

DICHOTOMY IN MULTICULTURAL TRAVEL: OVERVIEW FROM EARLY TIMES TO THE PRESENT

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ABSTRACT

As an ancient practice, travel is an inalienable aspect of human existence. Once cumbersome, costly, and perilous, now it is executed with ease and the defining feature of globalism. Since ubiquitous in the real and fictional world, travel has sparked philosophers, scholars, poets, scholars, and travel writers to comment on it. Their views are either positive or negative. In this regard, the current article strives to bring into light its dichotomous picture from early times to the present. The present article consists of three parts—the first part, which is the introduction, presents the definition along with the different types of travel. The second section will demonstrate the writers' critical perspective on the act of traveling. The last part will highlight their favorable attitude towards it. In the end, it will conclude that travel has been assaulted when it is dovetailed with immorality and inhuman objects, while glorified when it serves humans when undertaken without ulterior motives.

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ARTICLE INFO

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received:
7 January 2020
Accepted:
5 April 2020
Available online:
20 April 2020

KEYWORDS

Etymology, multicultural
travel, globalism,
Inhuman objects, human

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Introduction

Etymologically, 'travel' is the variety of travail, meaning oppressive toil and pain both mentally and bodily, (Chatwin, 215). By definition, it means movement in space. This displacement is negotiation at best and confrontation at worst with the alterity or travelees (Thompson 9). For Paul Fussell, travel is not just mobility, negotiation, and hostility, but the quest for the anomaly (167). Scholars of travel have distinguished different types of travel.

Jean-Didier Urbain differentiates between exotic and endotic journey. The former involves leaving the banal and tedious life of the everyday for distant loci. In contrast, the latter means to remain close by and travel within familiar surroundings (Cronin *Between Languages* 297).

By the same token, Michael Cronin, in his book: *Across the Lines: Travel, Language, Translation*, sets up a distinction between two paradigms of travel: horizontal and vertical. (19) By horizontal journey, he means the traditional mode of travel in which the traveler moves from one place to another in a linear fashion. For Cronin, it is macroscopic since it presents only a superficial vista of the visited region rather than a detailed and nuanced one. For example, traveling in the car, train, or motorcycle falls into this category. In marked contrast to the horizontal journey, vertical travel is the dwelling-in-traveling because the traveler sojourns in the visited place for a specific period. When he/she embarks on a vertical trip, the traveler moves into the particulars of the place either in space or time. The spacial movement, for instance, includes a study of the landscape along with flora and fauna. Whereas temporal movement, for example, encompasses the study of folklore, history, archeology. Hence, the traveler's perspective about the region is microscopic or enriched (ibid.).

Syed Islam also in his *The Ethics of Travel* distinguishes between sedentary travel and nomadic one (53). In sedentary travel, the traveler is a goal-oriented subject who engages in reterritorialization and representation. In contrast, in the nomadic travel, the traveler is a fast-moving subject characterized by "multiplicity, deterritorialization, performance, chance, ...rhizome, [and] becoming." (57). The former travel belongs to the realm of Enlightenment and modernity, while the latter to that of postmodernity.

Likewise, Pico Iyer in *Video Night in Kathmandu* delineates two types of travel: alienating and renewing,

Every trip we take deposits us at the same forking of the paths: it can be a shortcut to alienation – removed from our home and distanced from our immediate surroundings, we can afford to be contemptuous of both; or it can be a voyage into

renewal, as, leaving ourselves and pasts at home and traveling light, we recover our innocence abroad (Love Match).

Finally, Marget Topping simultaneously introduces and critiques the concept of virtual travel, which is the by-product of the twenty-first century. According to Topping (280-281), virtual travel is exploited by the leisure travel industry to present three or four-dimensional reality of touristy attractions. She argues that even though it gives the impression of time and space of simulated destination for its users and reinforces the idea of globalism and cosmopolitanism, it fails to offer the real and embodied experience of travel. She, moreover, believes that to be qualified as authentic practice, travel should wring and rinse the traveler. Nevertheless, this quality is absent in the virtual trip. She finally maintains that this type of travel is ethically problematic since it proffers only a sanitized simulated image, thereby masking ideological and geopolitical aspects of visited places.

Dichotomous View

Since interconnected to politics, culture, religion, trade, and science, travel has stimulated philosophers, anthropologists, scholars, psychologists, poets, travel writers, and novelists to dissect, speculate, discuss, and write about it. Some of them disapprove of it, whereas some approve it, and each party presents its reasons to persuade their readers to accept their standpoint.

Negative Picture

In ancient times, Plato is cynical about the benefits of travel beyond the border of his Republic. For him, traveling through foreign places spreads falsity and corruption. Thus, he does not license the young residents of his Republic to venture out before becoming forty and fifty years old (Montaigne 908). Nevertheless, he permits older people to journey abroad. To check their potential spread of alien beliefs and customs in his Republic, he demands the elderly travelers to be interrogated by a council after their journeys. If it finds them guilty, it will sentence them to death (Harbsmeier 216). In the same manner, Gulliver, the antihero, in Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* desires the existence of a law designed to check the veracity of travelers' narratives as well as to nip their falsities in the bud (2629). Plato and Swift's fear finds its confirmation in John Mandeville's travelogue written in the Middle Ages that is rife with forgery and imaginary creatures living in non-European zones.

In the same way, early Church Fathers take a critical attitude towards travel and restlessness. They associate them with original sin and the unholy employment of eyes (Adams 70). Pascal, in a similar fashion, has a pessimistic outlook towards travel too. He believes that the miseries of humankind spring from their inability to remain in their dwelling places (Chatwin *The Songlines* 161). His healthy

pessimism is justified by the dark side of Western imperial expansionism and colonialism. Seneca, likewise, casts doubt on the oft-believed the positive power of the journey. For him, travelers carry with themselves their home identity and cultural baggage to their traversed terrains (Leed 46), which functions as a cultural barrier, thereby preventing a genuine and constructive cross-cultural dialogue. Lisle calls them travelers with “colonial vision.” (4)

Equally, Rumi, the medieval Persian poet, gainsays the view that travel changes the perspective of travelers because they remain inflexible and narrow-minded in their cultural perception towards their travelles and destinations and fail to cultivate a deep understanding of them,

*How many a one has gone as far as Syria and 'Iraq
and has seen nothing but unbelief and hypocrisy;
And how many a one has gone as far as India and Herat
and seen nothing but selling and buying;
And how many a one has gone as far as Turkistan and China
and seen nothing but deceit and hidden guile! (Book IV 149)*

Rumi later in his poem likens these travelers to the cows in the Baghdad Bazaar, whose attention is gripped solely by insignificant watermelon rind rather than by the pleasures and delights of the vibrant bazaar (ibid.). Like Rumi, John Donne, in the seventeenth century, points to its evil side. He connects foreign travel with dishonesty: “to runne all countries, wild roguery.” (qtd. in Chatwin 186). By roguery, he means that European travelers in alien regions are dishonest in their dealings with natives and carry out exploitative ventures. Similarly, Swift in the guise of Gulliver savagely attacks travels carried out by Europeans for the sake of plundering, robbing, Christianizing, and civilizing non-Western people. By doing so, he exposes the dark dimension of the European people,

Here commences a new dominion acquired with a title by Divine Right. Ships are sent with the first opportunities; the natives are driven out or destroyed, their princes tortured to discover their gold; a free license given to all acts of inhumanity and lust; the earth reeking with the blood of its inhabitants: and this execrable crew of butchers employed in so pious an expedition is modern colony sent to convert and civilize an [supposedly] idolatrous and barbarous people. (2631)

In the eighteenth century, Alexander Pope, Swift's friend, airs his mistrust of the Grand Tour, travels through the Continent, as an educational tool in his *The Dunciad*. Pope portrays the practitioners of the Grand Tour as pleasure-seekers who indulge in vices and spend their time with whores in the brothels in place of culling culture and knowledge:

*Led by my hand, he saunter'd Europe round
And gather'd ev'ry vice on Christian ground...
The Stews [brothels] and Palace equally explor'd (282).*

Likewise, Emerson in his "Self-Reliance" vehemently objects on travels to foreign countries executed for the sake of amusement and diversion. He believes that these journeys enervate will power and mind (250). Furthermore, he rebuffs the notion that travel is a tonic to the traveler's giant, that is, his sense of sadness because it chases him wherever the traveler moves. This explains why he describes the act of traveling as "a fool's paradise" (ibid.) by which he means a futile and absurd endeavor.

Even though his profession (that is studying purportedly primitive people) hinges on traveling, in the twentieth century, Levi Strauss is vociferous in his dislike for travel and travelers: "traveling and travelers are two things I loathe." (17) Here he also subtly accuses the travelers and explorers of commercializing their travel in unknown lands as well as exploiting the naivety of their audience to consume their readerly travel accounts. Strauss denies the objectivity of most explorers and considers their new findings and data as myth (18).

In the age of globalism, Pico Iyer, in his *Video Nights in Kathmandu*, is the critic of the hedonistic journey of tourists in non-Western places known for their beauty and peaceful ambiance. He calls them "lay colonists," "foot soldiers of a new invasion," and "terrorists of cultural expansionism" (Love Match) because Western tourists corrupt and contaminate the authentic texture of indigenous cultures by reducing them into the objects which should pander to their fantasies and pleasures:

The sudden boom [in tourism] had not, of course, been without its costs. Flocking to Nepal to find drugs, Westerners had left Nepal with a sad drug problem of its own... Racing to Nepal to find religion, Westerners had left Nepalis thinking of the spiritual in largely material terms: holy men nowadays demanded payment every time their picture was taken, while shrewd peasants had taken to selling pages of their sacred texts (Nepal).

Equally, Jamaica Kincaid in her *A Small Place* articulates her dissatisfaction with modern tourism/ tourists which/ whom he perceives as a new form of colonialism. Adopting postcolonial lens, she enlarges on the pernicious effect of Western affluent, epicurean tourists on the environment of poverty-stricken Antigua,

You must not wonder what exactly happened to the contents of your lavatory when you flushed it. You must not wonder where your bath water went when you pulled out the stopper. You must wonder what happened when you brushed teeth. Oh, it might all end up in the water you thinking of taking a swim in; the contents of your lavatory might graze against your ankle as you wade carefree in the water, for you see in Antigua, there is no proper sewage-disposal system. But the Caribbean Sea is very big and the Atlantic Ocean is even bigger, it would amaze even you to know the number of black slaves this ocean has swallowed up.

In this fragment, Kincaid finds the persistence of the brutal colonization of the former times in modern times. Now the colonizers emerge as indifferent and pleasure-seeking tourists who pollute their host culture and its environment. Finally, at the time of the Corona Virus pandemic, travel is forbidden and, at times, illegal. It is viewed as the agent of the virus contagion. Hence it is regarded as selfish and unethical if it is undertaken via violating the measures taken to control it.

Positive Picture

Unlike the opponents of traveling, there are writers, philosophers, poets, and travel writers who adopt a positive stance towards travel. For pro-travel humanists, the chief motive behind getting off is benign curiosity (Adams 70), which they regard as a fundamental feature of human beings' existence. Sadi, the Medieval Persian humanist poet, interprets travel as an approach to acquire knowledge in lands far and near,

*I have traveled all around the world,
Have been in the company of many people
I have much learned from every corner of this world,
From every crop, I have gathered a share...
I have recollected what I have learned from Syria to Anatolia!
For I thought it unfair from all those orchards
To go empty-handed to my friends. (qtd. in Dabashi 35)*

In England, humanist and empiricist Francis Bacon promotes travel on the grounds of education and experience that it bestows on the traveler, "Travel, in the younger sort, is a part of education, in the elder, a part of the experience." (1)

In line with line Bacon, Montaigne deems travel as a school in which one's mind gets incessant exercises by observing new things, diverse human lives, and novel customs and manners (904). He prizes travel for producing "a marvelous clarity in the judgment of the world." (qtd. in Jackson 4) In the same vein, Santayana, the American philosopher, cherishes travel for sharpening the mind, eliminating prejudices, and bestowing humor (<http://.whytravel.org/topics/philosophy/>)

Likewise, Kant highlights the importance of travel. He is of opinion that traveling abroad facilitates communication between cultures which are apart from each other, as well as brings peaceful relations for them. By doing so, travel generates cosmopolitan citizenship (Dhillon 93). Nevertheless, he is the hostile critic of travel for the sake of imperialism or the appropriation of foreign territory (95). Like Kant, Nietzsche exults the journey because it, he maintains, provides an opportunity to know oneself (Meyer 131).

Romantic poets like William Wordsworth and Samuel Tylor Coleridge have displayed a warm attitude towards pedestrian travel. For them, leaving their homeland is the expression of democratic passion and idealism (Mazzeo 93). For

Byron and Shelley, travel serves as a cultural instrument to rebel against the conventional norms of their society. Both of them traveled to and settled in Italy against their wishes since British society deems their conduct as immoral and indecent. With respect to John Keats, he revels in textual journeys carried by the wings of poesy in his "On First Looking Into Chapman's Homer" though he traveled to Italy and died there,

*Much have I traveled in the realms of gold,
And many goodly states and Kingdoms seen:
Round many western islands have I been
Which bards in fealty to Apollo hold. (409)*

Lord Alfred Tennyson in the Victorian era in his "Ulysses" strongly values the idea of the notion of travel,

*...Come my friends.
'Tis not too late to seek a new world.
...
One equal temper of heroic hearts,
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield (1172).*

Tennyson's poem resonates well with the zeitgeist of the Victorian period in which England, as a world superpower, colonizes a large portion of the globe. Freud looks at travel psychoanalytically and tacitly champions it. In his view, the delight of travel lies in the son's protest against his family and father (Fussell *Abroad* 16). Paradoxically, Freud, Rebecca Solnit in her *Wanderlust: History of Walking* maintains, believes that the basis of all travel is separation and departure from one's mother (The Pace of Thoughts). For example, one can see this defying gesture in the protagonist of Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*:

I went on board in an evil hour, the first hour of September 1659, being eight years to the day from when I left my father and mother at Hull, to act rebel to their authority, and fool to my own interest (32).

Freud's speculation about the travel is in harmony with the standpoint of Leed, who believes that travel in modern times is the expression of freedom and autonomy. In conjunction with Leed, Henry David Thoreau not only eulogizes the virtues of walking/pedestrian travel but also promotes its status as a divine grace in his essay entitled, "Walking:"

Most of my townsmen would fain walk sometimes, as I do, but they cannot. No wealth can buy leisure, freedom, and independence, which are the capital of this profession [walking]. It comes only by the grace of God. It requires a direct dispensation from Heaven to become a walker (261).

One can observe similar spiritualization of travel in Olga Tokarczuk's *flights*. In this very postmodernist novel-cum-travelogue, traveling is equal to the escape

from the talons of Antichrist desiring not only to crush the freedom of those who are enthusiastic about sauntering but also render them blind followers and passive entities,

Go, sway, walk, run, take flight, because the second you forget and stand still, his [Anti- Christ's] massive hands will seize you and turn you into just a puppet, you will be enveloped in his breath, stinking of smoke and fumes and big trash dumps outside town (258).

Since it is difficult for humans to extricate themselves from the tyranny of the stasis-loving Anti-Christ, the writer praise and glorify the resistant travelers, "Blessed is he who leaves." (261). One can see the similar impulse in Whitman's "Song of the Open Road" albeit less intensely,

*Allons! [let's go] with power, liberty, the earth, the elements,
Health, defiance, gayety, self-esteem, curiosity;
Allons! from all formulas!
From your formulas, O bat-eyed and materialistic priests (145).*

Gary's standpoint resonates with Whitman's perspective. He holds that the reason behind the arduous trip to distant lands is to experience vitality, which is absent in the civilized spaces (46). In a slightly different way, Kinglake assumes that the rationale for departing from Europe is to escape from its "stale civilization" known for its rigidity and stifling "respectability." (15). One can sense this sense of release from the chains of restraining civilization in Burton's travel book when he waxes lyrical about the desert which is the classical antithesis of the civilized sphere,

Your morale improves: you become frank and cordial, hospitable and single-minded: the hypo-critical politeness and the slavery of civilization are left behind you in the city. Your senses are quickened: they require no stimulants but air and exercise, in the Desert spirituous liquors, excite only disgust (143; emphasis added).

Perhaps the most articulate champion of travel and restlessness is Bruce Chatwin in his *The Songlines*. He severely attacks the nemesis of wandering, "Psychiatrists, tyrants are forever assuring us that the wandering life is an aberrant form of behavior; a neurosis; a form of unfulfilled sexual longing, a sickness which, in the interests of civilization, must be suppressed." (199) To elevate and restore the status of travel, he refers to the significance of the journey in Eastern religions. He points out that in Sufism, wandering is a way for the Sufi not only to lose himself in God but also to detach himself from materialism (200). To give another example, he quotes from Aitareya Brahmana [Indian sacred text], which regards travel as the reason for happiness, while sessility as the cause of sinning, "there is no happiness for the man who does not travel. Living in the society of men, the best man becomes a sinner. For Indra [deity in Hinduism] is the friend of traveler. Therefore Wander!" (ibid.)

Conclusion

In conclusion, travel for poets, philosophers, travel writers, psychologists, and anthropologists have been a blank screen onto which they have projected their viewpoints. They adopted a Manichean attitude towards it. They do not conceal their disdain for it when they find its connection to corruption, lies, misery, narrow-mindedness, immorality, light diversion, exploitation, colonization, and the degradation of nature. At the same time, they praise it when it is employed for virtuous and humanly purposes. For instance, when travel educates, renews, sharpens the mind and judgment, and releases humans from materialism and ungodliness, as well as when it brings freedom from the formulas and fetters of stifling and tedious civilization.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest were reported by the authors.

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