprojekt, og kaptajnens hævnbegær bliver katalysator for romanens narrative begær (Brooks, 1984). Ahab bliver herved også fortællingens *centripetale kraft*, som koncentrerer verdens mangfoldighed i ét punkt, og driver rejsen og plottets drama fremad som en målrettet bevægelse mod plottets fuldbyrdelse *..at the proper time and place*. (p. 643) Ahabs projekt er anti-digressivt; hans *narrow-flowing monomania* (p. 284) tillader ingen afvigelse fra skibets *undeviating wake* (p. 626). Heroverfor står fortælleren Ishmael som *diskursens* centralgestalt, da romanens form udspringer af Ishmaels sproglige bevidsthed. Og Ishmael er samtidig romanens *centrifugale kraft*, der med sine digressive, encyklopædiske udforskninger udsætter og bringer handlingen ud af kurs for at fordybe sig i detaljens rigdom. Begge positioner kan siges at knytte an til det flerlydige nøglebegreb "Loomings", som er titlen på romanens indledende kapitel: hvor Ahab fikserer rejsens bevægelse i en drift mod slutpunktet, som lokkende toner frem i horisont, knyttes 'loomings' hos Ishmael derimod til undvigelsen af et sådant slutpunkt, til fordel for en uafsluttelig, vævende erfaringsproces, som aldrig lader verden eller subjekt fikse i en fast orden: *God keep me from ever completing anything*. (p. 241)

Sameksistensen af disse to principper kommer blandt andet til udtryk i romanen som en stor spænding mellem hvad Franco Moretti kalder "incidents" og "episodes": narrative segmenter, som bi-drager til udfoldelsen af fortællingens handling, og deskriptive, diskursive segmenter, som afviger fra og afbryder plottets lineære forløb i en udvidelse af handlingens implikationer. (Moretti, 1994, pp. 46-47) De to protagonisters positioner knytter sig desuden genrehistorisk til heltens status i det moderne. Mens den *episke form* traditionelt er forbundet med en heroisk individualisme, hvor helten



gennem sine handlinger former verden i sit billede, erstattes denne handlende helt i *den moderne roman* af den passive helt, som søger at indfange virkeligheden gennem kontemplation: *In this new scenario, the grand world of the epic no longer takes shape in transformative action, but in imagination, in dream, in magic.* (Moretti, 1994, p. 16) I *Moby Dick* er Ahab en ”overleveret” episk helt, som repræsenterer en geninstallering af det handlende individs almagt, mens Ishmael er den kontemplative helt, som flyder gennem verden, og på fatalistisk vis lader sig handle med. Han søger ikke at intervenere i verden, men forbliver det passive vidne og fortolker af begivenhederne.

Romanen relativiserer dog denne modsætning, idet Ahab samtidig er fikseret som et objekt for sit eget begær – men også for Ishmaels fortælling. For *Moby Dick* er i sidste ende Ishmaels værk. Ishmaels eneste signifikante handling er selve romanen, som er det eneste, der står tilbage, da Pequod er forsvundet i dybet. Romanen er således et produkt af Ishmaels overlevelse, som en symbolsk transcendens af Ahabs (selv)destruktive idealisme til fordel for en mere bæredygtig position, som bygger på en pragmatisk, relativistisk tilpasning til det moderne vilkår.

Heroverfor har Ahab med sin abstrakte, anakronistiske idealisme klare lighedstræk med titelfiguren i Miguel de Cervantes’ metaroman *Don Quijote*. Men i modsætning til ridderen af den arme skikkelse er Ahab dog langt fra nogen harmløs, udgrænset bevidsthed. Han er tværtimod et moderne magtmenneske, som autoritært former og instrumentaliserer omverdenen i sit billede, idet han formår at gøre sit begær til gældende princip og lov for Pequods sociale mikrokosmos. Desuden ville der uden Ahabs monomane projekt ikke være nogen fortælling, som Ishmael skulle overleve for at fortælle.

Ishmael, derimod, træder aldrig i fuld karakter. Han indtager kun en birolle som vidne og fortolker af romanens drama. Han intervenserer ikke i verden for at søge sin bestemmelse, og derfor bliver han aldrig en afrundet subjektivitet (Kearns, 2006). Dette forhold kommer konkret til udtryk i læseoplevelsen. Hvor Ahab fremstår med ikonisk klarhed, og er blevet gjort til genstand for talrige billedlige repræsentationer, er det nærmest umuligt at fremmane et billede af Ishmael. Han forbliver ”faceless”, en tentativ, flydende subjektpositionering, som aldrig træder frem af den skrift, hvori han konstituerer sig.

Det er Ahab og Ishmael som formbærende subjektpositioner, der tegner hovedlinjerne i *Moby Dicks* æstetiske udforskning af rejsen som kulturelt, eksistentielt og psykologisk tema. Den spændingsfyldte relation mellem de to positioner skaber en kompleksitet og flertydighed i romanen, som også har præget *Moby Dicks* receptionshistorie. Fortolkninger af romanens udsigelse og genrehistoriske tilhørsforhold har således ofte været betinget af den respektive status, man har tillagt de to protagonister: hvor læsninger af *Moby Dick* som romantisk epos reducerer Ishmael til et kor i Ahabs tragedie (Matthiessen, 1949), bliver Ahab i modernistiske fortolkninger af romanen blot til en komponent i Ishmaels sprogkonstruktion (Brodtkorb, 1965). Denne artikels hovedpointe er, at en fyldestgørende læsning af romanen i stedet bør fastholde et dobbeltblik på Ahab og Ishmael som ligeværdige, komplementære positioner i romanens univers: Ahab kommer kun til syne som objekt for Ishmaels fortælling; men samtidig bliver denne fortælling kun mulig som afrundet historie gennem Ahabs mytologiske plotting. *Moby Dick* er som rejseroman og 'ironisk totalitet' således funderet på disse to komplementære positioner: Ahabs monomane idealisme, som i en entropisk indsnævring brænder op indefra i en destruktion af selve den vitalisme, som bærer det. Og Ishmaels relativistiske position, som forbliver "a little treatise on Eternity" (p. 482), en evig, uafsluttelig fortælling, hvor alle faste mål og erkendelser opløses i sproglige forgreninger.

### Noter

- 1 Den nye udgave er oversat af Flemming Christian Nielsen og udgivet på Forlaget Bindslev. For mere herom se: <http://www.dingbat.dk/>
- 2 Denne kritik af den sociale ordens forkrøblende effekt på den menneskelige var meget udbredt i Melvilles amerikanske samtid. Se bl.a. Kaul 1963, p.21ff

### Referencer

- Brodtkorb, P., 1965. *Ishmael's White World. A Phenomenological Reading of "Moby Dick"*.  
New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Brooks, P., 1984. *Reading for the Plot. Cambridge (Mass.): Harvard University Press*

- Bryant, J., 2006. "To fight some Other World" (preface). In: J. Bryant, M. K. B. Edwards and T. Marr, ed. 2006. *'Ungraspable Phantom. Essays on "Moby Dick"*. Kent: Kent State University Press, pp. ix - xvii.
- Emerson, R.W., 1982. *Selected Essays*. New York: Penguin Books
- Fiedler, L., 1960. *Love and Death in the American Novel*. New York: Criterion
- Franklin, B. H., 1963. *The Wake of the Gods – Melville's Mythology*. Stanford: Stanford University
- Fussell, E., 1965. *Frontier – American Literature and the American West*. Princeton (N. J.): Princeton University Press
- Higgins, B and Parker, H., ed. 1995. *Herman Melville: The Contemporary Reviews*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Horsford, H. C., 1977. The Design of Argument in "Moby Dick". In: H. P. Vincent, ed. 1977. *The Merrill Studies in "Moby Dick"*. Columbus: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Company.
- Howard, L. R., 2006. "Ungainly Gambols" and Circumnavigating the Truth; Breaking the Narrative of *Moby Dick*. In: J. Bryant, M. K. B. Edwards and T. Marr, ed. 2006: *'Ungraspable Phantom. Essays on "Moby Dick"*. Kent: Kent State University Press, pp. 25-37.
- Kaul, A.N., 1963. *The American Vision – Actual and Ideal Society in Nineteenth Century American Fiction*. New Haven: Yale University Press
- Kearns, M., 2006. Morality and Rhetoric in *Moby Dick*. In: J. Bryant, M. K. B. Edwards and T. Marr, ed. 2006. *'Ungraspable Phantom. Essays on "Moby Dick"*. Kent: Kent State University Press, pp. 117-32.
- Levin, H., 1958. *The Power of Blackness*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf
- Lukács, G., 1916. *Die Theorie des Romans*. Berlin: Sammlung Luchterhand, 1971
- Matthiessen, F.O., 1941. *The American Renaissance: Art and Expression in the Age of Emerson and Melville*. New York: Oxford University Press
- Melville, H., 1851. *Moby Dick*. London: Penguin Books, 1986
- Miller, J. H., 1995. *Topographies*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Moretti, F., 1994. *The Modern Epic*. London: Verso
- Poulet, G., 1956. *Studies in Human Time*. Baltimore: The John Hopkins Press

- Richardson, R.D., 1978. *Myth and Literature in the American Renaissance*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press
- Stern, M. R., ed. 1968. *Discussions of "Moby Dick"*. Boston: D. C. Heath & co.
- Tanner, T., 1965. *The Reign of Wonder*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Tanner, T., 1971. *City of Words: American Fiction 1950-70*. London: Jonathan Cape
- Tanner, T., 2000. *The American Mystery. American Literature from Emerson to Delillo*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Tygstrup, F., 1992. *Erfaringens fiktion*. København: Forlaget Tiderne Skifter
- Williams, D., 2006. Filling the Void: A Lacanian Angle of Vision on *Moby Dick*. In: J. Bryant, M. K. B. Edwards and T. Marr, ed. 2006. *'Ungraspable Phantom. Essays on "Moby Dick"*. Kent: Kent State University Press, pp. 61-81

## The trip as a script

Mobility as a tool for creation in artist's cinema

*Miro Soares*

*is a Brazilian visual artist based in Paris. He holds a Master of Arts and Digital Media and is a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne. Filmmaker and traveller, he has participated in exhibitions in different countries in the Americas, Europe and Asia. He has also participated in artistic residences in Latvia, Lithuania, Slovenia, Norway, Germany, Finland and Netherlands.*

The article's intent is to analyze aspects of artist's cinema connected to the issue of mobility and, therefore, to the context of globalization and of cultural transnationalism. These works are part of a specific segment in art in which the displacement, the journey, and / or the walk itself assume a major role in the creative process. They are relevant because they push us to reflect on the issue of mobility at the same time that they collaborate to expand the borders in moving images.

Sometimes I wonder why I went left,  
while I might have had to go right...  
(Raymond Depardon, Errance)

### Introduction

The journey has always been a source of inspiration explored in many different ways in films from all over the world. The list of these productions is so vast that road movie has become a genre in cinema. In most cases, the itineraries of the trip appear not only as the place for the story but as a main character. Eventually it is also an element that would open up a space in the script making room for improvisation in the film.

In artist's cinema, which can be generally understood as a specific segment in moving images based on principles of both production and distribution much more related to art, documentary and experimental cinema than the usual cinema industry, the journey – more than a source of inspiration – can become an active tool for creation. It places the artists in a modified state of mind and of contact with the environment around him. The artists can then make use of this condition to produce artworks expressing a personal, critical and poetic point of view about the world.

This article is part of the beginning of a study based on the notion of voluntary uprooting as creative process. Responsible for breaking the time and space instances of the daily existence, here the uprooting is an engine for the production, being understood as a permanent and continuous exercise of creation in a dialectic movement of refinement of the personal gaze. The voluntary uprooting is an artistic position that determines a production in a context of mobility at the same time that it is a critic position of dialogue and understanding face today's world.

Here I intent to analyze aspects of artist's cinema connected to the issue of mobility and, therefore, to the context of globalization, of liberal global market and of cultural transnationalism. These works are part of a specific segment in art in which the displacement, the journey, and/or the walk itself assume a major role in the creative process. They are relevant because they push us to reflect on the issue of mobility at the same time that they collaborate to expand the borders in moving images.

By the adoption of this specific approach and by the selection of the artworks presented here, I also suggest the existence of a particular group of works that is considerably influenced by practices of the so called art in context. Described by Michel De Certeau (1990) as "the practice of everyday life" and by Paul Ardenne (2002) as a "contextual art", this is a segment in art in which the artist places his creative process directly in contact with the reality around him. He puts himself in movement in order to discover cities and roads, urban and natural spaces, a new land or his own native place. The displacement here is not just a way of movement in space, but equally a psychological phenomenon, a tool for imagination and production. This "cineplastic" – taking the concept by Thierry Davila (2002, p.21) – transforms the city into a stage for creation. In my point of

view, there is a visible connection between contextual art and some of the audiovisual works produced in the context of mobility, which were not included in the discourse of these authors due to the purposes of their publications. Most of them emphasize objects, interventions and performative actions in public spaces.

The aim here is to identify the elements involved in the production of films, videos and video-installations made by artists and analyze this aesthetic of mobility. The idea is also to understand how the journey as a space open to knowledge of the elsewhere and the other can become a protocol for the shooting. I am going to present some of these aspects examining some of the principles of these productions, which would appear as different genres ranging from documentaries to personal essays, from performative actions to fiction. In the body of work mentioned here, besides artists and documentary filmmakers I have decided to include also particular projects of cinema directors that show a distinct creative process, which are not the most representatives in their career.

### **A voluntary state of movement**

With the global establishment of a new order related to technological and media resources, as well as the reorganization of socio-economic and geographical networks, the concept of mobility is increasingly becoming an important issue in moving images, both in cinema and contemporary art. Before we head to the production in artist's cinema it seems important to specify here the exact context of mobility where the productions analyzed take place.

The issue of mobility often evokes two different processes concerning groups of people that are placed in movement in our globalized world: forced and voluntary uprooting. In contrast to studies based on the collective nature of groups forced into exile due to war, poverty, or social and political conflicts, this article is dedicated to the singularity of a voluntary gaze. It focuses on the group that benefits from an expanded mobility, on the individual that can be understood as a global citizen, simultaneously transiting between a city-world, the "virtual métacité" as named by Paul Virilio (1984), and the world-city. If in the artworks related to forced exile the political aspects can be seen right through its content, in the ones connected to voluntary displacement they tend to appear more integrated in its form.

The question of mobility lays on the dialectical relationship between the Local and the Global. According to Marc Augé (2009, p.34), the “world as a city” represents the ideal and the ideology of the globalization system, while the “city as a world” expresses the historical contradictions and tensions determined by this very system. The mobility of the global alien is forced and he/she is frequently occupied with a sense of belonging, both to the country of origin and/or to the receiving country, while the presence of the global citizen is welcomed and his mobility is desirable. The situation of the first is normally connected to a group of people in similar condition, as the second steps out alone.

Among the global citizens we can identify a psychological and a geographic voluntary uprooting as well as a change of focus from the national identities to an individual singularity. This singularity is referred by Giorgio Agamben (1990, p.9) as a “whatever singularity”. But it is important to notice that the understanding of “whatever” should not be defined by indifference but based on the Latin translation of “being such that it always matters”. This kind of “crossroad-individual” that is currently emerging, a hybrid of different cultural influences, is described by Nicolas Bourriaud (2009, p.58) as being a “radicant”: “this contemporary subject, caught between the need for a connection with its environment and the forces of uprooting, between globalization and singularity, between identity and opening to the other”. These are attributes that are been shaped gradually and can certainly be conflicting when these individuals are confronted with their pairs or more widely with the society.

In this context it is, of course, Walter Benjamin’s figure of the wanderer (flâneur) who appears as a major historical reference. His experience is the freedom to displace, observing and being observed, but almost never interacting with the other. A similar figure in literature is the stranger. These heroes of modernity share the possibility and the perspective of the solitary traveller, of the voluntarily uprooted, of the anonymous arrival into a new place. They are closely linked to the living conditions in the flux of the cities of their time.

Displacement, exile, drift, crossing, wandering, roaming, etc. are all figures of mobility, and each one shows a specific aspect of it. The common point and maybe the reason why mobility becomes so important in the artworks is related to the fact that the journey places



the artist in a modified psychological and relational state. This modified state allows him/her to be open to new and random encounters, and decentralize himself/herself, being in a position to think differently. It forces him/her to leave his/her comfortable zone, to overcome inertia, and to produce. It also brings fruitful imaginations to be associated to stories and mythologies of the road between the ambivalences of the local and the global. The journey points out to a distinct reality in which the way to observe, think and react with the environment are not ordinary.

A journey is generally based on the trinomial composed by departure, displacement and return. Each one of these stages reveals a particular state of mind, fed with different expectations about what is ahead. If very often it is motivated by a more or less specific impulse, the journey does not necessarily have to be driven by a clear, logic or understandable reason, and it is not rare to be a goal in itself. The fact is that the movement is the entrance door for an unmediated geographical and cultural experience, for everyone's personal will of a better understanding of the self and the other, of the space between here and there. As in an experimental creative process, the movement is an entrance for one to step into the unknown.

### **Artist's cinema: notes on the context of production**

If cinema gives us a vast repertory on the issue of mobility, which comes out essentially as content within the films, artist's cinema on the other hand tends to make a distinct point, integrating the components of mobility also in the artwork's form. In the traditional cinema the narrative organizes these components in a quite clear manner (even in a non-linear story), showing us the whole piece: cause, event and consequences. But in contemporary art it is not surprising to see artworks that show a fragmented, abstract, provocative, intuitive or more personal approach.

Even if the journey gives the director in traditional cinema a certain degree of freedom to improvise in productions like road movies, at the end they are still committed to a story. The road can feed them with inspiration and with assets they would have never thought about before the start of the shooting, but the fact is that – in almost all cases – a script is meant to be completed. We can say that in cinema the production of a film always foresees a precise final result.

In certain productions in artist's cinema (likewise in some documentaries, and in exceptional cases in cinema) the trip gets notably more relevance than the story itself. The story can be reduced to an inspiration, a referential, or a vague starting point for the production, or even replaced by new protocols of creation. The content of the film may not be defined or known until the itinerary begins and the events take place. The journey in such way can truly define the production of the artwork.

Artist's cinema is plural and does not follow a standard structure; it is diverse in its means of production and display as well as in its genres and forms. In terms of production it is noticeable that an increasing variety of protocols for both creation and display have been used, collaborating to emerge an aesthetic of mobility and proposing new space- and time-based experiences to the audience. Beyond the subversion of traditional narratives structures – which is a constant concern of cinema itself – these protocols for creation and display expand the concept of film (usually based on the single channel screen and on a limited or pre-determined length of time).

Moving images more art-orientated also invest in experimentation and eventually in the use of recent media and devices, for both creation and display. Everything in terms of equipment tends to be more compact, flexible and immediate compared to the traditional cinema industry (although the industry itself sometimes intends to follow this direction as a trend). That is not to say that, instead of working with a big crew, most of the artists only have a very small team or even work alone. All connected, these factors contribute to a significant difference in the aesthetic elements presented in the artworks.

The need for freedom in terms of movement and immediacy during the travel pushes the artists to create networks and to make use of equipment that are better adapted to their practices. Very often they work in connection with artist-in-residence programs in a foreign country. These programs allow the artists to work abroad having another geographical base and a certain structure in (or closer to) the location he wants to put himself in. The equipment that is used in this context is generally small and light, which allows the artist to go on a trip carrying nothing more than a backpack – a mobility concept that had already been extensively explored by Glauber Rocha. The backpack becomes “the artist's studio” and he

can basically work everywhere, since almost all the equipment is digital and the images are stored in files that can be easily transferred, even by internet or phone

Currently, artists and independent filmmakers still keep exploring the possibilities of the use of films, either 35 mm, 16 mm or the immortal super 8 mm. However, they specially welcome digital formats and supports, such as HDV, 3GP cell phone videos, internet streaming etc. Beyond the handy video cameras – that long ago gradually started to replace film cameras –, the artists also make use of DSLR cameras, handy sound recorders, cell phones, laptop computers, customized applications and software, GPS, and other portable devices, which all allow the development of new practices of creation taking in consideration a geographical location or a shift in space.

In terms of display, the process is not different. More and more the perspective is open for projections and interactivity out of the limits of the cinema. Video-installations, multi-screen projections, programming language based software, and a multitude of other new media offer experiences there are rather different than those in the traditional movie theater. Issues related to temporality, rhythm and length can be expanded from the film itself to the place of display.

### **The journey and the elsewhere as a tool for creation**

The journey sets up the context for production and appears as a space for creation and personal adventure. The principle of nomadism becomes the state of the artistic work. This aesthetics is fed with the movement and insists on the poetic necessity of the departure, on an experience that can only take place elsewhere. Some works focus on the itineraries and the roads as other on the places themselves. Between other specificities of these productions there is the fact that very often the process reaches the same relevance than the final result as well as a strong interest on the traceability and the cartography. The artworks frequently are a circuit connecting one place to the other.

Artists and directors combine both the production process and the experience of displacing itself, in a continuous exercise of creation. Presenting a higher or lower degree of intervention by the artist according to the nature of the project, these productions

would range from documentaries to personal essays, from performative actions to fiction.

### Documentary approaches

In some cases the artworks have a more documental approach in which the role of the artist is to capture the images trying to interfere as less as possible on the subjects. These productions share similar aspects with genres in documentaries and experimental cinema, where the act of observation seems to come out as the main source for the experience. Landscapes, cities and people will be the target of an accurate gaze.

A filmmaker that shows a remarkable look on the environment is James Benning. With an extreme minimalistic aesthetics in both the concept and the structure, Benning is able to capture the images of the places and organize them in long films that offer the viewer a beautiful level of contemplation and a positively immersion in his landscape films.

*13 Lakes* (16mm / 135 min. / 2004) and *Ten Skies* (16mm / 109 min. / 2004) are good instances of that immersion. As simple as indicate the titles both films are composed by a determined numbers of shots and are simply organized in sequence. Taking about 10 minutes each shot in these films is still, there is no movement of camera. The frame is totally dedicated to the landscape. *13 Lakes* presents different regions across the United States and its frame is equally distributed between the sky and the water. The horizon line is right in the middle. Following basically the same process *Ten Skies* shows a series of skylscapes, filmed in a journey around Val Verde, California. This minimal and precise configuration intensifies the experience of duration at the same time as it reveals new perceptions related to scale, ephemerality and the cinematic frame. In the stillness of the frame in both works we can see a richly and subtle change of light and shadows conjugated with the natural elements: water, vegetation and clouds. It is interesting to notice the tension hidden in the length of time of the images. The shots show mostly a desert landscape, but in specific moments clearly affected by the human presence.

While Benning has chosen the fixed frame, the Canadian filmmaker and artist Michael Snow has done the opposite. His work called *La région centrale* (The central region / 16mm / 180 min. /

1971) is centered on the landscape and precisely on the camera movement, one the most basic elements on the film medium. Michael Snow presents us a principle of autonomy of the camera. The work is a monumental three-hour movie shot on a deserted mountain, in which a system was designed in order to rotate the camera without the need of an operator and being able to do complete 360 degree movements, craning skyward and in circles in all directions. Due to the unconventional camera movement, the artwork leads the matter beyond the landscape documented in the film.

From the deserted landscapes through the roads to the city we meet David Lynch and his *Interview Project* (video / variable length / 2009). In a completely different project compared with his fiction movies the director has produced a documentary composed by 121 parts which showcases interviews with ordinary people. If the way of production is peculiar, determined by the encounters he has in the roads, its way of display is also not conventional. These interviews are displayed in the artist's website releasing a new episode every three days for the entire year. In his description David Lynch explicitly points out the character of chance within the project that is created based on random encounters along the journey:

"Interview Project is a road trip where people have been found and interviewed. People should watch Interview Project because they are going to meet hundreds of people. There was no plan really for Interview Project. That people who were interviewed each was different. Interview Project is a twenty-thousand mile road trip over seventy days across and back the United States."

### **The film-essay**

From the position of observation and documental approach some artists would also add a layer of personal reflexions, very often expressed by his/her own voice, composing a sort of essay, diary or notes on the journey. A director (and photographer) who will take the camera in his travels with a remarkable sense of discovery is Raymond Depardon. His films are often a witness of his presence in a region that attracts the attention of his gaze. *New York, NY* (35 mm / 10 min. / 1986) is a black and white film composed by three se-

quence shots that result on a panoramic view of the city. The shots are associated with the voice of Depardon, describing – in an auto-critic discourse – the experience to make this very same film in the American city.

In a film produced ten years later, *Afriques, comment ça va avec la douleur?* (Africa, how are you with pain? / 35 mm / 165 min. / 1996), Depardon is even more expressive and fully opens up the context of the work and of his position as a director. At the beginning, he insists on exposing his thoughts inside the film. So as there would be no distinction between what is the acting of filming and the film itself as a final result. Here is how he begins the film:

“Hello. I am here at the Cape of Good Hope, right at the extremity of the African continent, alone with my camera and my amateur tripod. I’m on the highest sand dune that I have found, facing the sea. It’s very windy; I’m not very comfortable, but ready to shoot. It’s winter, a late afternoon of July. I take the opportunity to make use of the light and I improvise my first shot.

That’s it. I am starting a journey. This is not a road movie. This is not a work of investigative journalism. I’ll try to observe and listen to the ordinary pain in Africa. Subjective journey, necessarily, through my desires, but also my fears. Don’t worry; I will not try to overwhelm you. I hope I’m not going to shoot always the same things.

I don’t know my stops, I prefer to improvise, let myself to be guided. I don’t know in advance what I’ll shoot, what my meetings will be.”

The film begins and everything is clear. The viewer is invited on the trip. Depardon is aware of all issues related to the image. He works in a critic and auto-critic manner.

In the film *Tokyo-Ga* (16 and 35 mm / 92 min. / 1985), Wim Wenders had decided to make his first trip to Japan a tribute to director Yasujiro Ozu and an investigation about the Japanese modernity. It is a deeply personal movie, which gives us a small sample of life in Japan and the director’s view. Wenders goes to Japan moti-

vated to know what he could find or meet, as he explains in the beginning of the film:

“And so, my trip to Tokyo was in no way a pilgrimage. I was curious as to whether I still could track down something from this time, whether there was still anything left of this work. Images, perhaps, or even people. Or whether so much would have changed in Tokyo in the twenty years since Ozu’s death, that nothing would be left to find.”

Wenders goes through the city and meet people. The film focuses on the figure of Ozu and his films. The interviews with the actor Chishu Ryu and the cameraman Yuuharu Atsuta reveal a bit about the man behind the icon of the director. The result, however, is also a film about Wim Wenders, about his gaze and his way to become himself a director.

### **Creative protocols**

In order to replace the predetermined script and embark on the adventure of the unpredictability, directors and artists will create personal protocols to trigger the production of the work. This principle, which is a recent trend in the audiovisual works and appears in varied ways, is often described by the generic term of “creation device” or “creative protocol”. They mostly give priority to space and instant, improvisation and chance. The term is certainly problematic as it allows to be comprehended in different ways and as it could be used to refer to most kind of procedures related to the arts. However, this is the way how it is widely used by critics to describe the strategy to subvert or to create new structures of the discourse in moving images.

The creative protocol can be understood as a tool capable of guiding the production of an artwork without a predetermined script. The main principle is not to tell a story delimited in advance, but to create a field of situations that will lead to the creation. In a practical way the creative device is the elaboration of a certain logic, rules, parameters and limits for the film to take place. As points out Cezar Migliorin (2005), the device is “the introduction of guidelines in a selected universe. The artist determines space, time, actors or characters in a universe and adds to it something that will force

movements and connections between them (characters, technicians, climate, technical appliances, geography, etc.) “.

Without the script, it is the journey, the walk, or the itinerary that will determine the creation of the artwork. In this case they are not only subjects of the works but an effective condition to be experienced, which can be directly related to the action of the artist or to a testimony of an event in the world. The film is then made *in situ* and in an almost “live” situation, being shaped from the stimulations of the visit through the proposed itinerary. It is susceptible to interference of chance and imprevisibility as the control over its content slips away from the hands of the author. The work reveals then the ambivalence: part of it is controllable and precise (which is determined by the protocol of creation) as other part is incapable of being anticipated (the events that will occur).

Creative protocols simultaneously blend the act observation/understanding of the space around with the act of production. They trigger the situation to be experienced in a certain place at the same time they produce an artwork, a final result that keeps the memory of the experience beyond the present moment. The artistic practice understood as a continuous research feeds the author with both aesthetics and personal knowledge, in a process that – retaking a modern utopia – seems to express the indistinct desire to live and to produce at the same time.

In the body of work of the Brazilian artist and filmmaker Cao Guimarães we can identify some particular protocols for creation. In the video *Acidente* (Accident / super 8mm and miniDV on DV / 72 min. / 2006), co-directed by Pablo Lobato, the creative device takes places as a poem structured by twenty names of towns of the state of Minas Gerais, Brazil. The artwork is driven by imprevisibility and chance. Guided by such names the artists visit the towns for their very first time. “The poem-device becomes a machine to produce images and acquires, as all devices, a certain power over the artist” (Lins, 2007).

The poem leads the artist in a continuous itinerary. The camera observes the everyday routine and reveals details about life in these small towns. This images show different aspects of the local in these regions, a universe that has its own bases and not connected to global strategies. Time in these places is different as is also different the contact of people with each other. The shots produced by the



artists are meant to correspond to this specific frame of space and time. As an immersion, the video is made through two layers of narrative: one related to the story of the poem and the other connected to the everyday life events, which appear accidentally in front of the camera in each of the cities.

The film *Ação e Dispersão* (Action and dispersion / DV / 6 min. / 2002) by Cezar Migliorin is also a travel device, and with a political component. The film was produced with public funding received from a prize for audiovisual production. In this performance-film the artist put in discussion the cultural politics and the circuit of cultural distribution. The director travels alone with his camera and the money to produce the film. He goes through several different countries. He records all means of travel he uses, all places where he sleeps and all kinds of food he eats. The only rule he adopts is never to stay two nights in the same city. He continues his journey randomly until the money of the prize is over.

### **Fiction**

As a vast source of imagination the journey will also feed the creation of the plot or the story in fictions. However, instead of being precise the narratives tend to show a quite minimal scrip. The story does exist but rather not as the center of the work.

The video-installation *En la pampa* (In the pampa / HD-CAM / five projection video installation / variable length / 2008) by Jordi Colomer is one of the artworks that are representatives of the way how the journey can build up the story in a fiction. In this installation, composed by five video projections, the artist invites a man and a woman to live certain situations in the Atacama Desert, in the north of Chile. These two people, that are not professional actors, did not know each other before the shooting. They will go through this region in the search of a story that does not exist beforehand. All the dialogues were created naturally from the contact between them and the landscapes. Considering the way as the installation was displayed at Jeu de Paume (in Paris, in 2008), five screens are placed in different positions within the room. Each projection displays a different scene of the story. To be able to access the whole content the visitor has to displace himself, standing in front of each one. The screens show a variable running time and are set in loop. The visitor is free to watch the scenes in the sequence he wants.

### Acts of presence

The presence of the artist itself can also become an element in the creation. Based on the reality, some of these artworks show us particular discourses and gestures of the artist, as well as acts that affirm his presence face of the world. Between different figures of the wanderer and the traveller, the explorer is very often connected to the incursion to desert and remote lands.

*Nummer acht* (Number eight / 16 mm to HD / 10 min. / 2007) is an impressive artwork by the Dutch artist Guido van der Werfe. The film shows a huge ice breaker ship making his way through a frozen sea in a remote region of Finland. In front of it the small figure of the artist walks few meters ahead, as if he has to lead the way. In this monumental image the short distance between the artist and the ship, and the real imminence of a danger, makes you hold your breath. As typical of his work, this romantic figure is associated with a certain degree of irony on both the indifference how he walks in front of the ship as well as on the subtitle of the artwork “everything is going to be alright”.

A similar image is that made by the Russian artist – and graduate from the Higher Engineering Marine School – Alexander Ponomarev, in a performance called *Baffin Figure* (Video / 2006). Restituted as video and as photographs this is a performance in which the artist attaches himself in the front part of a ship. The ship goes through the open Baffin Sea, a marginal sea of the North Atlantic Ocean, located between Baffin Island and the southwest coast of Greenland.

### Conclusion

Artist’s cinema made in the context of mobility pushes us to reflect on contemporary issues related to our globalized world at the same time it also questions the audiovisual production itself. Such works are somehow like heirs of experimental cinema and the old Glauber Rocha’s principle of making cinema with “a camera in the hand and an idea in the head”. This production looks backwards and recognizes the itineraries of moving images throughout the years, at the same time it looks to the future and tries to find out what are to be the new audiovisual works.

These works serve as a way to observe the environment, give room for improvisation, present personal discourses, replace the

predetermined script by new protocols for creation, inspire fictions and allow the artist to mark his presence. They also can determine a critical attitude face to the established notions and indicate us changes in social institutions such as family, place of origin and nation. They show us a particular aesthetics related to the mobility, in which their elements suggest a skepticism about stability, roots, certainty and order.

Produced independently in the sphere of contemporary art or experimental cinema, these works explore many and different paths in the field of moving images. Through its dimensions of production and distribution set out of the strict and alienating rules of industrial or commercial cinema, these artworks allow us to believe that the artistic production resists not only as an inventive, but also democratic and liberating space. These audiovisual productions made in the context of mobility push us to important reflections about the art's universe and our daily social universe. They collaborate to the renewal the field of moving images, to the understanding of our time, and to the establishment of a critical and poetic consciousness of the world.

## References

- Agamben, G., 1990. *La Communauté qui vient: théorie de la singularité quelconque*, Seuil: Paris.
- Ardenne, P., 2002. *Un art contextuel*, Flammarion: Paris.
- Augé, M., 2009. *Pour une anthropologie de la mobilité*, Payot Rivages: Paris.
- Bourriaud, N., 2009. *Radicant. Pour une esthétique de la globalisation*, Éditions Denoël: Paris.
- Davila, T., 2002. *Marcher Créer : Déplacements, flâneries, dérives dans l'art de la fin du XXe siècle*, Editions du Regard: Paris.
- De Certeau, M., 1990. *L'invention du quotidien*, Gallimard: Paris.
- Laderman, D., 2002. *Driving visions: exploring the road movie*, University of Texas Press: Austin.
- Lins, C., 2007. Tempo e dispositivo nos filmes de Cao Guimarães. *Cao Guimarães*, Edição Caja de Burgos: Espanha.
- Migliorin, C., 2005. O dispositivo como estratégia narrativa. *Compós*, Niterói.
- Sargeant, J., & Watson, W., 1999. *Lost highways: an illustrated history of road movies*, Creation: London.

Virilio, P., 1984. *L'espace critique: essai sur l'urbanisme et les nouvelles technologies*, Christian Bourgois: Paris.

## Spectators' Journeys

### Immersions in Experimental Theater

*Elsa Belhomme*

*Elsa Belhomme is currently writing her doctoral thesis on the "Cartographies of Spectatorial Experiences at the Avignon Festival: Transmission, Ruptures, Creations and Becomings", as part of the Erasmus Mundus Joint Doctorate in Literary Interzones. Her research interests include contemporary theater and new media, intercultural productions and the dynamics of international living arts festivals.*

This article looks at two theatrical performances from the point of view of their spectators. The act of going to the theatre is in itself a journey immediately followed by the confrontation of an unknown world during the performance. This article questions the position and roles of the spectators in contemporary, interactive performances, where spectators become central within the theatrical set-up. It analyzes two plays, *Le Bardo* and *EUX*, both presented at La Chartreuse in Villeneuve-lès-Avignon. The two plays present spectators with mixed territories of actual, fictional and virtual, and accentuate immersive processes by using virtual or augmented realities. The article argues that in those apparatus, spectators must undertake an intro-directed journey and renegotiate their own sense of being there, while remaining at the center of attention. This allows them to appropriate the territories with which they are confronted and eventually participate in the plays, in a process similar to that of the traveler.

Vois sur ces canaux / Dormir ces vaisseaux  
Dont l'humeur est vagabonde;  
C'est pour assouvir / Ton moindre désir  
Qu'ils viennent du bout du monde  
(Charles Beaudelaire, *L'invitation au voyage*)

In the theater, a play is an ephemeral event which unites, in a unity of time and place, various human beings (artists, technicians, spectators), who come from diverse backgrounds and will, after the play, follow their own trajectories. The theatrical event, in itself, is a result of the co-presence of those individuals (Fischer-Lichte, 2008). The sum of the actions and reactions of all participants creates the play as an event as well as an object. It is generally accepted that the participants of a theatrical event have a clearly defined role: with the help of technicians, the actors present situations to spectators who observe them. However, in some contemporary experiences, notably with the use of virtual technologies in the theater, one can observe small shifts in the theater encounter and the casting of roles. We want to observe two cases of plays making extensive use of virtual technologies in this essay, both produced by and presented at the CNES of La Chartreuse in Villeneuve-lès-Avignon, and discuss the “invitations to the voyage” they offer to their participants.

### Limiting expectations

*E.U.X* and *Le Bardo* were both presented at La Chartreuse, a laboratory for theater writings. The presentation leaflets of both plays did not explain what the theatrical apparatus would consist of, but were specific on the fact that only a spectator at a time could enter the plays. This laboratory mode, as well as the presentation of works during either probes or festivals, incited spectators to take a risk by going to those plays. They were expecting alternative forms of theater, without knowing what the rules of the game would be. The absence of many information gave an incentive to the spectators to discover the plays without many preconceptions, and to eventually engage entirely with the plays. *EUX*'s playwright, Eli Commins, noted in an interview the importance of keeping a mystery about the nature of the plays, in order to leave a greater range of reactions from the part of the participants:

One important aspect of these systems is the fantasy and the expectations. If you tell people it is going to be an immersive situation, some people are so eager to play that game that they immerse themselves. The person was already projecting before the text started. Some people just refused to get in there [...] Reactions were generally

quite strong. They ranged from deep anxiety to pleasure (Commins, 2010).

In addition to presenting the work as a game whose primary players are the spectators, this remark shows us to which extent the play is experienced through the body of the spectators. Their reactions are not only intellectual, but mostly physical. In Europe, the forms of theater to which we are mostly accustomed also completely immerse their spectators: since Wagner and the construction of his opera house in Bayreuth, at the end of the XIXth Century, spectators are asked to remain silent. Only the stage is lit, and everyone's attention is directed in its direction. As in the cinema, the spectators forget their bodies during the time of the play. They do not direct their attention to their surroundings, but rather towards the illuminated stage. Their bodies are left alone so that their minds can concentrate fully on an object which they experiment primarily through sight and sound, and analyze intellectually.

### **Experimenting the plays through one's sensorium**

*E.U.X* and *Le Bardo* request that the bodies of their spectators occupy other spaces. Indeed, both plays are labyrinths through which participants must make their own way, using mainly their vision, but also hearing, touch and proprioception. Rather than subscribing to the dichotomy of body and mind to appreciate the intellectual immersion into a play, they rather ask their spectators to engage fully in the plays by the means of all their bodily senses. The plays must be appreciated both intellectually and physically to make sense to their spectators. If they are observers coming from the outside, as the term "spectator" suggests, they only observe themselves in the midst of the object-play presented to them. In those theatrical situations, they become participants in an apparatus which they do not know, or control. In *E.U.X*, the participants are invited to experiment and sense the play via Virtual Reality helmets. They enter a virtual world reminiscent of gaming universes, which they can explore by pointing their gaze in any direction and by walking. Indeed, they are pushing a cart (in the virtual world, a wheelchair), which connects their movements and pace to the computer graphics that they see through the helmet. They are surrounded by actors and technicians who monitor their movements and reactions, but who they cannot

see. Their senses are stimulated throughout the play: they are spoken to directly, being addressed by their first name; they are pushed to draw on their own clothes; they are lied down on a table, before they can continue their journey in the galleries where they are virtually walking; they are touched by strangers, etc. It has been remarked about CREW's work that: "in this hybrid experience, the perception of the own body is pushed to the extreme, causing a most confusing corporal awareness" (Vanhoutte and Wynant, 2009). In *Le Bardo*, participants also have to walk through a labyrinth, entering several rooms, each activating different senses. One is entirely dark; another one has an inclined plan on which to walk; on yet another, participants cannot decipher whether the characters are embodied by actors or are mere video projections, etc. Although participants are not delved into a virtual world through VR helmets, *Le Bardo* uses cinematic techniques, such as optical theater and video, to alter the perceived reality. Participants cannot make sense of the reality of their immediate surroundings. Both experiences, heavily drawn on focusing on corporeal awareness, force participants to use their sensations, their sensorium, in order to fully understand the plays. In this type of immersion, participants experience the fiction of the play as a situation to which they are directly confronted and to which they must react, thus transforming it into a real situation, affecting their personal immediate decisions.

### **Perceptions and sensory renegotiations**

The focus on one's body and perceptions, in a play, must open territories and possibilities that are not common in theater where spectators forget about their own bodies. Bergson studied perceptions and attention in relation to memory in *Matter and Memory*. His thesis is here summarized by Crary (2001, 317):

To sketch very briefly, *Matter and Memory* demonstrates that attention always operates on two axes. One is an attentiveness to the flow of external sensations and events while the other is attention to the way in which memories coincide with or diverge from "present" perception.

From this summary, we can induce that participants, during the play, try to match the sensations they are experiencing with ones



they already know, in an attempt of making sense of their surroundings. Being mediated and augmented by the use of immersive technologies, there is a confusion for the spectators as to what pertains to the real and what pertains to the actual. For example, one sees that they are walking on hard tiles when in fact they feel that they are stepping on a carpeted floor. Although relying on their senses, participants are lead to doubt them. From then on in the performance, the spectators remain in a state of uncertainty about what can happen to their own bodies. It can be argued that spectators experiment sensory renegotiation during the play. The disruption of sensations may trigger a re-organization of the information received from sight, sounds, smells and proprioception and create impressions of synaesthesia. It "literally means *co-sensation* and [...] refers to one or more (emotionally) related sensorial qualities" (Wynant, Vanhoutte and Bekaert 2008, p.160). It is often referred to as an intermingling of the senses, a shift in sensorial perception. It comes from the Greek *sunaisthêsis*, *simultaneous perception*. With it, as Frank Popper (2007, p.162) points out: "all sensorial inter-relations are possible".

### **(Im)materiality**

Those discrepancies between various senses, in both plays, open up thresholds between the awareness of the materiality of one's body and the immateriality of the experience. Both aspects are complementary, rather than mutually exclusive. Rooted in the bodies of the participants, the play develops in their imaginations and fantasies. After the event, the memories of the play seem to remain ungraspable, difficult to transmit through words or images, to remember accurately, to live again mentally. A sense of an unattainable real pertains to those plays, as if they had happened at the intersection of the actual, the real and the virtual. They have a dream-like quality, which is not new in the theater, and has been explored, among other plays, in Calderon's *Life is a Dream* or Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Those plays, created before social codes silenced theater audiences, presented characters for whom the boundaries between dream and reality had faded, if not disappeared. The position of the characters on a threshold between two states frees the play from certain conventions, and eases the acceptance of unreality-like events, opening spaces to explore, and leading to happy encounters or disastrous transformations. In *E.U.X*

and *Le Bardo*, no character played by an actor enters liminal spaces in between realities as in those plays. However, the participants themselves are thrown into those spaces, watched by the actors and technicians, who observe their very moves in order to react to them. The state of liminality is also reinforced in *Le Bardo* by its theme. To create this play, the company was inspired Antoine Volodine's book, *Bardo or not Bardo*, which refers to the Tibetan Book of the Dead, the *Bardo Todhöl*. This book accompanies the dead for 49 days -each of those days represented scenically in *Le Bardo* by a room through which the spectator must walk- until their reincarnation or escape from its cycle.

### Liminal states

Those states are reminiscent of the state of betwixt-and-between conceptualized by Turner and described by Fischer-Lichte as "the experience of a crisis, [which] is primarily realized as a physical transformation, in other words a change to the physiological, energetic, affective and motoric state" (Fischer-Lichte, 2008, p.117). Those changes are the locus of opening new possibilities, of accidents, or, as Julie Sermon reads the work of Eli Commins, as a place for the *kairos* to strike:

Ce temps qui, par opposition au temps mesuré par les horloges et les calendriers (kronos), renvoie à un moment singulier, décisif: celui où le destin frappe, mais aussi, où s'offrent des occasions à saisir, où s'ouvrent des brèches dans lesquelles activement s'engouffrer. (Sermon, 2008).  
*This time which, in opposition to the time measured by clocks and calendars (kronos), refers to a singular, decisive moment: the moment when fate strikes, but also the moment to seize opportunities, when breaches open in which one must actively dive.[Translation mine]*

The *kairos* would suppose the ability from spectators, technicians and artists to seize unplanned opportunities to create something new, thus simultaneously co-creating common territories and living a unique experience. However, although the plays seem to transport the participants into such a state, where transformations are possible and where the actuation of the play seems to stand on

an ever-changing threshold, which is triggered by the reactions of each participants, the plays are also created according to a fixed structure, and the time of the *kairos* soon meets the real constraints of the time allotted to the play. The labyrinthine path of the plays, on one hand, helps the spectators' sense of being lost in space, but on another hand, maintains them on a planned path, and, to a certain extent controls their whereabouts and their movements. In *Le Bardo*, a participant enters the apparatus every seven minutes, and must remain alone at all time. This particular structure leaves no space for unplanned developments which would exceed the allotted seven minutes. A similar structure is found in *E.U.X*, where the structural choreography makes two participants exchange their goggles every twenty minutes. In both play, the timing is tight and the sense of freedom of participation only an illusion.

### Co-construction

If participants have an acute sense of how their bodies react to the plays, how do they, in turn, consider the bodies of the actors who are present in the play? Apparently, the actors do not take on the main roles: the participants do. Are the actors apprehended only by their phenomenal bodies, or are they seen as embodying characters? Which role are the actors playing, and how are those roles perceived by participants who are not only spectators in those plays? Erika Fischer-Lichte has been arguing that postdramatic plays permit to perceive the actors' bodies in their phenomenality, thus creating shifts, moments of betwixt-and-between (Turner 1995, p.95) which actualize the theatrical experience :

The question is what perceptual multistability achieves. [...] Whenever such a shift takes place, there is a rupture, a discontinuity. The order of perception, which the spectators have initially followed, is upset and even destroyed and another one has to be established. (Fischer-Lichte 2008, p.87).

Again, the limits between the actual and the virtual are not clear for the participants, nor are the limits between the real and the fictional. When, as in *Le Bardo*, an actor summons you to forget who you are, and to imagine you become a twig, while gently touching your

neck or your arms, the fiction of the plays matter little and the phenomenal body of the actor who touches the participants takes more importance than his fictional character. What matters is not how the action evolves in the play, but how the relationship between the actors, the visible technicians and the participants are constructed. Those relationships are of proximity, and, if possible, trust. The building of trust between the various individuals who are present in the theatrical event can fail or succeed, but it is this process which collaborates to create a feedback-loop which, in turn, allows chain of reactions to occur, from which the play can develop. In *E.U.X.*, to reinforce the feedback-loop and offer a distanciation from the bodily experience they just had, each former-spectator is invited to stay in the space of the performance to observe an other participant's journey through the play. There, spectators can confront their sensory memories of the play with someone else's experience of the same material. There, they can see that the play, the event, is radically different from one participant to another, depending on their reactions and the amount of trust they manage to build with the actors and technicians. The processes of becomings at play depend on this trust, and on a letting go off control from the part of the participants. Participants and artists present in a those immersive performances deeply influence each other, and therefore influence the performance itself. Deleuze defined processes of becomings as such (2004, p.262-263):

A becoming is not a correspondence between relations. But neither is it a resemblance, an imitation, or, at the limit, an identification. [...] To become is not to progress or regress along a series. Above all, becoming does not occur in the imagination [...]. Finally, becoming is not an evolution, at least not an evolution by descent and filiation. [...] Becoming is always of a different order than filiation. It concerns alliance.

The immersive processes at play in those two experience lead to an alliance between all the participants in the event. Actors and participants influence each other, react to each other and, through the actions that they lead, challenge the course of the play. At each moment, the actors, the participants and the play, by their presence in

the same space, enter processes of becomings. Each participant, by entering the apparatus of the plays and by experiencing his/her own journey, has an impact on the way the actors react, as well as on the future representations. In this sense, the creative process of those plays is never finished, and is reinvented for each performance. Despite a rigid structure, those plays permit the encounter of artists and participants, in a moment of co-creation. Each spectator appropriates the territories they cross in order to get to know them, and by this action redefine those territories.

### Conclusion

It may seem paradoxical to speak of a spectator's journey. Indeed, the spectator, from Latin *spectare*, is the one who watches, who observes, whereas the journey implies the idea of the movement of traveling from one place to another. Yet, the immersive plays we have discussed show us that a spectator can travel through the territories presented by the plays: they explore, experiment, experience through their senses and build relationships with the people they encounter. In a liminal state mixing real and fictional, actual and virtual, the participant – spectators are lead to embrace the play through their bodily sensations, and experience its immaterial impacts on their memories. The immersive, immaterial experience is reminiscent of our contemporary uses of virtual technologies: one can spend a whole day reading, writing, creating, discussing, playing on a computer, turn it off and possess nothing tangible to present to a third party. They experience is similar with those plays: all actions have been carefully planned and monitored, yet the imagination of the participants, triggered by their sensorial perceptions, pertain to the domain of fantasies, of unspoken memories. No caption, visual or audio, could transmit an idea of the experiences lived during the plays. As a consequence, perhaps, the experience of the plays is always ready to be re-lived, re-traversed, to create a new form, to be co-created again. The artists offer their apparatus by presenting the plays, but the plays only exist when they are activated by the actions and reactions of participants who accept to immerse themselves in those worlds. As Russell West-Pavlov states, "This space is not the pre-existing stage upon which human life is played out. [...] The world creates us, as we create it, in relations of reciprocity" (West Pavlov, 2009, p.242).

## References

- Commins, E., 2010. Personal Interview (creating *EUX* and *Breakings*), 21 April.
- Crary, J., 2001. *Suspensions of Perception: Attention, Spectacle and Modern Culture*. Cambridge: the MIT Press.
- Deleuze, G. and Guattari, F., 2004. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. [Translation Brian Massumi] London and New-York: Continuum.
- Fischer-Lichte, E., 2008. Reality and fiction in contemporary theatre, *Theatre Research International*, 33 (1), pp. 84-96.
- Fischer-Lichte, E., 2008. *The Transformative Power of Performance: A New Aesthetics*. [Translation Saskya Jain] Routledge.
- Joris, E., 2008. *EUX* [Company CREW, Belgium] [performance lived 25 April 2008, CNES La Chartreuse de Villeneuve-lès-Avignon].
- Mathieu, J., 2010. *Le Bardo* [Company Haut et Court, France] [performance lived July 14 2010, CNES La Chartreuse de Villeneuve-lès-Avignon].
- Popper, F., 2007. *From Technological to Virtual Art*. Cambridge: The MIT Press.
- Sermon, J., 2010. Entre combinatoire et catastrophe(s): les dramaturgies accidentées d'Eli Commins, *Âgon*. [L'Aléatoire, Dossiers, N°2] [Online]. Available from: ENS LSH. <http://agon.ens-lyon.fr/index.php?id=985> [Accessed 21 December 2011].
- Turner, V., 1995. *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti Structure*. [Second Printing] State University of New Jersey: Aldine Transactions, 1995.
- Vanhoutte, K. and Wynants, N., 2009. Pending presence: negotiating the space inbetween, in: Klaveren, van, R. et al. (eds.) *Space cowboys: how art creates networks and visualises hybrid spaces*. Genk: Media and Design Academy.
- West-Pavlov, R., 2009. *Space in Theory: Kristeva, Foucault, Deleuze*. New-York: Rodopi.
- Wynants, N., Vanhoutte, K. and Bekaert, P., 2008. Being Inside the Image. Heightening the Sense of Presence in a Video Captured Environment through Artistic Means: The Case of CREW. *Presence 2008. Proceedings of the 11<sup>th</sup> Annual International Workshop on Presence*. [Padova, 16-18 October] pp. 157-162.

## Travelling Sociability

### The Mobile Library

**Pirkko Raudaskoski**

*Professor MSO ved Institut for Kommunikation ved Aalborg Universitet. Er aktiv inden for en række forskningsområder. Leder af Mattering: Material-Discursive Practices – gruppen, og er kontaktperson på AAU angående forskning om SenhjernesgadeCenter Nord. Med sine tværfaglige forskningsinteresser er hun associeret medlem af fx AAU centre: Discourses in Transition, Kvalitative Studier, Mobility and Urban Studies.*

**Thessa Jensen**

*Ph.d. og lektor ved Institut for Kommunikation ved Aalborg Universitet, medlem af forskningsgruppen MÆRKK (Markedskommunikation og Æstetik, Reception i f.t. Kognition og Kultur), Center for Interaktiv Digitale Medier, og Værdibaseret forbrug.*

#### Introduction

The Danish mobile library as a concrete place in a material vehicle has changed remarkably throughout the years. Used at the beginning just as transportation from point A (main library) to point B (small villages in the countryside), nowadays the buses and even trucks are not merely bringing books to people. The modern mobile library is a place for sociability. At the stops of the library route people meet, discussing books and other materials: The bus or truck itself has changed from just being a transportation unit to a place for rest, tranquility, immersion and information. The material setup is meant to create an atmosphere and not merely offer a moving shelter for books. Mobility means connecting between spaces but with the mobile library the place itself (the room) is moved from one place to another, carrying the same artefacts into a different, yet similar setting.

In this article we define mobility as the possibility to move artefacts, people, and encounters to different locations, thus creating new kinds of relationships and meaning. The aim of our article is to be part of the “critical engagement in and through mobilities studies” in which “researchers are making a difference to the ways in which (im)mobilities are conceived of, in research, design and areas of public policy” (Büscher et al. 2011: 14). We want to con-

centrate on relationships when we explore how the librarians in a mobile library constitute their newly learnt ways of relating better to young library goers. It seems to be clear from the mobility literature we have studied that empirical studies are necessary. Mobility studies clearly belong to the recent practice and even material turn (e.g. Adey 2010, Büscher et al. 2011), but the discussions often stay at a theoretical level. Sometimes the theoretical discussion is illustrated with historical or other examples and stories (e.g. Urry 2007) or spiced up with private memories of mobility (e.g. Jensen 2006). In order to ground the practice/material turn even more to the everyday life, we join those mobility researchers who use ethnography, especially observations (cp. several articles in Büscher et al. 2011), and to our case, the Randers Mobile Library. As far as we know, mobile libraries have not been a focus in this detail in mobility research, nor in ethnography. When examining “mobile” we are not going to follow the mobile library on the road, but, instead, focus on what is going on at the stops of its route – as we deem those as sites of “crucial action” (Scollon & Scollon 2004): The purpose of the mobile library is to stop en route for citizens to visit. And not just to visit, but to dwell. So, the mobile library aims at immobility (cp. Adey 2007 about airports as places for immobility for people on the move). As libraries are meant to be the emblem of democracy in providing free access to information, we will take democracy as a concept with us when zooming into the affordances of the mobile library as a place for good relationship making. We find these theoretical aspects about mobile libraries as an interesting background when we take a closer analysis of actual encounters.

### The case

In Randers, Denmark, as almost everywhere else, libraries are part of state infrastructure and offer a free service to citizens. Our case consists of interviews and observations in Randers library that came from a development project during which some librarians also produced videos of their own work practices. These videos were collected both on the move and at the main library of Randers, showing differences and similarities between the mobile library and the stationary central library.



For the present article, we focus on the mobile libraries in Randers. A new Finnish-built mobile library was taken into use in January 2009. In a press release, the words that also appear on the bus, *Think, Meet, Notice*, are repeated. The rationale is that "the library is the basis for democracy, with free and equal access to information, experiences and knowledge that citizens have to get wherever they live". In the same press release the new design of the mobile library is hailed: "Goodbye to the traditional heavy, dark and closed-up mobile library with loads of book backs; hello to a modern mobile library with light, air, fantasy and book covers" (Press release 19.1.2009, our translations).

The project where the video data comes from is called "Meaningful Relationships" (Andresen 2011). Randers Children's Library has, in cooperation with libraries from the surrounding municipalities, worked to establish better relationships between librarians and children or young people. The focus is on how to develop closeness and how the librarian can become a meaningful part of a child's world. At the same time, the librarians develop certain activity projects that explore further how it is possible to enhance being together with various groups of youngsters and children.

The focus on close and dyadic relations is due to the fact that the libraries' task as mediator of culture and society is seen to be realized in those relations. So, from five to ten libraries around Randers have started a specific project about good communication with clients (a topic which surprisingly is not part of library education in Denmark). The Danish libraries not only have to collect and manage materials and everything that is published in writing. As municipalities and counties are in the process of closing an increasing number of town halls and citizen service stations, libraries have to take upon many of their tasks. Thus it is the librarians' task to help citizens when they, for instance, have to contact the municipality or state via Internet. How much they have to do this kind of work varies from municipality to municipality, depending on how many citizen service stations the municipality in question has shut down (Jensen & Buchhave 2009).

At the same time, the library is one of the last regular free places for children and young people. They can be there without having to fulfil requirements for learning or being somehow disciplined. Progressively more children's libraries allow the borrowers to

play, use mobile phones, and play computer and platform games (Jensen & Buchhave 2009), all this without demanding payment or some kind of educational focus. However, exactly because of this freedom, the library has a good possibility to enhance the kind of learning that comes from knowing the materials. This possibility is often offered in the form of reading or gaming clubs where librarians present books and games to children and encourage them to deepen their knowledge of the various available resource materials.

### Relation to mobility studies

In Adey's (2010) understanding of mobility, Meanings, Politics, Practices and Mediations are central. The new mobile library clearly seems to want to convey new *Meanings*. With meanings Adey wants to emphasize that mobility never is pure movement, but movement is always interpreted in a certain context. A mobile library is always "a visit from the centre", thereby constituting the mobile library stop as part of periphery, both geographically and figuratively (cp. Burke 1992). It seems to be the case that the recent updates of mobile libraries not only want to challenge the presumed lesser status of mobile libraries but they also want to renew the identity of the mobile library goes: It is not just the (maybe poor) elderly, disabled and families with children that have to use the "secondary" mobile services – now anybody should be willing to experience the air and lightness of a mobile library. In the present paper, we want to see what is going on in the mobile library and interpret those, especially how the participants' interpreted the situation, on the basis of close analysis of the video data: Meanings (and contexts) emerge inductively from data.

All libraries, inclusive mobile ones, should be sources of knowledge and information. It is this democratic ideal that makes mobile libraries part of (welfare) *Politics*. As for *Practices*, the mobile libraries are also sites in which there has been an increasing focus on communication with children and youngsters. As mentioned above, the librarians working with children have taken a course on that. The mobile library can be regarded as a *Mediating* part of the main library; the books and other items are always carried on loan from there. The mobile library connects the library to the borrower and for the borrower: Mediation compresses the time to a

scheduled stopping time and the space to a miniature model of the library (cf. Adey 2010: 198); the main library is related to the mobile library as a closest *mooring*, as a relationship that is “solid, static and immobile” (Adey 2010: 20).

Still at this general level, we want to turn to another recent publication on mobility studies (by Büscher et al. 2011) to see how mobile libraries could be placed in relation to what these authors find central for mobility: First of all, with its scheduled appearances, a mobile library is *constitutive of a mobility system* in which people, objects, information and ideas come together. The library itself, the library goers and librarians all *travel* and they all are *temporarily stationary*. One important feature, as stressed by the course on communication just mentioned, is *how* the face-to-face encounters take place between library goers and librarians. In our empirical analysis we explore how the intimate knowledge about the library-goers in a mobile library gets constituted.

The new mobile library in Randers is emulating as best as it can the stationary library buildings. The “what is a library” (as a material environment, as services, and so on) is “copied” / remediated / translated. Though the press release claims that there is “light, air, fantasy and book covers” in the mobile library, it does not claim that there is space – the size will be that of a bus, the visitors have to do their business in a much more cramped space. The mobility of the library also means that the library is open for a considerably shorter time than is the immobile library. We could, in fact, talk about stopping hours (or minutes), rather than opening hours.

In this motile limited space, the library-goers have to be much more disciplined than in the big library. Also, the librarian is “on stage” practically all the time; it is only when travelling to the next stop that he or she can relax away from the gaze of the library customers. It is very hard to avoid encountering a librarian in a mobile library – at least an exchange of greetings takes place –, whereas in a main library they normally have to be approached by the library-goer for a contact.

So, it could be claimed that the democratic ideal of information and services is a bit truncated as there is no time, nor space for immersion, not to speak of any club activities that only take place in the main library. We can, therefore, ask: Is democracy best served by central, static institutions?

### Analytical considerations

In trying to cover relevant aspects of mobility studies, Büscher & al state (2011: 14):

“It is not just about how people make knowledge of the world, but how they physically and socially make the world through the ways they move and mobilise people, objects, information and ideas.”

It is this constitutive approach that we, too, want to turn to now. In other words, we want to go from political statements to the everyday world. How do (or do) so called “big D” (political, media, educational, etc.) discourses like “the library is the basis for democracy, with free and equal access to information, experience and knowledge that citizens have to get wherever they live” relate to what is going on in a mobile library? Is there a connection between the big D press release statement by a politician and what the librarian said one afternoon in a mobile library to a little girl (“I have something for you”)? One way to explore the possible connection between abstract policies and everyday practices is to use nexus analysis (Scollon & Scollon 2004), an ethnographic approach to investigating practices. (Also Ole B. Jensen in his article from 2006 turns to Goffman and Simmel – and the Scollons -- to “connect the global flows to the everyday level of social practice” (2006: 145).) In NA, actions are always social and mediated, they are always executed with mediational means (cultural tools, meaningful elements) and by social actors that have learnt to do the actions in certain ways because of their life history (that is, part of a certain family, culture, institution etc.). So, the focus is on concrete social actions or sites of engagement that are done by people with certain “historical bodies”, certain life experiences; the actions are done in Goffmanian interaction orders (for example, you might be doing something alone, in a “with” or as part of a larger group); and in discourses in place, that is, in concrete material circumstances out of which meaningful elements are lifted up (or ignored) to be able to accomplish an action. The graph in Figure 1 with its discourse cycles (or discourse itineraries) attempts at showing how *any* social practice is at the same time a repetition of something familiar and has a possibility for change.

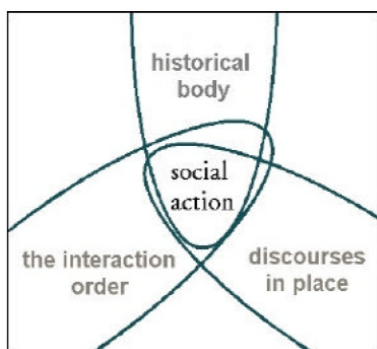


Figure 1. The analytical task of nexus analysis

This focus on here-and-now qualities of the central, immobile phases in the mobile library's route, resonates well with Büscher et al's (2011: 14) point on "how [people] physically and socially make the world through the ways they move and mobilise people, objects, information and ideas." Also, with a mobile library, the cyclic nature of the action is clear. For instance, the scheduled stopping hours also mean that a library-goer collects books not when the library gets them (like in the main library) but when the mobile library arrives next time. In spite of concentrating on the here-and-now, nexus analysis wants to understand how the "big D" societal questions either shape or are shaped by the local accomplishment of action. So, democracy should also be found within them.

We also believe in claims that all movements of people, objects and ideas are transformations. What does change and why in a mobile library? In the following, we shall explore that and use nexus analysis to make sense of our empirical materials. Some materials show *anticipatory* if not *instructive* discourses: What should preferably take place in the library. There are direct quotations from interviews or the videos that one librarian made for the course on better communication skills.

### Analysis

We can start with two types of instructions that seem to be important in the case of Randers: 1) the instruction to think/meet/notice that the mobile library has on the bus itself, and 2) the course that the librarians who work with children and youth have taken on meaningful relationships.

We now turn to finding out more about how these two types of instructions are present in our empirical materials. We will mostly be concentrating on video clips that one librarian has kindly given to us. We can see from most of them that they are staged in the sense that at the beginning the librarian asks the children or young people to restart the action they would be doing anyway, so that he can have it recorded for him. We will present some of the questions nexus analysis recommends.

To find out about the historical bodies, that is, past experiences of the librarians and library goers, we have interviews and other empirical materials to resort to. We know that the librarians have taken the course on meaningful relationships "to create an emotional and

relational basis for growth such that children can enjoy the children's library both as *beings* and as *becomings*" (course website).

So, the participants in the (mobile) library encounters are the librarians taking a course on good communication skills and children (with parents) that are familiar with the practice of visiting libraries. A librarian tells in an interview about a family that would come to the late hour stop with the kids ready for bed – the library is treated almost like an extension to home instead of using it as a "dumping place" for children or as a special library visiting occasion (Roed 2006).

Let us now explore the materials we have about *how* the mobile library and its semiotic aggregates are being used as a meaningful space. From the photo in Figure 2 we can get an idea about the size.

Our first example comes from when a librarian and a youngster are close to each other at the mobile library desk, the height of which is better suited to a child. The boy is following very closely all the professional movements of the librarian who – as part of the course on good communication – is explaining all the time what he is doing. At one point the librarian types on the screen to order a book. The boy monitors him and notices a typo. He points at the screen and says "that is misspelt".

In another encounter with a small girl and her mother (see Figure 2), the librarian explains: "I actually think that I have some (.) fine books with me for you today". The books are not just referred to (e.g. 'here's a nice book') but they are oriented to as being a result of special work and that work is part of the fact that this is a visit ("today", "with me" constituting the 'I'm on a visit' aspect of the mobile library). When the librarian a bit later processes some reserved books at the computer desk, he finds them immediately to his left hand side. However, as he is meant to be explaining all the time what he is doing, he goes "I'll just go and find them". In doing that, the librarian uses ways of talking from the big library, thus showing that he is in ethnomethodological terms "doing being a relational librarian" (something they were taught as part of the course on good communication) that also works in a big library – there is a mismatch between talking and acting.

The bus also has computers to play with and this can cause conflicts of interest as happened between three brothers who ended up having a loud fight (and who apparently demanded the services of



Figure 2. Using mobile library (still from video collected by Jørgen Ledet)

the librarian also in a loud manner). So, the experiences that a little space offers might be of negative kind, too. The librarians have during the course been taught how to have a “difficult conversation” and this indeed does take place. The librarian has the conversation mostly with the eldest of the brothers who is sitting at a computer, but involves another brother who is moving back and forth in the discussion, too. The librarian leans on the computer table, thus coming physically closer to the boy being primarily talked to and maybe also conveying a relaxed but strict atmosphere. He calmly goes through the rules of the game, explaining why there should be 15 minutes slots so that there would not be “shouting in the bus” and also explaining how and when they should call upon a librarian. So, he talks about rules around a computer gadget in the library.

The calm and – also embodiedly – friendly “telling off” seems to work well, and the boy shows his interpretation of it as a dialogue rather than a one-way adult-child interaction. In fact, after the librarian says that it is not OK to shout in the bus or shout after him, the boy repeats “one musn’t shout”. The librarian also mentions the smaller brother as an example of one who cannot wait for the librarian but shouts loudly after him. He states to the boy that “we are going to teach him that [how to behave] don’t you think so”. The librarian seems in fact to have gotten the message through (the boy also nods and acknowledges what he hears with mm’ms). When the librarian makes what he has talked about in the abstract more concrete by saying (and pointing at “here”): “you understand now that when you see that I’m serving down here, then you wait a bit”. After this, he explains, that “it sometimes happens with adults that they forget a bit (Boy: “mm-m”). Then one has to go and say to them it has to happen now, right?” After this the librarian does a typical “closing off”: he lists the main points he has said, and finishes: “so I think it’ll go really well”. The boy agrees and is about to say something (“yes because”) when the librarian overlaps by adding a comment that he wishes the Internet will be there, too. After this he asks the boy if he wants to ask something: “was there something you want to ask about?” The boy, sitting stiff, says “It’s just that children have a better memory than: adults”. The librarian agrees that they do and turns the topic back to library practices and how children sometimes might get ignored if there are adults present.

We went through this episode because it shows how the librarian succeeds in *physically and socially making the world* – this time creating physical and social closeness through certain techniques (and because of the limited space of the bus). The instructions on how to behave are given both in the abstract and in mobilising through pointing at certain places in the bus' interior to exemplify concrete actions. The boy seems to understand the situation as one of learning and even knowledge sharing. Again, like in our first example where the boy was correcting a typo, a young library goer is included and involved to the extent that they start behaving in somehow *equal terms*. What was mentioned maybe as a typical adult way of talking to a child "it sometimes happens that adults forget a bit" (that makes the forgetting understandable, a general feature of adults, or all the librarians instead of, for example saying 'if I seem to have forgotten you, then...'). The boy builds on that and contributes to the discussion with a bit of information "It's just that children have a better memory than: adults". It is a totally unmitigated (and perhaps strange, that is, out of place) and an almost scientific explanation compared to the "child-talk" about sometimes forgetting. However, it shows that the boy is a willing participant in the dialogue – and on equal terms.

Our last example comes from a short encounter with a young woman who returns a book and asks about reserved books. She does that in very general terms "if one has reserved a book". The librarian uses the screen with information about the girl's reservations and quotes the book titles to the girl, pointing at the screen. He is doing a bit extra, reading aloud the titles of the books that she has on loan and the dates they should be returned. One of them is called "You know you love me". The librarian reads the title a bit slower, as if he could not quite make out what it's saying on the screen. There are no other customers visible in the bus. We were wondering whether the teenager would have felt embarrassed should there have been others to listen to the titles of the books she has borrowed. So, the privacy of the borrower can be challenged in the small space of a mobile library.

## Conclusion

We are very humble in our conclusions about looking at these videos and acknowledge that more data analysis is needed. However,



we can start making some tentative claims that counter the idea of big, stable libraries with enormous amounts of materials being necessarily better places for the ideal of democracy and sociability. The mobile library is a *trans-port* – it moves books, ideas, ideologies, librarians through a scheduled route. When stopping, it opens its doors to encounters that are much more intimate than those in the main library: the librarian gets to know the library-goers; the space is cramped so the encounters are fairly immobile, there's more *turning* to than walking to. The children that go to the library not only get to know and find books and other lendables (and the work that goes to them being there), they also get instructions on how to behave.

The aim of many main libraries has become to emulate a living room. In mobile libraries the home-like atmosphere is almost unavoidable: Not only do you know where everybody else is, the kids are taught everyday ethics and norms of how certain library practices should be undertaken. It is in these practices they learn how to “think, meet and notice” – and, most importantly, how fellow citizens should be involved in these activities. The librarian in the videos analysed was taking a course on how to make contact with young people. He seems to be very successful in his ability to engage with the young library goers. The analysis shows that this kind of *affect work* (that respectful attention also could be called) seems to create a feeling of *equality* that could be regarded as big a victory for democracy as having read all the possible standpoints about it (or about anything else for that matter). The big D or democratic ideal is in the little d's of dialogue and doing. So, democracy is not “just about how people make knowledge of the world”, it also is about how to become other-oriented citizens that “physically and socially make the world through the ways they move and mobilise people, objects, information and ideas” (Büscher et al. 2011: 14).

## References

- Adey, Peter (2007) ‘May I have your attention’: Airport geographies of spectatorship, position, and (im)mobility. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 25: 515–536.
- Adey, Peter (2010) *Mobility*. London: Routledge.
- Andresen, Bent B., red. (2011), *Relationer på biblioteket*. Aalborg: Aalborg Universitetsforlag.

- Burke, Peter (1992) *History and Social Theory*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Büscher, Monika, Urry, John & Witchger, Katian (2011) *Mobile Methods*. London: Routledge.
- Jensen, Ole B. (2006) 'Facework', Flow and the City: Simmel, Goffman, and Mobility in the Contemporary City. *Mobilities* 1(2):143–165.
- Jensen, Thessa & Buchhave, Bente (2009), *Fremtidens børnebibliotek i konkret udformning. Rapport om projektet Det (næsten) bogløse børnebibliotek*. Aalborg: Aalborg Bibliotekerne.
- Roed, T. (2006) *Børn bruger biblioteker – hvordan og hvornår*. København: Københavns Kommune.
- Scollon, Ron & Scollon, Suzie (2004) *Nexus analysis*. New York: Routledge.
- Urry, John (2007) *Mobilities*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Websites

Course site: <http://huset.randersbib.dk/course/view.php?id=129>

**akademisk**  
academic quarter

Zalburga Universitet

tidsskrift for humanistisk forskning

**Virtual journeys –  
– digital journeys –  
journeys on the internet**

## Why walk when you can teleport?

Themes of travel in online roleplaying games

*Nick Webber*

*is Senior Researcher and Research Developer at the Birmingham Centre for Media and Cultural Research, Birmingham City University, UK. He has written on identity, cultural history and the relationship of technology and culture, and his current research includes popular music consumption, on-line archiving and civic history, and the culture of massively multiplayer online games.*

### Abstract

Travel constitutes a significant activity in the majority of Massively Multiplayer Online Roleplaying Games (MMORPGs), whether players are pursuing quests, trading, adventuring or simply exploring. Yet not all journeys are equal, and the roles of, and responses to, various journeys demonstrate a number of interesting interpretations of travel. From one perspective, journeys in games are simply consumers of time: notably, *World of Warcraft* obtained the nickname “World of Walking” due to player perceptions that there was too much travel involved. Yet it is intriguing that some players voluntarily undertake extensive journeys, which are often difficult (in gameplay terms) and time-consuming, when more convenient routes are available. This article seeks to consider the many roles of travel in MMORPGs, and to reflect on ideas of the journey as, among other things, labour (*travail*), a rite of passage, and a means of saying goodbye.

### Article

Although the players themselves remain firmly in their seats, travel, and the journeys that are made, are significant activities within Massively Multiplayer Online Roleplaying Games (MMORPGs). Aspects of game-driven play which incorporate travel, such as quest-

ing and trading, are supplemented by player-driven journeys, to explore perhaps, or to visit a favourite location. Scholars have noted that 3D environments (which MMORPGs typically are) place an emphasis on movement through the world, prompting more travel than in 2D environments (Book, 2003, p. 4). Yet in the variety of journeys, and in the discourses that surround them, we can see that the players of these games interpret and make meaning from travel in a number of different and sometimes contradictory ways. Travel in MMORPGs serves a number of purposes, therefore, and this article will investigate and consider different kinds of travel, attempting to understand what, for players, travel means.

A study of these interpretations and meanings contributes to a number of discussions and developments. Firstly, the investigation informs (and is informed by) debates about social roles in games and about the relationship (or lack thereof) between games and narrative structures. Secondly, a clearer understanding of player activities in game spaces provides information useful to game providers in creating fulfilling environments for their players and in accommodating a variety of approaches to play. Finally, and in more general terms, examining online games adds to the corpus of information about online spaces which, while increasingly widely studied, are still relatively poorly understood, particularly in the context of the relationship between online and offline behaviour.

The academic debates which contextualise this work focus on attempts to understand the practices of gamers, and the extent to which games can be thought of as texts containing narrative structures. Both areas of inquiry feature strong analytical structures, which are valuable tools when they are allowed to inform, but not to construct, our research. When considering the ways in which players approach games, there is a tendency to create typologies; Richard Bartle's seminal 1996 work on player types (refined in 2003) and Nick Yee's model of player motivations (2006) are undoubtedly the most significant. Typologies of gamers are, however, "young" enough to be necessarily incomplete, and Yee has drawn attention to the lack of empirical evidence supporting Bartle's analysis (2007). In terms of narrative, although a lengthy and often antagonistic debate has taken place within and around game studies about the relationship between games and narrative (see, for example, Eskelinen, 2001; Jenkins 2004), this can be broadly set aside (Frasca, 2003).

It has been the site of a great deal of misunderstanding, but has at its heart the common principle that, while games are not stories, notions of narrative (alongside other analytical approaches) can help us to make sense of them. For the purposes of this study, a useful intervention is that of Celia Pearce (2004), who offers a consideration of narrative in a play-centric context. Pearce defines a number of narrative elements which can be found in games; of particular value in understanding game journeys are experiential (the emergent narrative of the play experience), augmentary (backstory and contextual information) and metastory (narrative overlay) elements (Pearce, 2004, p. 145).

Here, then, I set out not to produce another typology, nor to undertake a narrative analysis, but rather to explore the journeys that players make in games as cultural practices, in their own terms. Taking elements from both narrative and typological approaches, I will produce a cultural analysis which might help to refine future work.

We move on, then, to the journeys themselves. When considering the various forms of travel which players undertake, we might make an immediate distinction between two general types: travel driven by the game, and travel driven by the player. Although the outcomes of these forms of travel can ultimately be the same – arrival in the same location, even after travel by the same route and in the same manner – the sense of purpose is significant. In the majority of MMORPGs, game-driven travel is constructed through a mechanism of game objectives. Typically, these are quests, where a character is required to travel either incidentally (to another town to collect a package, for example) or as a more fundamental part of the quest experience (they might have to escort an injured soldier to safety). In addition, many games offer achievements (rewards obtained for completing longer-term, non-quest objectives) and these are sometimes travel-related (to visit every cave system in the game, say). Finally, travel occurs as an aspect of situation: location is important in certain games for particular reasons (e.g. security, access to facilities), prompting travel to these locations from elsewhere.

The notion of a quest as a motivation for travel, and as a way to give travel meaning, is firmly rooted in narrative traditions. Some writers refer to the archetypal heroic quest of Odysseus (Krzywinska, 2008, p. 133), and as the vast majority of these games employ common tropes of fantasy literature (around 85% of MMORPGs are

fantasy games: Van Geel, 2012), we might also note the prevalence of quest narratives there, with Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* being perhaps the best-known of many examples. More broadly, Campbell noted the importance of the monomyth or heroic journey to the structure of myths (2008). Academics in game studies have worked to define quests, suggesting, for example, that they require the player to "move through a landscape in order to fulfil a goal while mastering a series of challenges" (Aarseth, 2004, p. 368). For game players, however, quests are understood in a dual mode: "in both narrative and other, more functional and experiential, terms" (Krzywinska, 2008, p. 133). While quests provide an augmentary or metastory narrative which sets the triggered activity in terms of the game's story-world (Krzywinska, 2008, p. 127), the majority of players engage with the majority of quests, and the journeys they prompt, as a piece of game function which sets clear and simplistic objectives. Indeed, the idea of the heroic journey is so well understood by game players that transitional and expositional sequences can be removed (Jenkins, 2006, p. 120), turning the quest into a shortcut to game activity. For the majority, therefore, quests function in a manner similar to achievements, and both of those are not far from the simple functionality of shopping and banking – the end result (the purchase, the reward) is the objective, and the cultural experience is ignored.

Where the quest, achievement or simple location is the driver, therefore, travel is to a large extent meaningless in these spaces: travel extends the time of the quest, achievement or location activity, but is not integral to it, and the fact that a player may be pushed to explore the game world becomes incidental. This is reflected in player discourse around travel and quests, with *World of Warcraft* for example mocked as a "travel simulator" (e.g. Newlin, 2009) or as "World of Walking" (Rohnalt, 2011). Travel is perceived as work which must be completed in order to obtain a reward, *travail* in the truest sense. We might then think of achievements which celebrate this kind of travel, among other things, as celebrations of the mundane; much like the "gamification" (Castronova, 2011) of life implied in applications like *foursquare*, in which you can unlock badges "for the things you do in the real world" (Foursquare, 2011), achievements "gamify" games, making play activities out of incidental labour. That many of these activities are also repetitious (quests that are repeatable or achievements which scale: kill 10 cultists; kill 100 cultists;

etc.) supports notions of these activities, and the connected journeys, as in pursuit of a work ethic or corporate ideology (Rettberg, 2008). In another locale, we might see such a journey as a commute.

Evidently, the designers of such games understand that travel, beyond first instance exploration, becomes onerous (and it is perhaps intended as such). The worlds in which these games are set are “scaled” such that they are functionally very small. Indeed, players remark on the oddities of world sizes, and extensive discussions take place which attempt to provide accurate measurements of the effective size of these spaces, from the tiny Telara (the world of *Rift*; 4.6 miles long and 5.5 miles wide) to larger spaces such as Norrath (*EverQuest*), which at launch was claimed to cover 350 square miles (Maverick, 2011). In addition, travel speed is relatively swift: most players make their characters run everywhere, and it is possible to cross the entirety of even a mid-sized game world in under an hour of continuous travel. Even so, as characters increase in power (and often, also, as games increase in age), the “blockage” of travel is lifted, and a variety of ways to make journeys shorter become available: mass transit systems, personal transport devices (e.g. mounts), the ability to fly, or the ability to teleport. As one commentator notes, in the context of tourism in *Second Life*, “one distinct advantage of the tourist experience in virtual worlds is that instead of being required to walk to the next sight, one can simply click a link and ‘teleport’ there” (Book, 2003, p. 15). Travel is tedious and a time sink, and long-time players (i.e. established customers) need not trouble themselves with it.

With this instrumental notion of travel in mind, it is therefore striking that a substantial number of players appear to choose to travel for reasons other than those driven by the game. Moreover, many of these players choose to travel slowly, or in a manner which does away with the conveniences accorded to those who adopt more conventional approaches. In general, inconvenient forms of travel offer no tangible gameplay benefit and, in fact, may expose a character to additional risk – travel on foot through a forest full of monsters is rather more dangerous than simply teleporting between cities. So although travel to complete game objectives may ultimately be either onerous or meaningless, these voluntary journeys seem to offer players a way to make meaning of, and through, online travel.



In some regard, the idea that travel becomes easier as one gains power, and as the game ages, indicates that specific journeys, and travel more generally, constitute some form of “rite of passage” for an MMORPG player. The process of levelling a character (increasing their power by gaining experience in battle, etc.) replicates the experience of growing up; as level/age rises, access to increasingly powerful and effective forms of transport becomes available. This raises two important considerations: firstly, that increasing power, and increasing access to transport and to choices of transport, constitutes an increase in independence (and MMORPGs are traditionally relatively dependent games, in that much of the game content requires access to groups of allies); and secondly, that the ability to make a choice about transport gives you the opportunity to use transport as a statement, to choose the harder path.

It is in terms of these considerations that the deliberate undertaking of “perilous” journeys must be set. Before they reach the break points in progression that grant access to high speed or instant travel, players will have passed slowly through small patches of dangerous territory on numerous occasions. Yet to deliberately undertake and successfully complete certain more substantial journeys without access to “easy” forms of transport becomes a badge of pride, and a mechanism to gain respect from other players. At a superficial level, players of high level characters will remark, in public channels, on the presence of a lower level character in a notably dangerous area of the game world. More significantly, players will discuss particular journeys that represent a more concrete and specific rite of passage than the simple “growing up” of increasing levels of power (e.g. Olivetti, 2010, comments p. 4). We might think of these activities in terms of trials or tests, and the completion of such trials provides a topic of discussion and of reminiscence. An example of a journey of this kind could be found in the game *EverQuest*, in the early months of its release. Two of the major cities in the game stood at either side of the game world’s main continent, and the journey between the two was lengthy (taking approximately one hour) and very hazardous at lower level. Yet the trip was considered to be worth making, simply for the experience of so doing. Players would strip characters naked, in order to place all of their belongings in the bank as a protection from loss, before running across the world, attempting to evade lions, bears, griffons and giants. Death on the

journey was commonplace, returning the traveller to their departure point, and successful completion was felt to be a triumph (Ceeb, 1999). And although reattempting the journey a number of times might seem laborious from a distance, this was not simply *travail*. The peril, the nature of risk and trial, and the sense of achievement make this more a matter of *aventure*.

Another important aspect of such journeys is that, unlike reaching maximum level, relatively few people undertake them. Their status, and the status of those who succeed in these “adventures”, indicate that we can see these kinds of travel as cultural practices, as forms of performance and of display which generate cultural capital. A more visual indication of the cultural nature of in-game travel comes from the way in which these games and their players address the notion of appearance. In more modern games, players are able not only to obtain powerful new equipment with a unique look – a staple of MMORPGs – but also to choose to hide this under a “wardrobe” set of equipment which presents a different appearance. In terms of travel, this sartorial attention has two implications. In the first, players will travel to or around cities or other areas of dense player population to display their outfits (Royce, 2011). Yet clothing features can be fairly subtle (especially in the case of small items such as gloves and boots), and a parallel but more ostentatious display comes not from the character’s attire, but from the character’s means of transport.

As noted above, as character power increases, so too does their access to high-speed travel, and many MMORPGs offer a variety of “mounts” or “vehicles”, including some which are hard to obtain. Display of such rare acquisitions will often prompt enquiry or comment from other players, sometimes including outright jealousy. Again a claim to in-game capital, the use of the mount as a form of display calls on tropes of the car in American culture in particular, and in youth culture more generally, which have been explored by scholars (Miller, 2001; Best, 2006). The idea of “cruising” stretches into the online space from post-war America via the medium of modern youth. In some cases, parallels are explicit, with specific mentions of cruising and even the incorporation of a “hot rod” into *World of Warcraft* (Maninscratch, 2010). The fantasy (and thus generally medieval) setting of many of these games also prompts us to think of forms of regal and noble display from his-

torical contexts, conjured in art: Godiva, perhaps, or Napoleon. And certainly, these cultural connections are reflected in the philosophy underlying these games. Jeff Kaplan, the lead designer for *World of Warcraft*, talking on the subject of a new flying mount, noted: “We wanted you to be able to land in front of your friends and be able to show it off like, ‘Hey, dude! Check me out. I’m on a flying mount!’” (Yu & Park, 2006, p. 2). Not only, therefore, do players travel to display themselves and their accrued in-game capital, but the idea of display as an activity in which players will participate is designed into the game.

Touring the city on a high-speed epic mount, however, is not the only way in which travel is used as communication in these spaces. A small group of characters will proceed around the cities far more slowly, moving along at walking pace, a distinct contrast to the tendency noted above for typical characters to run everywhere. Although some new players may have not yet discovered that they *can* run, by choosing to walk, players are generally identifying themselves, through their characters, as roleplayers (Manekineko, 2011, comments 7, 8, 13). Attempting to maintain a patina of “appropriate” behaviour for their avatar, role-players offer a more nuanced consideration of the character’s relationship to the world. They will often walk, noting that people do not normally run everywhere (Sullivan, 2011), and they will take care to avoid collision with other characters. As roleplaying is most usually a social activity, such characters are often found in densely populated areas.

Each of these examples indicates that journeys and the activity of travel play a significant role in these spaces in contributing to, and as forms of, communication. Perilous journeys act as the subject of conversations, between other players or between peers who have undergone the same experiences. Travel for display prompts, again, inter-player communication, but as an activity it communicates in itself – prestige, wealth, in-game achievement. Equally, walking conveys a strong message to other players; in these spaces it is as unusual as running around in a real-world shop or house.

Of course, travel doesn’t only have a communicative function, though, and we can clearly discern instances where travel, and often a specific journey, is not only uncommunicative but actually highly personal. In the broadest sense, this applies to the idea of exploration, where this is not driven by a desire to unlock every

achievement but rather by a desire to see the game world in full. As Bartle's typology suggests (1996), there is a qualitative difference between these two approaches to play, between what he calls the "achiever" and the "explorer". Achievements reflect a character's presence in a number of generalised locations, whereas exploration is much more about a sense of place and location, and about a personal experiential narrative of visitation. For Yee (2006), this is a distinction between achievement and immersion; between an interest in the game and an interest in the gameworld.

The notion of exploration is again underwritten by the structure of many of these games; so much so, indeed, that some scholars have expressed concern that they invoke a frontier mentality, reflecting the legacy of western imperialism and an ideology that a frontier is a boundary of exploitation (Gunkel & Gunkel, 2009). In a crude sense, then, exploration could be seen as participation in a structure in which players are encouraged to kill "the other" and steal their goods, without engagement with a notion of pre-existing culture, co-existence or sustainability. Yet in reality player exploration is much less about conquest and much more a reflection of curiosity – again, in Bartle's terminology, these are "explorers" and not "killers". For these explorers, the frontier is the boundary of what is known to them, and they capture the spirit of real-world explorers in journeying to see what is there "because it's there".

One player activity in particular truly characterises the concept of a personal journey in these game spaces, and that is travel as a form of memory: the goodbye journey. My own first encounter with this practice concerned an *EverQuest* player, heavily involved in a large player community site, who travelled the world and created a series of screenshots to memorialise the space before cancelling his subscription to the game. Sadly, this material is no longer available online, but more modern versions of this practice can be found, even continuing to use *EverQuest* as the source of the memories (e.g. Valcaron, 2010). While a number of players will build slideshows from the screenshots that they have produced during their time playing the game, an interesting activity in itself, there are apparently far fewer players who create deliberate travelogues, although the introduction of the ability to capture in-game activity as video make this simpler than it was historically. In the context of the game, this is not an activity which grants reward, advantage or opportu-

nity, and in that respect this piece of travel is again removed from the framework of *travail*, becoming something altogether more personal. Parallels can be sought and seen in machinima productions chronicling similar last journeys in a narrative mode – *The Monk*, produced in *EverQuest 2*, is one good example (Tan, 2005).

Of course, for us to know about the existence of these more personal practices indicates that they are not wholly personal in nature. While the activity itself is not a piece of communication, the sharing of the activity – whether through a forum or blog post, *Facebook*, or a *YouTube* video – is communicative, so each of these activities provides the substance for a piece of communication. In that these are massively multiplayer games as much as they are online or roleplaying games, in many senses a communicative – a social – context is essential for activities in game to have meaning. It may well be the case that the vast majority of “goodbye” travellers keep their last journeys to themselves, but the fact that some do not indicates that the drive to share and communicate underpins much of what occurs here.

This enquiry only begins to consider how we might usefully understand the relationship between travel practices and the nature of the narratives that players construct in the game. It is not immediately clear whether these experiential narratives are personal narratives or avatar-centric narratives, for example, and thus whether the motivations that underlie travel proceed from a sense of player experience, from a respect for the coherence of the storyworld, or from a combination of the two. In particular, when players memorialise their gameworld, do they do so to remember that place, their avatar in that place, or the experience that they had playing that avatar in that place? As always, therefore, there is more work to be done here.

We must also reflect on the differences between these communicative forms of travel and the travel as work / *travail* discussed at the start of this article. Considering these practices in terms of gamer typologies, it is clear that the different kinds of travel – the different purposes – can be more easily understood in terms of these frameworks. As noted, the simple initial division into game-driven and player-driven travel in many ways reflects Bartle’s achievers and explorers. Yet a reflection upon Yee’s model suggests that, while recognising that a great deal of travel is motivated by achievement, many journeys are driven not only by immersion (the area of Yee’s

model which incorporates discovery and exploration) but also by social factors. This offers support for Yee's proposition that player types might not be independent in the way that Bartle suggests (Yee, 2006, p. 772), and implies that player motivations are more complicated than our current typologies allow.

Evidently, although these games support notions of exploration, travel initially appears as something mundane and unnecessary, this very presentation means that journeys undertaken in spite of this banality are immediately notable – whether the walking of the role-player or the cruising of the flamboyant. Much as in other popular cultural activities, then, players of MMORPGs reappropriate travel, taking it from a work/achievement context and transforming it into an immersive and social tool. Its mundanity and vacancy of meaning allow players to reuse it to communicate with and to other players, and to make meanings anew. Much as cycling in the age of the car or keeping chickens in the age of the supermarket makes a statement of novelty in the context of the background of the world, so travel makes a statement against the background of the game world. In travel in MMORPGs, therefore, we can see a cultural activity of surprising richness.

## References

- Aarseth, E., 2004. Quest Games as Post-Narrative Discourse. In: M-L. Ryan ed. 2004. *Narrative across Media*. Lincoln, NE.: University of Nebraska Press, pp. 361-376.
- Bartle, R., 1996. Hearts, Clubs, Diamonds, Spades: Players Who Suit MUDs. *Journal of Virtual Worlds*, 1(1). [online] Available at: <http://www.mud.co.uk/richard/hclds.htm> [Accessed 30 December 2011].
- Bartle, R., 2003. *Designing Virtual Worlds*. Berkeley, CA.: New Riders.
- Best, A., 2006. *Fast Cars, Cool Rides: The Accelerating World of Youth and their Cars*. New York: NYU Press.
- Book, B., 2003. Traveling Through Cyberspace: Tourism and Photography in Virtual Worlds. *Tourism & Photography: Still Visions - Changing Lives*. Sheffield, UK, 20-23 July 2003. [online] Available at: <http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/Delivery.cfm?abstractid=538182> [Accessed 2 December 2011].

- Campbell, J., 2008. *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Novato, CA.: New World Library.
- Castronova, E., 2011. Gamification. *Terra Nova*, [blog] 30 April. Available at: [http://terranova.blogs.com/terra\\_nova/2011/04/gamification.html](http://terranova.blogs.com/terra_nova/2011/04/gamification.html) [Accessed 29 December 2011].
- Ceeb, 1999. How to get from Qeynos to Freeport. *Ratajik.net*, [guide] 20 April. Available at <http://www.ratajik.net/eq/members/Ceeb/qeynostofreeport.htm> [Accessed 30 December 2011].
- Eskelinen, M., 2001. The Gaming Situation. *Game Studies*, 1(1). [online] Available at: <http://www.gamestudies.org/0101/eskelinen/> [Accessed 28 March 2012].
- Foursquare, 2011. *foursquare*. [online] Available at: <https://foursquare.com> [Accessed 30 December 2011].
- Frasca, G., 2003. Ludologists Love Stories, Too: notes from a debate that never took place. In: M. Copier & J. Raessens eds. 2003. *Level-Up Conference Proceedings*. Utrecht: Utrecht University, pp. 92-99.
- Gunkel, D. J. & Gunkel, A. H., 2009. Terra Nova 2.0 – The New World of MMORPGs. *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 26(2), pp. 104-127.
- Jenkins, H., 2004. Game Design as Narrative Architecture. In: N. Wardrip-Fruin & P. Harrigan eds. 2004. *First Person. New Media as Story, Performance, and Game*. Cambridge, MA.: MIT, pp. 118-130.
- Jenkins, H., 2006. *Convergence Culture*. New York: New York University.
- Krzywinska, T., 2008. World Creation and Lore: *World of Warcraft* as Rich Text. In: H.G. Corneliussen & J.W. Rettberg eds. 2008. *Digital Culture, Play and Identity*. Cambridge, MA.: MIT, pp.123-141.
- Manekineko, 2011. Ideas for making it easier to find roleplayers in game? *Guildwars Guru*, [forum post] 13 September. Available at: <http://www.guildwars2guru.com/forum/ideas-for-making-easier-find-t21885.html> [Accessed 30 December 2011].
- Maninscratch, 2010. WoW Cataclysm Goblin Kezan Cruising. [video online] Available at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kJA7LSJkLIY> [Accessed 30 December 2011].
- Miller, D. ed., 2001. *Car Cultures*. London: Berg.
- MMO.Maverick, 2011. *How large are MMO worlds now REALLY? A comparison in world sizes*. MMORPG.com Discussion Forums [forum post], 4 February. Available at: <http://www.mmorpg.com/discussion2.cfm/thread/306052> [Accessed 30 December 2011].

- Newlin, B., 2009. *W.O.W. = World of Walking*. [online review] Available at: <http://www.amazon.com/review/RM95GV2LVF4C6> [Accessed 30 December 2011].
- Olivetti, J., 2010. The Daily Grind: What's your most memorable MMO rite of passage? *Massively* [blog post], 28 August. Available at: <http://massively.joystiq.com/2010/08/28/the-daily-grind-rites-of-passage/> [Accessed 30 December 2011].
- Pearce, C., 2004. Towards a Game Theory of Game. In: N. Wardrip-Fruin & P. Harrigan eds. 2004. *First Person. New Media as Story, Performance, and Game*. Cambridge, MA.: MIT, pp. 143-153.
- Rettberg, S., 2008. Corporate Ideology in *World of Warcraft*. In: H.G. Corneliussen and J.W. Rettberg eds. 2008. *Digital Culture, Play and Identity*. Cambridge, MA.: MIT, pp.19-38.
- Rohnalt, 2011. *SW:TOR threads and fond memories*. Forums – World of Warcraft, [forum post] 29 November. Available at: <http://us.battle.net/wow/en/forum/topic/3595348419> [Accessed 30 December 2011].
- Royce, B., 2011. Do you banksit? *Massively*, [blog] 14 November. Available at: <http://massively.joystiq.com/2011/11/14/the-daily-grind-do-you-banksit/> [Accessed 30 December 2011].
- Sullivan, 2011. Mythbusting RP. ((RP)) *Made Simple*. [guide] Available at: <http://rpmadesimple.com/the-rp-survival-guide/mythbusting-rp/> [Accessed 30 December 2011].
- Tan, P., 2005. *The Monk*. [video online] Available at: [http://www.archive.org/details/EQ2\\_The\\_Monk](http://www.archive.org/details/EQ2_The_Monk) [Accessed 30 December 2011].
- Valcaron, 2010. *Sight-seeing Neriak one last time*. [video online] Available at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8YbSmkWFQJA> [Accessed 30 December 2011].
- Van Geel, I., 2012. Market Share by Genre. *MMOData.net*. [blog] Available at <http://mmodata.net/>, with chart at <http://users.telenet.be/mmodata/Charts/genre.png> [Accessed 29 March 2012].
- Yee, N., 2006. Motivations of Play in Online Games. *Journal of CyberPsychology and Behaviour*, 9, pp. 772-775.
- Yu, J. & Park, A., 2006. World of Warcraft: The Burning Crusade Q&A. *GamespotUK* [interview], 18 May. Available at: <http://uk.gamespot.com/pc/rpg/world-of-warcraft-the-burning->



[crusade/news/6151428/world-of-warcraft-the-burning-crusade-qanda](http://crusade/news/6151428/world-of-warcraft-the-burning-crusade-qanda) [Accessed 30 December 2011].



## En opdagelsesrejse ud i de sociale medier

I sporene på Sherlock

**Thessa Jensen**

*Ph.d. og lektor ved Institut for Kommunikation ved Aalborg Universitet, medlem af forskningsgruppen MÆRKK (Markedskommunikation og Æstetik, Reception i f.t. Kognition og Kultur), Center for Interaktiv Digitale Medier, og Værdibaseret forbrug.. Universitet.*

**Peter Vistisen**

*Studieadjunkt ved Institut for Kommunikation ved Aalborg Universitet. Er uddannet som Cand.it. indenfor Interaktive Digitale Medier, med forskningsinteresser inden for strategisk digital design. Er generelt optaget af de nye digitale mediers potential og samspil mellem medier, maskiner og mennesker i en samfundsmæssig kontekst.*

### Abstrakt

I denne artikel gøres et forsøg på at kortlægge, hvordan en tv-serie spreder sig i de sociale medier. Med udgangspunkt i opdagelsesrejsen som metafor og virtuel etnografi som metode tages BBCs modernisering af Sherlock Holmes historien i serien "Sherlock" som bagvedliggende interesse for at starte rejsen. Formålet er at undersøge, hvordan sociale medier medierer mening, betydning og nyt indhold i forhold til tv-serien. Rejsen er til tider overraskende og bevæger sig fra mere velkendte områder ud i mindre kendte, altid med det formål at beskrive, forstå og fortolke de bevæggrunde, mennesker har med at bruge tid og energi på at udvide tv-seriens univers med egne produktioner og give feedback til andre menneskers deltagelse i samme.

### En opdagelsesrejse med etnografien i rygsækken

Den opdagelsesrejse, som denne artikel vil beskrive, vil tage læseren ud i de sociale mediers verden. Sociale medier defineres som netbaserede services, der giver mennesket mulighed for at

1. Konstruere en offentlig eller halvoffentlig profil indenfor et afgrænset system
2. Formulere en liste over profiler, som mennesket har en relation til

3. Se og gennemgå deres og andres lister over relationer indenfor systemet (efter Boyd og Ellison, 2007:2)

Den rejse, som læseren her begiver sig ud på, kan ses som en etnografisk undersøgelse af et indhold, som mennesker skaber nye relationer igennem. Delvis kan rejsen sammenlignes med den etnografiske beskrivelse af en bestemt begivenhed, som Bateson (1958) beskriver i bogen "Naven". Her søger Bateson at forklare de kulturelle bevæggrunde, som får en indfødt indonesisk stamme til at gennemføre Naven ritualet, hvor mænd klæder sig som kvinder og kvinder som mænd. Som Bateson skriver indledningsvist, så kan ritualet se bizart ud for den iagttager, der ikke kender til den kultur og historie, ritualet er udsprunget fra. Den beskrivelse og de informationer, der skal gives, for at kunne forklare ritualet på en meningsfuld måde for udenforstående, kan kun gives, hvis iagttageren bliver en del af kulturen og på denne måde kan sammenholde denne nye med sin gammelkendte. Se forskellene og læg mærke til lighederne - og qua dem forklare, hvad meningen er.

En anden form for etnografisk rejse er blevet foretaget af Campbell (1993). Campbell undersøger, hvordan historien om helten kan genfindes i forskellige kulturer verden over. Modsat Bateson, som tager udgangspunkt i ét ritual hos én gruppe mennesker, tager Campbell udgangspunkt i én historie og undersøger, hvordan denne er blevet påvirket gennem historie og kultur op igennem tiden.

Når der i det følgende tages udgangspunkt i én historie, Sherlock serien fra BBC, kunne det umiddelbart ligne Campbells undersøgelsesmetode. Men spredningen og remedieringen af historien er kun den ene side af artiklens formål. Det andet formål er at se på, hvordan de menneskelige relationer er med til at skabe en kultur og fortælling omkring netop denne tv-serie, som igen kan forklare de menneskelige bevæggrunde, der ligger til grund for at bruge tid, energi og viden til at skabe og formidle nye produkter og ny viden uden at få materielle goder i bytte.

Den anvendte metode til at klarlægge eller blot beskrive nogle af de sociale medier, der gør sig gældende på internettet i dag (anno 2012), kaldes virtuel etnografi og tager sit udgangspunkt i Hines (2003) og Boyd (2008). Virtuel etnografi er kendetegnet ved, at de mennesker, der iagttages, og de rum, som skal undersøges, ikke er fysiske enheder. Ligeledes kan iagttageren vælge at være fuldstæn-

dig anonym og usynlig på nogle sociale medier, mens det andre steder er nødvendigt at have en profil og give sig tilkende som follower for at kunne blive en del af fællesskabet, der skal undersøges.

For at kunne forstå de mennesker, der vælger at blive en skabende del af de sociale medier, har det til tider været nødvendigt at deltage i skabelsesprocessen. Dette påvirker selvfølgelig undersøgelsen. Ligeledes har det ikke på noget tidspunkt været muligt at skabe et egentligt overblik over, hvad der reelt findes af Sherlock relateret materiale på internettet eller i et givet socialt medie. Det blev hurtigt klart, at væksten inden for brugerskabt materiale og udviklingen af nye medier sker i en hastighed, som gør det problematisk at følge med.

Derfor faldt valget på, at følge med dér, hvor det virkede "interessant". Det vil sige, at rejsen på nettet blev bestemt af, hvorvidt den rejsende følte, at det ene fremfor det andet medie havde noget at byde på. Dette vil svare til at starte en opdagelsesrejse med det formål at lade sig guide af en lyst til se de spændende steder og dykke ned i netop deres historie og kultur, såvel som afdække de semantiske forudsætninger, der foreligger for denne.

I denne artikel skelnes der ikke mellem internettet og de sociale medier som kulturelle artefakter, det vil sige, en enhed, der blev udviklet på grund af en given kultur, eller som et område, hvor kultur i sig selv bliver udviklet (Hine, 2003). Teknologien sætter på nuværende tidspunkt grænserne for udviklingen af relationerne mellem mennesker og dermed for, hvordan en given kultur kan udvikle sig – men teknologien udvikles ligeledes i takt med og nogle gang hurtigere end de behov og ønsker, mennesket har for at kunne kommunikere og skabe relationer. Ligeledes er det selve brugen af teknologien og dermed de sociale medier, der viser, om mennesket kan se en mening med denne form for skabelse af produkter og relationer.

### **Produktsemantikken som forklaring**

Den virtuelle etnografi i den metodiske rygsæk og lysten til at se, hvordan en given tv-serie kan være med til at skabe produkter og relationer, er udgangspunktet for rejsen. Men der er en antagelse om, at forklaringen på nogle af de fænomener, der vil blive iagttaget og opdaget undervejs, vil kunne findes i konceptet omkring produktsemantik, der udlægges som studiet af, hvilke symbolske kvaliteter,

der opstår i designede artefakters interaktion med menneskets kognitive og sociale kontekst. (Krippendorf & Butter, 1984).

Produktsemantikken giver et designorienteret perspektiv, som undersøger, hvordan forskellige udtryksformer giver mening for mennesket, samt giver mulighed for at blive egen producent af videreudviklinger af et artefakts semantik.

Hypotesen er, at tv-seriens fremstilling af en moderne Sherlock Holmes er med til at skabe en eksplicitering af tv-seriens produktsemantik og dermed sætter tærsklen for aktiv participation og producenteren af indhold meget lavt.

### **Ved rejsens begyndelse: en tv-serie**

Sherlock Holmes er med afstand den mest portrætterede litterære figur op igennem film og tv-mediets udvikling (Guinness, 2011). I de seneste år kan de to amerikanske film "Sherlock Holmes" og "Sherlock Holmes 2: A Game of Shadows" nævnes som nytolkninger af figuren, hvor den viktorianske tidsalder udgør baggrundshistorien. Der har gennem tiden været forsøg på at modernisere figuren, bl.a. en mindre tv-serie af Sherlock Holmes, som udspringer under Anden Verdenskrig.

Men BBCs nytolkning i form af "Sherlock" bringer historien ind i den moderne verden med internet, sociale medier og mobiltelefoner. Serien består (anno 2012) af 2 sæsoner med hver 3 afsnit. Hvert afsnit er på halvanden times sendetid. Serien blev sendt i juli og august 2010 på BBC, og er siden blevet solgt, oversat og udsendt i en lang række lande verden over. I januar 2012 bliver anden sæson sendt og tredje sæson forventes filmet i begyndelsen af 2013.

Med seriens modernisering fulgte ligeledes en på nogle områder eksperimenterende optageteknik og anvendelse af mediernes indhold i forhold til selve skuespillet på skærmen. Således vises tekstbeskeder i rummet i form af hvid skrift. Kameraet skal med andre ord ikke zoome ind på en mobiltelefon eller en computerskærm. Publikum kan følge med i, hvad karakteren foretager sig, samtidig med at beskedens indhold vises og på denne måde bliver til en "medspiller" i den givne scene. Ligeledes giver denne brug af rummet mulighed for at lade en karakter optræde uden at det skal ske ved hjælp af en skuespiller. En given tekst meddelelse afsluttes altid med afsenderens initialer. Eksempelvis: "*If inconvenient, come anyway. – SH*" (sms fra Sherlock til John, Study in Pink).

Udover selve den teknologiske og historiske modernisering har serien et andet særkende: manuskriptforfatterne lægger hovedvægten på udviklingen af relationen mellem de to hovedpersoner, Sherlock Holmes og Doktor John Watson. Således er det første afsnit en genfortolkning af den allerførste Sherlock Holmes historie, *A Study in Scarlet* (Conan Doyle, 1998 - oprindeligt 1887), med titlen *A Study in Pink*, hvor de to hovedpersoner møder hinanden for første gang. Relationen mellem de to hovedpersoner har allerede siden de første historier blev skrevet af Conan Doyle været genstand for en række overvejelser med hensyn til personernes seksuelle orientering. Forfatterne bag tv-serien indarbejder denne diskussion bl.a. i en restaurantscene, hvor kæreste-problematikken diskuteres mellem John og Sherlock, som er på fornavn i tv-serien, samt gennem John Watsons gentagne udsagn: "I am not gay" når andre karakterer i serien henryder til, at han måske kunne være netop dette. Med andre ord efterlades publikum med en dobbelttydighed omkring denne relation, samtidig med at den i talesættes, hvorved en åben fortolkning af dette fortælleelements produktsemantik muliggøres. Som det vil vise sig, så åbnes der med dette en ladeport ind i et område for sociale medier, som kan have forholdsvis stor betydning for, at seriens publikum kan holdes interesseret i de kommende afsnit trods de store tidsintervaller, hvormed de vises.

Endelig er der ikke tvivl om, at serien er en Sherlock Holmes fortælling. Forfatterne udtaler således selv, at de bliver nødt til at være tro overfor Conan Doyles oprindelige historier for at moderniseringen kan lade sig gøre og publikum vil acceptere den. Det betyder ikke, at historienes plot og mordgåde overtages uden ændringer, snarere modsat, idet Steven Moffat og Mark Gatiss, hovedforfatterne bag og medproducenter på serien, er kendt for at udvikle overraskende historier – bl.a. til tv-serien *Dr. Who*. Men samspillet mellem de to hovedpersoner, samt måden, gåderne løses på, er trods moderniseringen tro overfor oplægget, ligesom flere af dialogerne næsten ordret er hentet fra Conan Doyles oprindelige tekster.

*"I am lost without my Boswell."* - *Scandal in Bohemia*, Conan Doyle, 1998:120

*"I am lost without my blogger."* - *The Great Game*, 1. sæson, 3. afsnit 2010

### Fra tv-mediet til hjemmesiden

Tv-seriens hovedpersoner har hver især deres egen blog, Sherlocks blog kan findes her: <http://www.thescienceofdeduction.co.uk/>. Umiddelbart er der intet på selve bloggen, der indikerer, at den tilhører en fiktiv person. Henvisningen til BBCs hjemmeside kommer allernederst på begge blogsites under punktet "More information", hvor linket så fører til BBCs hjemmeside for tv-serien. Begge blogs tilfører tv-serien yderligere information. Således beskriver John sine følelser og oplevelser på en mere personlig måde end tv-serien kan vise. Hvad der eksempelvis kun er et skævt smil i tv-serien, udvides via bloggen til en større psykologisk og menneskelig dybde, hvor karaktertræk og relationer ekspliciteres. Ligeledes bliver flere af de cases, som omtales kort i serien, uddybet yderligere på de to blogs. Derudover findes alle de indlæg og oplysninger, som omtales i selve tv-serien, så indholdet hænger sammen med selve seriens indhold og skaber en meningsfuld relation mellem hhv. tv-seriens og web-siderne som platforme.

### En første kortlægning og inddeling

Med udgangspunkt i tentpole begrebet fra Davidson et al. (2010) skal der nu forsøges en kortlægning af, hvordan Sherlock breder sig på internettet. Som forå er der de officielle og institutionelle rammer, som er underlagt den fulde kontrol fra BBCs side af. Indholdet er givet fra BBC og de forfattere, der er på serien. Indholdet er statisk, idet der efter en sæsons afslutning ikke sker nogen opdatering af materialet, før den nye sæson starter igen. Indholdet på BBCs Sherlock hjemmeside bliver opdateret med hensyn til interviews, trailere, eventuelle priser, serien har vundet eller er nomineret til, og deslige. Selve historien bliver ikke videreudviklet.

Udgangspunkt er en model i fire overordnede områder, med tentpolen i midten. I dette tilfælde udgør "Sherlock" serien teltpælen, hvorom de forskellige udtryk, remedieringer og informationer koncentrerer. De fire overordnede områder udgøres af:

*Institution-faktisk*: den faktiske verden, her udtrykt i BBCs hjemmeside, som BBC har fuld kontrol over og som indeholder oplysninger som sendetider, interviews med mere.

*Institution-fiktiv*: den fiktive verden, som BBC har kontrol over. Nemlig de forskellige blogs, som er tilknyttet serien og dermed giver en ekstra dimension i forhold til den oplevede tv-serie.



*Folk-faktisk:* den faktiske verden, som brugerne har kontrol over. Dette er navnligt de fan communities, der er opstået online, såvel som skuespillere og manuskriptforfatteres egne personlige profiler på de sociale medier, hvor der kommunikeres og teases omkring serien, uden direkte henvisning eller kontrol fra BBC.

*Folk-fiktiv:* Området for brugernes operationalisering af produktsemantikken, hvor seriens semantiske vokabular adapteres og modificeres af brugerne til nye brugergenererede produktioner – herunder video-mashups, fanfiction og flash mobs.

Disse fire områder, med tentpolen som samlende instans i midten udspænder det tværmedielle univers, der tilsammen gør Sherlock til et transmedia univers (Jenkins 2011). Vigtigt er det her at pointere, hvordan det ikke bare er tv-serien, dets blogs og forfatterens brug af sociale medier, der udgør det samlede tværmedielle univers, men at det brugerskabte indhold i form af eksempelvis fan communities og fanfiction også er med til optegne det samlede netværk af relationer, mellem Sherlocks tentpole og dets øvrige medieplatforme. Af samme grund indikerer kortlægningen også en hypotese om, at produktsemantikken for det tværmedielle univers ikke er fast, men er i en konstant forhandling mellem det institutionelle og folkestyrede lag.

Med ovenstående kortlægning som udgangspunkt, skal vi nu for alvor starte vores rejse, ved løbende at udfolde modellens indhold, samt relationen mellem de forskellige elementer.

### **Fra hjemmeside til Twitter**

En gennemlæsning af BBCs hjemmeside om Sherlock afslører, at de to hovedforfattere bag serien, Moffat og Gatiss, hver har en Twitterprofil: *@steven\_moffat* og *@Markgatiss*. Så rejsen fortsætter med en undersøgelse af Twitter i forhold til, hvordan Sherlock kan spores derude.

Således findes der:

*@sherlockology*, som er et samarbejde mellem flere Twitterprofiler omkring bl.a. en hjemmeside, der indeholder informationer om, hvor serien filmes henne, hvad skuespillerne er i gang med - og oplysninger omkring Sherlock-universet i det hele taget. Der bliver foretaget interviews med involverede skuespillere, anmeldelser af film og seriens forskellige afsnit. De emner, der tweetes om, har

med den faktiske verden at gøre. Profilen udvider ikke selve historien, men fortæller og informerer om de begivenheder, der finder sted omkring serien.

*@TheDiogenes*, igen et samarbejde mellem flere Twitterprofiler, som især forholder sig analyserende og undersøgende i forhold til de forskellige fortolkninger af Sherlock Holmes historien gennem tidens løb. Hjemmesiden, der er tilknyttet profilen, giver en række oplysninger omkring tilblivelsen af forskellige Sherlock Holmes film, idéerne bag, samt mere nicheprægede fortolkninger, som eksempelvis en Holmes musical.

*@TheDiogenes* havde i 2011 flere fælles arrangementer på Twitter, hvor followers blev opfordret til at deltage i en afstemning om, hvilken Sherlock Holmes tv-film ud af tre mulige, der skulle ses på samme tid på en given dato. Alle interesserede havde en kopi af filmen klar, som så startede på det angivne tidspunkt. Når filmen var i gang, tweetede en eller flere om filmens indhold, baggrund, skuespillerne, producenterne med mere. Med andre ord kunne de, der fulgte med på hashtagget #221b får en række ekstra informationer om filmen, samtidig med, at der kunne diskuteres forskellige emner undervejs. Hashtagget sørgede for, at en follower kan foretage en søgning på dette og på den måde fuldt ud koncentrere sin Twitter tidslinie om netop denne film.

Forskellen mellem de to profiler er, at *@sherlockology* især drives af kvinder, mens *@TheDiogenes* drives af mænd.

### **Tumblr: Reblogging af alverdens brugerskabte materiale**

Hvor Twitter profiler overordnet forholder sig til den fysiske verden og fortæller om oplevelser, events i forbindelse med deres liv, har Tumblr en helt anden vinkel på Sherlock. Her bliver der skabt nyt materiale til selve historien omkring Sherlock. Især tegninger, akvareller, photoshoppede billeder kaldet fanart bliver lagt op på de forskellige blogs og reblogget.

Tumblr virker på en måde som et samlingspunkt for vidt forskellige tilgange til fanfællesskabet omkring Sherlock: udover selve blogindlæggene på Tumblr, bliver der kopieret indlæg, billeder, lyd og videoklip fra andre steder på nettet. Materialet bliver distribue-

ret på en sådan måde, at det kan være svært, at finde originalkilden til det. I modsætning til Twitter arbejder Tumblr ikke med tidsangivelser på de indlæg, der kommer frem i ens tidslinje.

Det er på Tumblr vores rejse begynder at tage en ny drejning: fra et univers, der var præget af fakta omkring Sherlock serien, er vi nu på vej ind i et område, hvor fiktionen tager over. Og ikke nok med det: i løbet af kort tid bliver det tydeligt, at det ikke er Sherlocks deduktioner, der er i højsædet på Tumblr. Det er en meget direkte og tydelig erotisk, til tider pornografisk tone i det materiale, der kommer frem i tidslinjen.

Profilerne på Tumblr virker ved første øjekast noget yngre end på Twitter. Teenagepiger og enkelte drenge ser ud til at udgøre den største del af gruppen, der holder til i Sherlock fanfællesskabet.

Den erotiske del af materialet består især af billeder og tegninger, som viser kys, kram og samlejestillinger mellem hovedpersonerne i serien, Sherlock og John. Ligeledes er der en del materiale, som bearbejder billeder fra selve serien, giver dem nyt indhold og remedierer billederne ind i en anden kontekst. Brugergruppen tager altså seriens kendte vokabular af produktsemantiske aspekter, såsom personernes retorik, deres påklædning mm., og bruger disse til at udvide historieuniverset.

Endelig dukker der noget helt uventet op: udskrifter fra samtaler på web-sitet omegle.com. En såkaldt chat-roulette, hvor to fremmede kan mødes og samtale uden at skulle afsløre deres identitet. Sitet er forholdsvis lille, omkring 25.000 som det maksimale antal brugere samtidig. Men sitet er interessant, fordi det giver os en idé om, hvorfor Sherlock er blevet så populær på nettet. Derfor tager vi en kort afstikker til Omegle.com, for bagefter at vende tilbage til Tumblr.

### **Omegle.com: Talk to Strangers**

Omegle fungerer som samtale forum på tre forskellige måder:

1. Brugerne kan tale sammen to og to gennem video. Omegle finder en partner, som samtalen kan begynde med. Der opfordres fra mediets side til, at man klikker videre, hvis noget i samtalen bliver ubehageligt. Det betyder, at man ikke forpligter sig i selve samtalsituationen til at præsentere sig eller holde samtalen kørende i et bestemt stykke tid. Der er heller ingen nødvendighed for at afslutte samtalen - det kan gøres uden det almindelige "farvel".

2. Brugere kan skrive sammen. Her foregår samtalen via tekst, men ligesom med videochatten er der ingen krav om, at man skal præsentere sig eller afslutte samtalen på en høflig måde.
3. Endelig kan en tredje part skrive et spørgsmål og lade to fremmede skrive sammen om det. Tredjeparten deltager ikke i samtalen, men kan se på, hvordan den udvikler sig. De to fremmede har et spørgsmål, som de kan forholde sig til og som på denne måde kan være med til at gøre den indledende del af samtalen lidt nemmere.

Deltagelsen i denne form for samtale føles grænseoverskridende for os. Efter et par indledende forsøg, lykkedes det at komme ind i universet og det lykkedes endda at skabe samtaler.

Forsøget på at samtale viser, at Omegles samtaler i hovedsagen drejer sig om to ting:

1. Sex i enhver form og afart
2. Sherlock rollespil

I og med flere Omegle samtaler i form af rollespil var dukket op på Tumblr, havde dette givet os en idé om, at der måtte være en del brugere på Omegle, som faktisk benyttede dette medie til rollespil. Det interessante i den forbindelse er, at Sherlock, i kraft den tidligere beskrevne eksplicitte produktsemantik, giver et meget klart bud på, hvordan et sådan skriftligt rollespil kan ske: ved at bruge sms beskederne som en ekstra skuespiller på skærmen, kan publikum overføre denne måde at håndtere mediet på til andre skriftlige medier, som eksempelvis Omegle. Hvis en bruger på Omegle stiller et spørgsmål i stil med: "John, put the kettle on. I'll be home in 5 minutes. - SH", så vil brugere fra Sherlock fanfællesskabet vide, at John er John Watson og SH er Sherlock Holmes. De semantiske mønstre, der giver samtalen en meningsfuld form, findes således ikke direkte i Omegle samtalen, men som intertekstuelle markører til situationer og retoriske stilarter, som er kendt fra BBC serien.

Det betyder, at to fremmede, som kender serien, ikke behøver at forklare eller beskrive, hvilket univers, de er i. Begge vil med det samme kunne tage fat i selve rollespillet. Og den første sætning giver, at den ene af de to sandsynligvis skal spille Sherlock, mens den anden har frit valg.

## **Tumblr og det, at starte en verdensomspændende bevægelse**

Den 15. januar 2012 blev foreløbigt sidste afsnit af Sherlock vist på BBC. The Reichenbach Fall ender med, at Sherlock tilsyneladende begår selvmord, fordi han bliver afsløret som værende en svindler. Den 16. januar 2012 starter bloggen: [believeinsherlock.tumblr.com](http://believeinsherlock.tumblr.com)

På nuværende tidspunkt er bloggen vokset til 116 sider, hvor hver side indeholder mellem 5 og 10 billeder eller tekster, der viser, hvordan folk i den fysiske verden tager udfordringen op og spreder budskabet. Ikke nok med det, så bliver der med jævne mellemrum indkaldt til møder via Tumblr, hvor folk fra storbyer verden over opfordrer til at mødes for at fordele plakater med mere i netop deres storby (eksempler er fra Hamborg og Berlin). Disse møder bliver dokumenteret og lagt ud på nettet forskellige steder. På YouTube er der startet en konkurrence om at lave en video, der viser, hvordan tagget *#believeinsherlock* kan udbredes yderligere eller allerede har bredt sig. Et eksempel på dette kan findes her: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q0mnC3F7h5E>

På Twitter giver en søgning på hashtagget *#believeinsherlock* en ny tweet ca. hver halve time, alt efter om det er i løbet af ugen eller i weekenden.

Vores umiddelbare bud på, hvorfor folk deltager i denne bevægelse er medlemskabet af et fællesskab. Med andre ord er det anerkendelsen fra andre mennesker på de forskellige sociale medier og ikke mindst anerkendelsen fra forfatterne og producenterne bag serien, som giver et skub i denne retning. Anerkendelsen, muligheden for at indgå i en relation med de mennesker, der har grundlagt de historier og karakterer, som folk føler betyder noget for dem, er et af de største ønsker, der driver folk til at bruge tid og energi på at skabe nyt indhold på de sociale medier.

Og med dette er vi ved at rejse ind i en verden, som har eksisteret siden Sherlock Holmes historierne blev skrevet for første gang – og som interessant nok netop havde Sherlock Holmes som et af de første emner for deres interesse: fanfiction, ønsket om at videreudvikle den historie, som publikum er blevet fascineret af.

## **Fanfiction - en kvindesag**

I modsætning til så mange andre steder på nettet og udenfor, så er fanfiction området domineret af kvinder. Og har været det siden

begrebet for alvor fandt indpas i 1970'erne i forbindelse med det kvindelige publikums fascination af forholdet mellem Captain Kirk og Spock, hovedkaraktererne i Star Trek (Woledge, 2006:99). Fanfiction blev på den tid udgivet i små hæfter, som blev sendt til interesserede. Allerede dengang var omdrejningspunktet en form for erotisk intimitet, som Woledge vælger at kalde intimatopia for at adskille indholdet af denne type for fanfiction fra ren pornografi eller erotik. Forholdet mellem to mænd er hovedomdrejningspunkt. Et forhold, der på ingen måde er platonisk, men hvor sex og erotik opstår i forbindelse med den nærhed og fortrolighed, de to karakterer opnår i deres relation.

Mens 1970'ernes fanfiction var hensat til fjerne planeter, andre tidsaldre eller eksotiske kulturer, kan nutidens fanfiction, og især Sherlock fanfiction, boltre sig i nutidens London uden at skulle tage hensyn til det tabubelagte emne om sex mellem to mænd. I selve tv-serien tages emnet op med en vis ironi. Samtidig arbejder serien med den fortrolighed, der opstår gennem mændenes nære venskab og kendskab til hinanden.

Igen viser dette, at tærsklen for at deltage, være co-creator, i denne sammenhæng er uhyre lav. Historien lægger op til, at relationen forklares og uddybes ved at tilbyde en eksplicit produktsemantik, der imidlertid også har tomme felter. I selve tv-serien ser publikum kun glimt af denne relation, publikum skal selv tænke sig til, hvordan forholdet mellem de to mænd er nået til dette stadie. Disse tanker er netop, hvad fanfiction arbejder med. Hvordan en relation udvikles og vedligeholdes. Og Sherlock er ingen undtagelse for dette.

Tages der udgangspunkt i fanfiction.net, der viser en oversigt over de mest populære tv-serier i forhold til antal skrevne indlæg, er Sherlock på en 18. plads (29. marts 2012) med 13.088 indlæg. Tv-serierne, der ligger foran Sherlock har det tilfælles, at de alle har eksisteret i længere tid og består af langt flere afsnit, som eksempelvis Glee på 1. pladsen med 67.262 indlæg. Med andre ord indeholder Sherlock serien noget, som det kvindelige publikum kan forholde sig til (Busse og Hellekson, 2006:17).

### **Ude og hjem igen - Sherlock som eksempel på en tværmediel dynamik**

Rejseberetningen nærmer sig sin afslutning, men skabelsen af nyt materiale og nye måder at bruge de sociale medier på vil fort-

sætte i lang tid fremover. Ovenstående beretning viser, at sociale mediers brug og målgruppe varierer meget fra medie til medie. Omegle er nærmest blevet overtaget af Sherlock-fans, Tumblr huser især de yngre teenagepiger og fanfiction området er i faste kvindehænder.

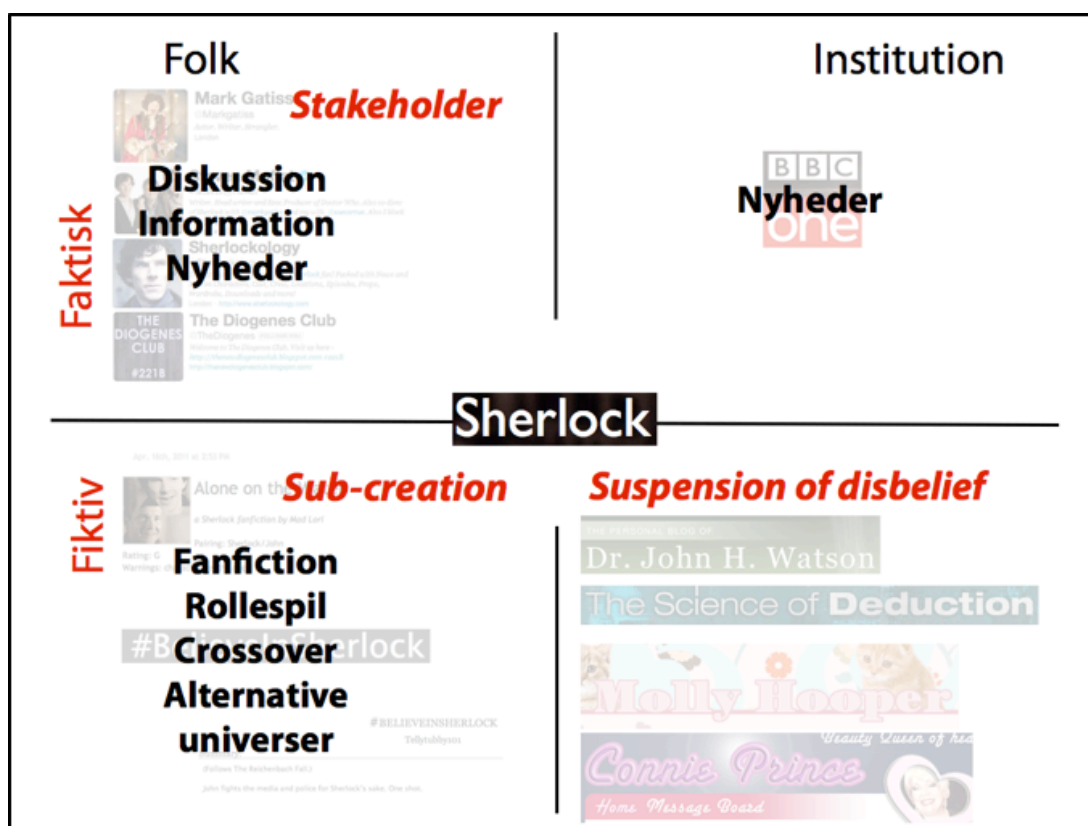
Rejsen viser, at sociale medier byder på et hav af muligheder i forhold til, hvordan mennesker kan engageres og aktiveres gennem internettet. Vi har prøvet på at vise, hvilke mulige forklaringer der ligger bag dette engagement og vil nu afslutte med at udfylde vores gennemgående model med yderligere et forklaringsforslag. Figuren viser, hvordan selve Sherlock historien og de tilknyttede officielle blogs er med til at give publikum en mulighed for at gennemføre "suspension of disbelief" (Coleridge, 1817:174), det vil sige, at publikum vælger at tro på historien og leve sig ind i den. Den retoriske situation, den "overtalelse", der skal finde sted i denne sammenhæng, skabes både gennem selve historiens indhold og form, men ligeledes gennem producentens ethos. Hvis dette ethos er givet og publikum tror på historien, kan indlevelse finde sted.

Og så kunne rejsen og historien slutte her, men som vi har set, sker der i forbindelse med Sherlock en overtagelse af historien og en videre bearbejdelse af den. Ser vi på Tolkiens "subcreation" begreb, kan dette netop bruges til at forklare, hvad der rent faktisk sker i forhold til ændringen fra "publikum" til "co-creator", medskaber. Tolkien påpeger at subcreation går et skridt videre end suspension of disbelief (Tolkien, 1989:45). Sub-creation kræver, at publikum bliver til medskabere af universet. At læseren eller publikum tror så meget på historien, at den overtages og bliver relevant i det daglige liv. Denne forandring kan bl.a. ses i #believeinsherlock bevægelsen, som flytter det fiktive univers ud i det faktiske univers og - gennem fanfiction - tilbage til det fiktive univers. Således har for eksempel profilen Teletubby101 skrevet fanfiction med udgangspunkt i #believeinsherlock (Teletubby101).

Ved at investere sine egne følelser i skabelsen af historier, videoklip, billeder med mere, som tager udgangspunkt i den oprindelige historie, så skabes der en ny retorisk situation: pathos tager over, co-creator bliver følelsesmæssigt engageret og bliver på denne måde en loyal fan af den oprindelige historie.

Ved at investere følelser, tid og energi i skabelsen af egne produkter, kommentering og hjælp til andre folks produktioner, skabes der

den tredje retoriske situation: logos tager over. Produktet bliver vist frem og er med til at skabe yderligere ethos for den oprindelige historie. Og publikum går fra co-creator til stakeholder. Fordi folk er blevet medproducenter, har de nu noget at tabe i forhold til, hvordan historien opfattes af andre. Hvorfor vi igen er tilbage ved ethos situationen: nu vil stakeholderen, som er det oprindelige publikum, overbevise det nye publikum om, at det her er en rigtig god historie. Cirklen er sluttet.



Den endelige opsætning af den tværmedielle kortlægning af Sherlock universet, hvor vi gennem vores rejse kan følge den rejse seerne følger i deres proces ved at acceptere universet på tværs af platforme, mod selv at engagere og involvere sig, for til sidst at stå som stakeholders for universets (og dermed tv-seriens) fortsatte eksistens.



Tv-serien Sherlock har med andre ord en række punkter, som kan forklare en del af fascinationen:

- Tv-seriens eksplicite produktsemantik lægger op til, at tærsklen for tværmediel deltagelse og involvering via internettet er meget lav.
- Producenter og forfatterne er på Twitter og anerkender, når der bruges energi og tid på ovenfor nævnte arrangementer.
- Trods de lange ventetider med hensyn til nye afsnit, har forfatterne været gode til at sende billeder og tekster ud via Twitter og på den måde sørget for, at der er "noget at tale om" og dermed både fastholde interessen og drive fanfællesskabets engagement.

Gennem sine tværmedielle relationers særlige retoriske struktur, anerkender seerne først tv-seriens og dennes semantik ved at give ethos, dernæst involverer seerne sig personligt som co-creators med pathos og endeligt står de side om side med seriens producenter om at være stakeholders for et Sherlock univers, der på tværs af platforme, brugergruppe og involveringsgrader, er blevet udvidet til et stadig voksende og dynamisk mediekulturelt fænomen.

## Referencer

- Bateson, Gregory, 1958, *Naven*, 2. udgave, Stanford, Californien
- Boyd, Danah, og Ellison, Nicole B., 2007, *Social Network Sites: Definition, History, and Scholarship*, i *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 13 (1), Article 11
- Boyd, Danah, 2008, *A Response to Christine Hine*, i *Internet Inquiry Conversations About Method*, Volume: 35, Issue: 1, Publisher: Sage, Pages: 26-32
- Busse, Kristina og Hellekson, Karen, 2006, *Fan Fiction and Fan Communities in the Age of the Internet*, mcfarland, North Carolina
- Campbell, Joseph, 1993, *The Hero With a Thousand Faces*, Fontana Press, London
- Coleridge, Samuel Taylor, 1817, *Biographia Literaria, Or, Biographical Sketches of my Literary Life and Opinions*, e-bog: <http://books.google.dk/books/reader?id=QHdaAAAAMAAJ&hl=da&printsec=frontcover&output=reader&pg=GBS.PP1>

- Conan Doyle, Sir Arthur, 1998, The Original Illustrated 'Strand' Sherlock Holmes, Wordsworth Editions, Hertfordshire
- Davidson, Drew et al., 2010, Cross-Media Communications: An Introduction to the Art of Creating Integrated Media Experiences, ETC Press, Creative Commons
- Guinness World Records 2012, 2011, Bantam Books, New York
- Hine, Christine, 2003, Virtual Ethnography, Sage Publications, London
- Jenkins, Henry, 2011, Transmedia 202 - Further Reflections, Online artikel: [http://henryjenkins.org/2011/08/defining\\_transmedia\\_further\\_re.html](http://henryjenkins.org/2011/08/defining_transmedia_further_re.html)
- Kietzmann, JH, Hermkens K, McCarthy, IP, 2011, Business Horizons, Elsevier
- Krippendorff, Klaus, 1989, On the Essential Contexts of Artifacts or on the Proposition That Design Is Making Sense (Of Things), Design Issues Vol. 5, No. 2 (Spring, 1989), pp. 9-39, MIT Press
- Krippendorff, Klaus, Butter, Reinhardt, 1984, Product Semantics: Exploring the Symbolic Qualities of Form, University of Pennsylvania Scholarly Commons
- Tolkien, J. R. R., 1989, Tree and Leaf, George Allen and Unwin, UK
- Woledge, Elizabeth, 2006, Intimatopia: Genre Intersections Between Slash and the Mainstream, i Karen Hellekson og Kristina Busse, Fan Fiction and Fan Communities in the Age of the Internet, mcfarland, North Carolina

### **Blog og Web-sites:**

- Teletubby101: <http://archiveofourown.org/works/326315>, fanfiction historie baseret på #believeinsherlock
- [www.seismic.com](http://www.seismic.com), Seismic Social Media Management

**akademisk**  
academic quarter

**akademisk**  
tidsskrift for humanistisk forskning

# Spiritual journeys

# Identification-of-self through a yoga-travel-spirit nexus

*Patrick J. Holladay*

*Ph.D. is Assistant Professor at Department of Recreation, Sport and Tourism Management, University of St. Francis, 500 Wilcox St., Joliet, IL 60435*

*Lauren M. Ponder*

*Department of Parks, Recreation & Tourism Management, Clemson University, Clemson, SC, USA.*

## **Abstract**

This article examines a heuristic paradigm of a yoga-spirit-travel nexus and its agency on the identification-of-self. In the ancient Sanskrit yoga means union or yoke. Yoga practice may act as a yoking or linking element between self-identity and spiritual development such that yoga travel may lead to the enhancement of self-identity for the yogi traveler. Conceptually, the practice of yoga acts as a catalyst for travel to partake in foreign yoga experiences. Both during travel and in the travel destination, the engaged spiritual capital via yoga may act as an uplifting transformative agent for identity formation. We conclude that by linking self-identification to a yoga-travel-spirit nexus a foundation of self-enlightenment may emerge.

Spiritual motivation has been noted as a reason for adopting a yoga practice and for yoga travel (Lehto et al. 2006). There seems to be a therapeutic ability of a yoga-place connection (as through a travel destination) to foster spiritual purity (Hoyez, 2007), disrupt the mundane and allow in the 'new' (Lea, 2008). Yoga, and its intimate partner meditation, may allow individuals to achieve self-realization, purification and intrinsic feelings of love (Aggarwal et al. 2008). Yoga landscapes such as Rishikesh, India, Yogaville, USA (the creation of yoga guru Swami Satchidananda), and La Mercy,

South Africa are recognized by some as spiritual places (Hoyez, 2007). Engagement in meaningful travel leading to experiential-intrinsic transformative processes could have positive implications for the development-of-self through a tourism product (Gelter, 2010), which in this example is yoga. A yoga journey may possibly integrate the mind, the body and the spirit (Kelly & Smith, 2009; Smith, 2003) leading to a causatum of values-laden transformation in self (Pritchard et al., 2011).

This article examines the archetype of a yoga-spirit-travel nexus and its agency on the identification-of-self. Consideration is given to whether melding identification-of-self to the evolvement of spirituality through yoga tourism might influence personal dynamics through positively reinforcing reciprocal feedbacks of spirit. This heuristic focuses on the multi-faceted nature of this phenomenon as yogi travelers are transformed by overcoming boundaries of self versus non-self by linking self-identification to spiritual capital through yoga practice and travel.

The descriptions laid out in this article should not be confused with *totality* or a notion of an '*Absolute*' such as outlined in some forms of religion like Buddhism or Hinduism (e.g. Brodd, 2003). Rather, the thoughts here are based on a philosophy of principles expounded upon in Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras*, an ancient treatise on *Raja Yoga* (e.g. Satchidanada, 1990). We suggest that by marrying self-identification to a yoga-travel-spirit nexus a foundation of self-enlightenment may emerge.

## Yoga

Yoga, from the Sanskrit, means union or yoke (Joshi, 1965). Yoga is an ancient form of spiritual self-discipline that promotes enlightenment and ultimately *samhadi*, the end-point of the yoga journey where the consciousness is stilled and energies are fully directed towards an object of attention (Lee, 2004). This induced stillness and direction of energy is about achieving higher awareness, a new state of mind or "mindfulness" (Freidberg, 2009; Langer 1989). This mindfulness may facilitate stronger connections between individuals and place (Langer & Moldoveanu, 2000).

Yoga is guided by eight principles. In Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras*, the eightfold path is described as *ashtanga* (Chatterjee & Datta, 1939) or "eight limbs" (*ashta* = eight, *anga* = limb). This path was developed

to infuse balance between the polarities of strength and compassion within an individual (Chopra & Simon, 2004). In support of the eight limbs are the six branches of yoga (*Raja, Karma, Bhakti, Jnana, Tantra, and Hatha*). While the yogin is encouraged to explore all six branches of yoga, *Raja Yoga* and its goal of *samadhi* is connected most closely to spirituality (Mehta & Mehta, 1990).

The development of *samadhi* is supported by meditative practices within yoga that may help to build the understanding of self (Kabat-Zinn, 2006). Meditation opens clearer understanding of individuals and the world allowing action to be more effective (Combs, 2002). Virtually all forms of meditation lead to a more calm and objective mental, emotional and spiritual poise (e.g. Arambula et al., 2001; Butler et al., 2008; Ditto et al., 2006; Kanojia, 2010; Waelde et al. 2008). Thus, it would seem that the practice of yoga, including meditation, leads in the direction of integral consciousness of identification-of-self (Bose, 2011).

### **Spirituality and travel**

Modern life generates uncertainty such that people seek authentic experiences as a means of revitalizing fragmented personal identity or existential authenticity (Steiner & Reisinger, 2006). It has been suggested that contemporary Western society has come to be defined by a 'spiritual revolution' (Heelas & Woodhead, 2005). There has been a shift in the sacred landscape and a search for spiritual nourishment through the pursuit of a variety of beliefs and practices, such as holism, feng shui, yoga, or New Age (Drury, 2004).

Spirituality often describes what individuals feel to be missing in their lives rather than explicitly defining what is hoped for (Brown 1998). Sharpley & Jepsen (2010, p. 55) stated, "spirituality may be thought of simply as a connection between the self and the 'this world', implying that a spiritual or emotional relationship exists or is sought between people, 'this world' and specific places, such as the countryside, within it." Spiritual travel experiences may promote a healthy state of wellness, oneness and humility (Aggarwal et al. 2008; Smith & Kelly, 2006a; Wilson, 2010). In a case study of Machu Picchu, Peru pilgrims were able to consociate with their creative energies, reconnect with nature and with the sustaining power of the ancient Inca civilization (Raj & Morpeth, 2007). More than simply seeking to gaze at an authentic culture, people or landscape, the

'post-tourist' wants to live an experience (Urry, 1990). These newly developing tourist quests are centered towards self transformation and constitute new ground for spiritual travel experiences.

Since the late 1700s, the Lake District in the United Kingdom has been an area steeped in fascination and seemingly able to deliver physical, mental and spiritual benefits to visitors. A case study of the area found that those who visited were motivated by or achieved spiritual meaning or fulfillment through their visits (Sharpley & Jepsen, 2010). The landscape offered travelers an emotional connection to a greater power and held a sacred meaning that compensated for the increasing spiritual void in urban society.

Prominent in the discussion of the Lake District was the idea of examining one's life in relation to the world around and how spirituality was related directly to nature and the earth (Sharpley & Jepsen, 2010). Either during or as a result of their visit, spirituality was reflected in the interpretation of the feelings they experienced: a sense of oneness and connection to the world, feelings of being part of something bigger and infinite, a sense of a greater power and the appreciation of creation, a sense of timelessness and of scale, euphoria, a feeling of being blessed and a sense of renewal. The Lake District led to a temporary fellowship with other tourists, a sense of 'communitas' bound by common interests and shared experiences, where social status and normal boundaries were disregarded (Digance, 2006).

The idea of tourism as a spiritual journey has been excoagitated by a number of authors (e.g. Olsen, 2006; Sharpley & Jepsen, 2009) sometimes with the spiritual concept under the guise of holistic or wellness tourism (Smith & Kelly, 2006b). Various studies reveal a correlation between the natural environment and a deep sense of belonging, a sense of place, a profound connection with the world and harmonious feelings (e.g. Pritchard, et al., 2011; Ratz et al., 2008; Voigt, et al., 2011). Solitude, silence, time and space are all important factors in spiritual well-being and have been described as life-giving and rejuvenating leading to an increase in human development and spirituality (Heintzman, 2002; 2009).

### **Self-yoga-spirit-travel**

The dualism and wholeness of physical and spiritual space, united in a holistic manner of being in and understanding the world,

seems to have been lost (Lightman, 2005). As Pritchard et al. (2011, p. 18) posited, "Our age is one which denounces love, hope and the transcendental. It is governed by the mundane; it is a time of lovelessness, of 'us' and 'them', of profit and loss, when we cut ourselves off from what makes us human, from our essence. It is a world which nullifies mutually sustaining, nurturing relationships and shuns beauty. Yet, our world does not merely ignore such relationships, it rails against them and so to even talk about them makes us vulnerable."

The practice of yoga is an awakening of the self, to include weaknesses, fears, and limitations as well as strength, courage and beauty (Cope, 1999). Yoga is about experiencing life, while working towards something greater than one's self (Chopra & Simon, 2004; Easwaran, 1985). The journey for the identification-of-self is a complex one as an individual travels from a personal level to that of a transpersonal one by overcoming imagined boundaries to self-identity, thus unifying the mind and spirit with the universe around them (Wilber, 1979). As Wilber (1979, p. 160) stated, "Real spiritual practice is not something we do for twenty minutes a day, for two hours a day, or for six hours a day. It is not something we do once a day in the morning or once a week on Sunday. Spiritual practice is not one activity among other human activities; it is the ground of all human activities, their source and their validation. It is a prior commitment to transcendent truth lived, breathed, intuited, and practiced twenty-four hours a day. To intuit your self is to commit your entire being to the actualization of that self in all beings."

One path for this transformation is self-identification influenced by the interactions of the practice of yoga, the development of spiritual capital or ethical and moral beliefs (Guest, 2007), and the sojourn of travel. As previously mentioned, yoga, from the Sanskrit, means union or yoke (Joshi, 1965). Accordingly, the yoga-spirit-travel model in this article posits that the identification-of-self is connected to the development of spirit, which in turn may be strengthened by travel. This comingling of yoga practice and yoga travel may lead to a unification-of-self for the yogi traveler (Cf. Aggarwal, et al., 2008; Lehto, et al, 2006). The yogi traveler is pushed and pulled (Crompton, 1979; Dann, 1977) by a desire for spiritual development and hope (Pritchard et al., 2011), which begets positive identity-of-self and personal transformation. Yoga tourism signifies a journey of



knowledge and enlightenment merging the physical and spiritual (Kelly & Smith, 2009; Smith, 2003). Through yoga tourism the outer world of experiences may be woven together to create 'narratives' that metaphorically connect desires with understanding and the inner world of the spirit (Graburn, 2002).

### Conclusion

This article acted as a heuristic for considering a yoga-spirit-travel nexus in the identification-of-self. Travel is seen as a means of spiritual fulfilment (Sharpley & Jepson, 2011). The harmonious consumption of a travel landscape may generate positive feedbacks of spirit to a traveller's well-being (Ratz et al., 2008). The ontological notion of travel and tourism as merely hedonistic could be laid to rest (Wilson, 2008). All humans may be seen as spiritual beings and if one views tourism and spirituality as a necessary condition of self then tourism and spirituality appear to be deeply linked (Wilson, 2008).

Wilson (2010) presented an argument that spirituality was the essence of being human and that travel experiences were both life-defining and imbued with one's spirituality. Further, the author argued that all travel was spiritual, which supported work by Cohen (1979), and expanded perspectives on meanings and purpose for life, connectedness, and transcendence. The work of these authors and others on spirituality in tourism (e.g. Mansfeld & McIntosh, 2009), are the beginnings of a conversation about connections within and without the individual and a travel dynamic (Konu & Laukkanen, 2010; Voigt et al. 2011). Yoga practice and the enhancement of spiritual capital may be deeply yoked to the travel experience (Cohen, 1979; Hall, 2003) and the authors of this article support the idea that these concepts be considered as one avenue for the development of self-identity.

### References

- Aggarwal, A. K., Guglani, M., & Goel, R. K. 2008. Spiritual & yoga tourism: a case study on experience of foreign tourists visiting Rishikesh, India. In: *Health, Spiritual and Heritage Tourism. IIML Conference on Tourism in India – Challenges Ahead*. Kozhikode, India. 15-17 May 2008.

- Arambula, P., Peper, E., Kawakami, M., & Gibney, K. H. 2001. The physiological correlates of Kundalini yoga meditation: a study of a yoga master. *Applied Psychophysiology and Biofeedback*, 26, 2, pp. 147-153.
- Berry, W. 1996. *The unsettling of America: culture & agriculture*. Sierra Club Books: San Francisco.
- Bose, B. K. (2011). Mindfulness, meditation and yoga: competition or collaboration? *International Journal of Yoga Therapy*, 21, 15-16.
- Brodd, Jefferey (2003). *World religions*. Saint Mary's Press: Winona.
- Brown, M. (1998). *The spiritual tourist*. Bloomsbury: London.
- Butler, L. D., Waelde, L. C., Hastings, T. A., Chin, X., Symons, B., & Marshall, J. 2008. Meditation with yoga, group therapy with hypnosis, and psychoeducation for long-term depressed mood: a randomized pilot trial. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 64, 7, pp. 806-820.
- Chatterjee, S., & Dhatta, M. D. 1939. *An introduction to Indian philosophy*. University of Calcutta: Calcutta.
- Chopra, D., & Simon, D. 2004. *The seven spiritual laws of yoga. A practical guide to healing body, mind and spirit*. Wiley & Sons, Inc: New Jersey.
- Cohen, E. 1979. A phenomenology of tourism experiences. *Sociology*, 13, 2, 179-201.
- Combs, A. 2002. *Integral conversations*. [online] Available at: <http://www.cejournal.org/downloads/IntegralConversations.pdf> [Accessed 21 August 2011].
- Crompton, J. 1979. Motivations of a pleasure vacation. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 6, pp. 408-424.
- Dann, G. 1977. Anomie, ego-enhancement and tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 4, pp. 184-194.
- Digance, J. (2006). Religious and secular pilgrimage: Journeys redolent with meaning. In D. Timothy & D. Olsen, eds. *Tourism, religion and spiritual Journeys*. Routledge: Abingdon, pp. 36-48.
- Ditto, B., Eclache, M., & Goldman, B. 2006. Short-term autonomic and cardiovascular effects of mindfulness body scan meditation. *Annals of Behavioral Medicine*, 32, 3, pp. 227-234.
- Drury, N. 2004. *The new age: searching for the spiritual self*. Thames & Hudson: London.
- Easwaran, E. (1985). *The bhagavad gita*. Penguin Books: New Dehli.

- Gelter, H. 2010. Total Experience Management – a conceptual model for transformational experiences within tourism. In: *The Nordic Conference on Experience 2008. Research, Education and Practice in Media*. Vaasa, Finland. November 26-28 2008.
- Guest, M. J. 2007. In search of spiritual capital: the spiritual as a cultural resource. In
- K. Flanagan & P. C. Jupp, eds. 2007. *The sociology of spirituality*. Ashgate, Aldershot, pp. 181-200.
- Hall, C. M. 2003. *Introduction to tourism: dimensions and issues 4th ed.* Hospitality Press: Frenchs Forest.
- Heelas, P., & Woodhead, L. 2005. *The spiritual revolution: Why religion is giving way to spirituality*. Blackwell Publishing: Oxford.
- Heintzman, P. 2002. A conceptual model of leisure and spiritual well-being. *Journal of Park and Recreation Administration*, 20, 4, pp. 147-169.
- Heintzman, P. 2009. The spiritual benefits of leisure. *Leisure/Loisir*, 33, 1, pp. 419-445.
- Hoyez, A. C. 2007. The 'world of yoga': the production and reproduction of therapeutic landscapes. *Social Science & Medicine*, 65, pp. 112-124.
- Joshi, K. S. 1965. *Philosophy east and west*. University of Hawaii Press: Honolulu.
- Kabat-Zinn, J. (2006). *Coming to our senses: healing ourselves and the world through mindfulness*. Hyperion: New York.
- Kanojia, A. 2010. Meditation and depression: a novel solution to the burden of mental illness in India. *Resilience: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Science and Humanitarianism*, 1, pp. 77-91.
- Kelly, C., & Smith, M. 2009. Holistic tourism: integrating body, mind, spirit. In R. Bushell & P. J. Sheldon, eds. 2009. *Wellness and tourism: mind, body, spirit, place*. Cognizant Communication Corporation: New York.
- Konu, H., & Laukkanen, T. 2010. Predictors of tourists' wellbeing holiday intentions in Finland. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*, 17, pp. 144-149.
- Langer, E. J. (1989). *Mindfulness*. Addison Wesley: Reading.
- Langer, E. & Moldoveanu, M. (2000). The construct of mindfulness. *Journal of Social Issues*, 56, 1, 1-9.
- Lea, J. (2008). Retreating to nature: rethinking 'therapeutic landscapes'. *Area*, 40, 1, 90-98.

- Lee, G. W. 2004. *The subjective well-being of beginning vs. advanced hatha yoga practitioners*. Ph. D. University of Hawai'i.
- Lehto, X. Y., Brown, S., Chen, Y., & Morrison, A. M. 2006. Yoga tourism as a niche within the wellness tourism market. *Tourism Recreation Research*, 31, 1, 25-35.
- Lightman, A. P. 2005. *A sense of the mysterious: Science and the human spirit*, Pantheon Books: New York.
- Mansfeld, Y., & McIntosh, A. 2009. Wellness through spiritual tourism encounters. In R. Bushell & P. J. Sheldon eds. *Wellness and tourism: mind, body, spirit, place*. Cognizant Communication Corporation: New York.
- Mehta, S., & Mehta, M. 1990. *Yoga the Iyengar way*. Dorling Kindersley Limited: London.
- Olsen, D. 2006. Typologies of spiritual tourists. In: *Tourism: The Spiritual Dimension Conference*, Lincoln, England. 5-7 April 2006.
- Pritchard, A., Morgan, N., & Ateljevic, I. 2011. Hopeful tourism: a new transformative perspective. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 38, 3, pp. 941-963.
- Raj, R., & Morpeth, N. D. (2007). *Religious tourism and pilgrimage festivals management: An international perspective*. CABI: Wallingford.
- Ratz, T., Michalko, G., & Kovacs, B. 2008. The influence of Lake Balaton's tourist milieu on visitors' quality of life. *Tourism*, 56, 2, 127-142.
- Sharpley, R. & Jepsen, D. 2010. Rural tourism: a spiritual experience? *Annals of Tourism Research*, 38, pp. 52-71.
- Smith, B. R. 2007. Body, mind and spirit? Towards an analysis of the practice of yoga. *Body & Society*, 13, 2, pp. 25-46.
- Smith, M. 2003. Holistic holidays: tourism and the reconciliation of body, mind and spirit. *Tourism Recreation Research*, 28, 1, pp. 103-108.
- Smith, M., & Kelly, C. 2006a. Holist tourism: journeys of the self? *Tourism Recreation Research*, 31,1, pp. 15-24.
- Smith, M., & Kelly, C. 2006b. Wellness tourism. *Tourism Recreation Research*, 31, 1, pp. 1-4.
- Urry, J. 1990. *The tourist gaze: leisure and travel in contemporary societies*. Sage Publications: London.
- Voigt, C., Brown, G., & Howat, G. 2011. Wellness tourists: in search of transformation. *Tourism Review*, 66, pp. 16-30.

- Waelde, L. C., Uddo, L. C., Marquett, R., Ropelato, M., Freightman, S., & Pardo, A. 2008. A pilot of meditation for mental health workers following Hurricane Katrina. *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, 21, 5, pp. 497-500.
- Wilber, K. 1979. *No boundary: Eastern and Western approaches to personal growth*. Shambhala: Boulder.
- Wilson, G. B. 2008. Conceptualizing spirituality in the context of tourism. In: *The 2nd International Colloquium on Tourism and Leisure*. Chiang Mai, Thailand. May 5-8 2008.
- Wilson, G. B. 2010. Exploring travel and spirituality: the role of travel in facilitating life purpose and meaning within the lives of individuals. Ph. D. University of Waikato.