

## JOURNEYS, OTHERNESS, EXCHANGES

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**Abstract:** In the current essay the journey is looked at from more angles both as a sacred place, diversity, a momentum of self discovery, a quest into self for the authentic travellers, be it a trip halfway around the world, or sometimes a race to the end of the street. Other and Elsewhere are passage rituals based on travel myths which can provide responses to the malaise of the madding Western society which undervalues and even marginalizes the nomadic tribes, Roma population, refugees, that is real travelers who start their genuine bias-free journey where certainties end. Travel is thus interpreted through the eyes of a tourist writer always on the move, between Bali, the West Indies, the Guyana, Strasbourg, etc; the thoughts below being extracted from the three books on travelling, illustrated at the reference section below.

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It is quite obvious that the journey is not only exotic but also meant to train. It needs to be reminded. Living within and experiencing the world around us, everyone is formed throughout one's life. I think the travel experience opens not only new horizons for us but even more it expands the range of possibilities. Bearing this in mind, it distorts and challenges our perception of the Other and Elsewhere, a projection too often formatted by our society and history, that of winners. Leaving means to make relative what we thought we knew, see with other eyes, and otherwise taste plural flavors that we unearthed from our market world. An authentic trip, whether it be a trip halfway around the world, or sometimes a race to the end of the street is primarily a journey into self. Our desires also fit into a willingness to change the environment, get away or unstitch. They are passage rituals based on travel myths. They also offer a response - an excuse sometimes - to the malaise of the madding Western society (trampling everything on its way).

*"Living together"* incorrectly set within our temperate regions somehow revives when tourists arrive under the coconut trees, therefore under the tropics, not always so sad. But the sometimes even a little rotten, coconut trees continue to make our modern journeys dream on, which sometimes rather circulate than travel. These twenty-first century tourists are desperate to get their share of paradise, even artificial if necessary. Through travel, the Southerners emerge besides policymakers and Northern consumers. The journey is not only a way to rethink the prevailing economic order but also life, the world, politics. The first sentence of my book *Désirs d'Ailleurs / Desires of Elsewhere* - recently released again and updated under the title *Du voyage et des hommes* (2013)/ *Of Travel and Men* (2013) - summarizes the challenges of travel philosophy which, in my opinion, must remain focused on learning of both life and freedom: *"The journey begins where our certainties end"*. Easy to say, harder to live.

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## RETHINKING JOURNEYS

Receptacle of our imagination, the journey is a happy blending mixture, an appeal to the exchange output (production) and if it does not encourage either exchange nor blending, it boils down to a common movement. Connecting point A to point B involves a bare movement not travel or tourism. Admittedly, our landmarks tend to blur lately. Some holidaymakers' difficulty to see the time pass by and be firstly devoted to space reflects the blurring/jamming of maps. Our time with its czars and stars, expels "*the people of travel*", quite badly referred to by our concerns because the term refers precisely - so beautifully - to the mystical road and nomads. If endowed with dreams of freedom, the Europeans enjoy the term, the reality on the terrain does not follow the magic of words, and they obviously do not like it. Much contempt against the incomprehensible jealousy hides behind the refusal of otherness. At the same time, our contemporaries discover the traffic jams on a driving holiday, each wishing to enjoy his poorly paid but well deserved share of elsewhere. Indeed, many of the travel agencies' customers depart occupying the least corners of beaches - domestic or foreign - during the summer festivals period: best seaside fun sit-ins but never political. They move much more than they are traveling, but deception works great, the staff of the agency grow old with a good work ethic not disclosing the swindle, at any time, he will not forget to treat these displaced kind of modern refugees from work placed in holiday camps, who are travelers and even adventurers.

Another example, another place: on the tarmac of Paris-Roissy or Bamako airport, a young French tourist, a bio-ecological solidarity activist, came especially to Mali to support an associative project and visit the countryside with the desire to share few slices of village life among the elderly sages of the community, meets the gaze of a Malian handcuffed family father on the brink of expulsion, for lack of official documents. We are told that it is a "*means of removal*" and not an expulsion.

Inside. At any time and in any place, the undesirable have always been carefully "*removed*" beyond the outskirts of the city, civilization, and shortly, acceptable boundaries for the domesticated right-thinker. Remains a grail-shaped cult book: no doubt that the most read popular required expensive little book, isn't like in the past a little red book or a bible or fashionable koran, or a first aid manual or junior beavers' manual, no, it is the passport. If it is a bestseller that is little known of, this is the one. If reading it, is not necessarily essential or even exciting, its supervision and control are. Traveling without papers has become more difficult nowadays than walking down the street or take the subway bare naked. They are funny samples of our present civilization, at a time when social link is not necessarily synonymous with social networks. Indeed, our accelerated world if not oppressive galore social networks but all online Facebook profiles are but faceless books whose virtual mobility is not matched but in the reflection of the intellectual ambient status quo. Communication has killed meeting, and the "*500 million friends*" considered by your profile, will stare at and intersect on canvas are all potential bulky enemies, capable to deprive you of an illusory freedom overnight or deprive you of freedom itself. Maybe this type of clash tomorrow will be necessary so that the highway can again prevail on the big screen. Grand Dehors vs Grand Dedans.

## TRAVEL AS A SACRED PLACE

The road follows the sinuous contours of a path still in gestation, being drawn, written, traveled, while the screen as flat as it is, announces the gloom of a spicy less life, a life whose last morsels of choice were cut off the to keep only the comfortable and secure aspects promised by commodification. If the route is located in the heart of truant enterprises that holds the test road, routine occupies the daily fixed on the Internet user's docile screen, almost screwed onto his electric chair, and of course subscriber Canal + as well as to the psychiatrist's office nearby. In a sterile world where the slightest risk-taking is part of a rare courage, the freedom of travel is not (anymore) assigned to all. Not because the free traveler would be exceptional, far from it, but because for becoming one, one has to return to the path of fighting for his own emancipation. And there, prospective travelers are much more discreet: in other words, engaging in conversation with

the cousin of the Moroccan Berber grocer around the corner is more disruptive than imagining to participate in yet another edition of a TV show more or less demeaning, sometimes with obvious racist overtones, like the Pékin-Express or Bienvenue dans ma tribu/Welcome to my tribe. The traveler and his shadow as Nietzsche said... well before the advent of television and even recreation.

The journey is nothing without the "*authentic*" meeting it is presumed to produce and, hence, our onlooker debating on the lives of Berbers a doorstep away from him makes even more kilometers in his head and in his heart than the disreputable lord that dreams to spend what was once and finally remains a common cathode-ray tube. The trip is an excuse, a text word for word, an avant la lettre trip as a desire to escape to better advance, so as to return, a more physical than literary act to find a meaning to his existence, a reason to live for not just surviving. Thoughts about action, the step is not clear, and it is so easy to rely on official dealers of exotic dreams - delegating is always leaving - a bit like in the religious field where many of our contemporaries give their blessing to licensed managers of the sacred at other times so well decrypted by Max Weber. The sacred is rarely distant from the act if not the art of travel.

### LEAVING FOR BETTER REMAINING

The desire of foreign tourists to arrive here moderates or deprives our contemporaries' desire to go elsewhere: is this not a proof that one feels well at home first? Why continue to check if life is more beautiful with others if not wanting to reassure? But staying is also a way to reassure, it is meant to validate the failure to discover, play it safe rather than risk. It is coming back to otherwise secure values. Setting out on the road comes back to sow doubt home and even doubt about home. Travel is to seek, consciously or not, answers elsewhere and with others: treachery, marginality, subversion rebellion against the established order are already on the lips of the sedentary who judge hastily the black sheep's leave. Accused of not thinking of others - as he hopes to encounter along the way - and forget his obligations to the employer, the state, the church, the family, etc., this (re) taker of freedoms until then confiscated is in his head. It is likely to be perceived by those around him more as an ego - traveler than a friendly ecotourist. Through the bias of travel, we enjoy while traveling the joys if not the happiness of a newfound freedom. And coming home, it's back to normal life, its customs and habits, a life which is truly sometimes more gloomy than pink and normality returns to the norm or standardization and requires too often to abandon this freedom, temporarily regained the blessed time of the trip ...

The return is actually never simple, the (supposed) 'reality' quickly becomes a liberty killer, not to mention that almost everyone will envy the temporary freedom or the one who dared to defy the "*Great System*" - to use the term and title of a book by Georges Balandier - largely governed by the voluntary consented servitude of our citizens. By dint of being sleepy or doped with anabolic consumerism, the latter are no longer able to get up to walk against the current: yet it is walking and moving - traveling - that you can be up and therefore refuse to live on your knees.

If some tourist journeys can be it, journeys are rarely uniform, they are multiple by essence, they have no need of the One and only derives to the Miscellaneous. The journey is not primarily a great dream factory where constantly begin the plans on the comet and follies to make or remake? This craft factory which combines passion and imagination can be seen now as transformed or converted, under the battering of economic liberalism in the tourism and leisure scheduled industry. But the journey continues to be in our privileged and shaped societies around the concept of work, a break, a pause, in a breath which we need by all means, at the risk of suffocating under the weight of a constantly accumulated stress.

Real experience out of the ordinary which disrupts our habits, an event sometimes conducive to delve us into stories and unknown adventures, the travel and to a lesser extent tourism invites or incites to break with the exhausting monotony of our worn out lifestyles. For some, that's for sure, the journey is the last resort to prevent suicide. For others, more numerous, it is the antidote - with an undeniable placebo effect - not to depress each morning every day of the passing year. Merely leaving, even in vacation time, is often a therapeutic procedure that we agree

with, an act of faith so as to regain faith in oneself. Just for the latter, social security should meditate on the merits of paying valid but already potential patients by putting them on the road rather than paying for their drugs.

Is it not surprising to see the joy of life of Roma people, these so sedentary "*travelers*", yet pursued, hunted down, beaten and expelled at all the crossroads of highways? European governments should consult and hire Roma and other nomads, to help Europeans to rediscover common sense close to their home, the morals away from the putrid morals, briefly the taste of life including that under the constraints or crises, instead, our leaders buttressed behind an eurofortress will enlist, file and police them, as illustrated by the example of French politicians who follow and unfortunately resemble since at least a decade already...

### **FOR PLURAL VOYAGES, FACTORS OF DIVERSITY**

In all its forms, beautiful, rebellious and plural, the journey holds decidedly an inexhaustible source of happiness which our contemporaries should consider if they do not want to fall down too quickly. The disoriented travelers stay for a while, like the "*lost sailors*" by Jean-Claude Izzo, like those long-term in the wake of the late Bernard Giraudeau, create ever more stranded passengers whose confusion has nothing to envy to some illegal travelers, with multiple destinies, who cross over ports, often stranded on sandy beaches or hanging on buoys.

As they say "*the journey shapes the youth*" it is also estimated that the conquest of elsewhere can not do without the quest of oneself. The quest is worth more than the conquest, we can also - and this is a good option - stay at home: for going (elsewhere) or emigrate (leave one's father and country) is not an obligation but a choice, a desire, a need, an escape or a strategy. Rubbing to the world, everyone eventually forms, reforms, and unfortunately sometimes deforms, throughout one's life. Sailors and religious people have understood it: to reveal, in fact, nothing better than to take to the sails. We release the ropes to pass a cape. A cape that you want to be that of good hope of course. The journey has always been a rite. There is no unharmed return of a good, fair or poor journey. Precisely, some people are so distorted by its use or intermediary, and the encounter with oneself can also be disastrous. The use of travel gives way to wear out the world, a world that is not any more similar to the image shaped by the trip. The fault lies with vanity but also with the exotic ... and with our childhood dreams and other colonial or neocolonial fantasies, relayed by a literature too sure of its origins, yesteryear Kiplings to neo-adventurers of the moment, but also from Marco Polo to Tintin ...

That said, the experience of travel opens not only the horizon but also expands the range of possibilities. It cultivates this field irrigating it both elsewhere and otherwise. It challenges our ways of thinking, being and doing. It invites us to undo more than doing so as to do it again tomorrow. It is a great laboratory to introduce other ways: ecological, philosophical, spiritual, economic, political as well. But an undertaken journey is primarily a journey into self. On the one hand, be it that the destination is the corner bistro or Mount Fuji in Japan, the outer journey hides badly the inner journey that underlies it, on the other hand and despite the agreed speech suitable for the tourism industry, it is not the Far that fascinates us but the Elsewhere. The former is usually an excuse to better reach the latter which, moreover, may be very close. If the far is indeed invited to our table and in our street, the elsewhere, continues to fascinate and intrigue, even if it is also just around us, here and now. Elsewhere here and vice versa.

### **WRITING AND JOURNEY, TO BETTER LIVE THE ENCOUNTER**

All travel as an out of the ordinary experience - which may even turn into an extraordinary adventure - is a rich slice of life. Just look at the prolific literature of travelogues cluttering the shelves of some bookstores or households. Newspapers, stories and blogs lately, try to continue the adventure on the field in writing. If the ego is the center of this process, a genuine ritual that gives meaning to seasonal tribulations, the telling of "*his*" journey contributes significantly to perpetuate the spirit of travel in a (re) trivialized routine. The aspiring or experienced journey writers, are they

first travelers or first writers? We remember the famous phrase of Nicolas Bouvier, expert on the subject: *"It is often more profitable to read travelers who write than writers who travel"*. The recurrent debate is still not resolved, some and others settle on their position as they would encamp at the bottom of a volcano to conquer. That he starts writing or plunging into adventure, a traveler is above all concerned not to reduce his mobile condition to the state of a mere journey. If he does not like boundaries, the traveler may, however, be a limited being, sometimes he traces his journey as a guide follows his marked out route, like a rural policeman fences a field. The obsession of the purpose neglects the essential interest of the road. Yet it is by confusing we find the right direction, thanks to the mishap that the adventure keeps its power, and it is also by taking risks that we measure avoided trouble. Fortunately so, the journey enlightens more often than blinds. It lights the way of life of those who until then floundered on cross paths.

That educational journey distorts our view of happiness with the Other and Elsewhere, a too domesticated regard by our society (that of the dominant) and history (that of the winners). Leaving is not necessarily fleeing but refusing to be manipulated by a pre chewed, rigid, unilateral, national and even universal discourse. Leaving initially means preparing to relativize what we thought we knew, seeing with other eyes, seeing so that we later on know better. Coming back more hardened, both more armed and tolerant. Even if the period was very different at the beginning of the twentieth century, Elie Faure wrote: *"I know why I left. To return. This is the most serious among all the reasons that compel us to leave what we love"* With globalization, more than at the time - not so nice as at other times - of Elie Faure, the world of travel has evolved to the point of now leaving as to better return, or to remain *"connected"* day and night at the risk of being rather home - locked in a mental or identity jail or - even when located in the heart of Borneo or of the "9-3" brief in full rainforest or urban jungle. It is precisely there that travel demands and reveals a healthy letting go. A failover occurs suddenly, often critical and insightful: a traumatic/ or therapeutic shock that allows progress to one's own path, and towards others.

Followers of a non- touristic journey - like nomads hunted everywhere - live the world's space more than they occupy it. Space often determines the way of life. And even in the era of mobility, inhabiting helps to better know and accept than moving. A journey that would only imply moving would only interest the "3 Ms" which have so trashed the planet over the past centuries: Missionaries, Military, Merchants ... We no longer travel in 2010 as in the 1850s, 1950s or even in the 1990s: the digital age, the information revolution and that of transportation have changed the situation.

Bouvier, Chatwin or London, and others Kerouac, Theroux or David -Neel , but also Malaurie or Lévi- Strauss, would hardly use the same world habits as at their respective time. The anatomy of wandering as well as the call of the forest - the Bushmen's fate in Africa, the Zo'é of Brazil, the Jarawa of India, the Roma in Europe, the forgotten or hunted Syrians, the undocumented and refugees everywhere, evidence with disgust in every corner of the earth, this ever more confiscated earth by the powerful - illustrating a way of being and thinking into disuse, endangered due to the lack of combatants, by dint of being beaten and fought by the dominant ideology : that of progress, growth, development, short of the destructive economism. The tropics have certainly never been so sad: sad, yes, but especially extinct for certain populations and regions. Tropics all suffering from a cancer which erodes the local before disturbing the global, where, in the surrounding indifference, the tragic intermingles with tragedy permanently.

In this context of general social disintegration where man (re) becomes a wolf to man, the journey prevails forging ahead, in escape, as a mobile territory of refuge. We leave to take refuge, the Chechen pursued by Putin's militia as well as the French employee of France Telecom, who joins his club resort in Tunisia during the vacation-counted time (now as the illusory *"Arab Spring"* has gone out fashion, you can return to the *"Club"* ) ... Each in his own way, trying to survive . It makes you wonder why come to the world for the sole purpose if not to leave too soon? Just born, one is already fighting against a system that doesn't run smoothly, to work best not to leave traces of vacuum of a too brief stay on planet Earth. Under raptors' grievances of the liberal

globalization, the fight for the sole right to exist is complicated as it can be attested, dramatically, by the Albanian babies conceived to serve the global sex industry, or more often the below age Kurdish, Chinese, Malian or Senegalese children, not to mention those Roma who wronged the system by not having a national territory or clear origin and, worse, did not even want one. We have forgotten lately the pioneering work of Gilles Deleuze or Pierre Clastres, yet deterritorialization as the stateless societies are not obsolete ideas, they are now irrigating the new areas of tomorrow, and even sometimes exotic play grounds of tourists in search of better living.

### FOR THE SLOW TRAVEL VERSUS THE FAST TRIP

Slowness, respect, ecology and decay "*naturally*" stand out to the attentive one to be guided by common sense: that of a both green and open journey. Moreover, it is towards the East, with its spirituality and its too notorious unfathomable mysteries that tourists will often seek to move otherwise. It gives meaning to their lives, to their on-site nomadic marches and their political moves back home. Any real journey is first an intimate and inner journey.

A genuine austerity and forms of voluntary simplicity are essential to expect to access the essential. To deprive oneself to cut down but not to be ripped off ... Walking is definitely the best option to achieve this state of levitation and healing, of meditation and return to self too. In a philosophical essay on walking, Frédéric Gros points out that walking is not only a sport but above all "*it is to be outside*". In every sense of the word. Especially on foot or not, it is essential to prefer the essential to the urgency and being to having or seeming, to seek balance instead of control.

At a time when zapping turns out as a survival if not virtue model, the journey - not tourism, does not appeal to licensed investigators who occupy the space of geographical research and so susceptible to the lure of tourist liberalism - appears as one of the last opportunities where we can have appointments with others as with yourself. In this sense, the journey is the ultimate antidote to dehumanization, mercantilism or diving in the all-virtual, which monopolizes the sedentary of everywhere. Despite a fashion - necessarily seasonal - which dedicates all virtues to ethics, one perceives that in the broad area of leisure mobility, especially when it comes to masses and beaches, a high persistence of "*ticks*" of a much desired ethical tourism, like green capitalism and its greenwashing trend. Ethics and rubbish somehow.

Here and there, the journey represents a radical but constructive way - without forgetting that before building, it is important to deconstruct - to rethink life, the world, politics. Decay, with autonomy and nomadism (and a fortiori the self-nomadism) have things to discuss as well as to mix with the journey. The fruits of these interactions and connections will give birth to other forms of innovative and alternative mobility, for which the preservation of human, cultural and natural environments will be respected and valued ... much more than through the arranged speech of tour operators and other official tourism bodies. But it will take political courage: a rare commodity in this era of bad weather ... Even if a real global warming in the political sphere is not completely excluded. In the meantime, a new type of migrant-travelers arise: the politically exiled, economic migrants, climate survivors, nuclear refugees, etc. It is not surprising, in this new context, that the last privileged tourists go in search of luxurious secluded islands of the world (but they are rare) and are moving toward original "*products*" where the term elite retains all its sense: weekend ski in Dubai or better space tourism to go and observe the earth from far away ... Is this not a confusing admission that future seems bleak on the blue planet? And for the destitute migrant as for the wealthy tourist capable of anything, the grass is always greener on the neighbor's lawn. Except that for the two, the "*neighbor*" is not the same ...

More down to earth, the journey is it not more than a deferment on a planet infested with (rather quickly) so-called social networks but also equally and largely devoted to a company of unprecedented disneylandization? Standardization and globalization perform both a tough battle for coastal and cultural sites of the world, sometimes without even inviting to this struggle the indigenous encouraged to stay in their place. Or in their role of rather passive than active onlookers. Tourism, as a temporary or seasonal recreational activity, has returned in your lives

delivered to work, play spaces, dream return to childhood but also war images. Tourism has long been perceived - and continues to be - as a temporary liberation. Get free time from work, go for a moment to the beach, enjoy family finally reunited rather than colleagues and boss. In this sense, the souvenir industry allowed to extend the holiday once returned to the factory or business company. Similarly, the fact of returning tanned back at one's place of work or a family reunion attested effectively the holiday summer travel in general. And the tanned skin undertook as a tattoo or an (enough) sustainable souvenir attached to the skin. Over time and with the increase in paid leave, the cult of the body will gradually be replaced by a genuine culture of the body. The history of mobility, in turn, is a reflection of our relationship with the world, with others as with ourselves. The double fantasy now very popular in the West is to be both tourist at home and native to the other's home. A ubiquitous difficult gift to achieve when we should not forget to live. And still be standing because it is, at all costs, refusing to live on your knees.

To finish and continue discussions started here on the meaning of our seasonal holiday travels, we should meditate on these words of Bernard Giraudeau reminding us the essential: "*A journey is a springboard to the imagination that feeds each of us, and not only offers us the unexpected of others, but also of oneself*". A self that always aims to become "*other*" but never to become "*the Other*". Merge without merging. This is just the challenge we must address ourselves to really succeed to pass the cape of good hope - hope makes us live they say! - or surpass the storms - because our time is more tumultuous than ever ... This "*self-nomade*" option conducive to an authentic "*live better together*" ultimately rests on three key words here briefly decrypted in this article: travel, otherness, exchanges.

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