Introduction

Andrew Irving
*Granada Centre for Visual Anthropology &
Research Institute for Cosmopolitan Cultures
University of Manchester*

Every text, story or trip, in short, is a journey made rather than an object found. And although with each journey one may cover the same ground, each is nevertheless an original movement. There is no fixed template or specification that underwrites them all.

(Ingold 2007: 16)

This special issue of *Journeys* brings together writers whose origins and research expeditions lie in different parts of the world (United Kingdom, Germany, India, Africa, Japan and the Caribbean) to explore the relationship between different kinds of movement (walking, voyaging, bus-tours, animal-tracking) and the accompanying transformations in body and perception that emerge when journeying near and far from home. Journeys are indelibly associated with movement through lands and across seas, but like songs and stories, they also are works of composition, sometimes carefully crafted, other times improvised, often unique, and frequently unfinished. Although a journey, like any other work of composition, unfolds over time and can be thought to have a narrative structure of beginning, middle, and end, it is likely to contain many unstructured moments: unexpected detours, various contingencies and chance encounters, moments of social and cultural disorientation, and unresolved questions that are neither planned nor initiated by the author. Journeys, therefore, can often take us into strange “inner” places. Perhaps then we might say that journeys involve a process of discomposition, an

Introduction

unravelling and disordering of habitual thoughts, perceptions, feelings, and normative presuppositions, which are made explicit in the face of new lands and may become temporarily reconstituted amid the diversity of people one encounters there.

Each of the following articles contains within it a moment of discomposi- tion that is inextricably linked to the environment that the traveler finds themselves in, whereby their previous perceptions and understandings of the world are made explicit and thereafter become subject to transformation. It goes without saying that the effects of such journeys are not restricted to cognitive processes in that the anthropologist, like the tourist and traveler, always “takes their body” with them wherever and whenever they go, and makes various practical and social adjustments to the new environment. Indeed, so axiomatic is the role of the body within travel that it recalls Merleau-Ponty’s observations concerning the bodily basis of all human activity, from art to speech and writing, wherein he suggests that in order to understand the operations of the moving body, “we must go back to the working, actual body-not the body as a chunk of space or bundle of functions but that body which is an intertwining of vision and movement” (Merleau Ponty 1994: 123).

Following Merleau Ponty’s decree, it is difficult to know *how a mind could travel* on its own, seemingly bodiless: for even in our dreams and imaginings of other places, the world is seen and experienced from a single corporeal viewpoint rather than simultaneous multiple perspectives. Likewise, no matter how creatively it is edited, every piece of film, image, or montage that finds its way back from a far away land is shot from one standpoint at a time, although without the entire sensory contextualization that originally accompanies it. In short, to gain a transformation in perception, something or someone is required to move their body: sometimes minimally by the involuntary, saccadic movements and constant motions of the human eye; sometimes by self-consciously coordinating head and body so as to afford a new take on the world; and sometimes by traversing an entire continent or ocean.

Expanding Merleau-Ponty’s focus on the body as an intertwining of vision and movement so as to include other sensory modalities, including proprioception, orientation, and disorientation, *Senses of Spatial Equilibrium and the Journey: Confounded, Discomposed, Recomposed* explores how the varieties of sensory and bodily experience generated through the

journey lead to new forms of consciousness, understanding, and self-reflection. Ordinarily, a habitual unity and rhythm of mind, body, and world is forged through the skills, movements, and practices of “everyday life,” which allow persons to establish a sense of social and existential continuity within their familiar environment. Here, the relationship between body and world is sedimented and naturalized in ways that are frequently absent to consciousness. What happens then, we must ask, when a person journeys beyond the boundaries of the familiar to encounter a new, even radically different environment for the first time, whether passing-through or arriving at a final destination by way of leisure, work, immigration, and/or other forms of physical, emotional, and sensory displacement? How do seemingly “universal” movements such as walking, looking, or finding one’s way around become recast while visiting another place, and at what points might they coalesce into uncoordinated forms of activity? What theoretical insights might emerge by paying close attention to how the traveler or anthropologist’s habitual body is affected by the novelty, negotiation, and lack of familiarity of encountering a new city or landscape? In short, what types of cognitive, emotional, and transformative journeys are made by different kinds of person, including the anthropologist, when habitual and pre-existing forms of thinking and being are disrupted, challenged, and *made strange*?

The places that we encounter via the journey are disclosed through the senses, thereby betraying the original meaning of *aisthetikos* as “perceptive by feeling.” It is instructive, therefore, that Terry Eagleton argues that aesthetics is primarily a discourse of the body, whose original territory was not art, but reality in all its corporeal, material, and ideological dimensions:

That territory is nothing less than the whole of our sensate life together – the business of affections and aversions, of how the world strikes the body on its sensory surfaces, of that which takes root in the gaze and the guts and all that arises from our most banal, biological insertion into the world. The aesthetic concerns this most gross and palpable dimension of the human (1990:13)

The embodied dimension of the aesthetic forms the basis of what Eagleton describes as “deep subjectivity”: a nervous and sometimes dangerous area of activity that raises important epistemological questions for social scien-

Introduction

tific disciplines, such as anthropology, based upon first-hand observation, and whose subsequent theorization and rationalization of aesthetic experience recalls the eighteenth-century German philosopher, Alexander Baumgarten's definition of aesthetics as the "science of the senses." We are told that what differentiates anthropology from other forms of cultural encounter is the extended engagement with people and the types of understanding that emerge through systematic rational inquiry. Accordingly, the initial aesthetic impressions of the first few weeks of fieldwork are dismissed as the anthropologist gains a greater in-depth knowledge and understanding. However, is there something to be gained by taking seriously the ephemeral and fleeting knowledge of the initial encounter? If so, then can these be ascribed an equal, but different status to later forms of knowing, or, if not, then on what epistemological grounds should we differentiate the different perspectives and modes of knowing that emerge at the beginning, middle, and end of fieldwork and beyond? If we are asking what is different about the knowledge anthropologists gain in the first few weeks of fieldwork, as opposed to the understandings that are achieved after living and working in a place for a year, we also have to ask what happens after that year has finished? What different forms of understanding would emerge by staying an extra three months or three years beyond the iconic year in the field that reflects the institutional constraints and demands of the PhD program far more than concerns about the quality, veracity, and status of anthropological knowledge? For life in the field continues long after the anthropologist has left their fieldwork site behind and begun the process of turning their time there into a series of articles and publications.

Of course, the anthropological method of combining extended periods of co-dwelling with rational inquiry does not guarantee mutual understanding and sometimes reveals deep-seated discrepancies. At times, the disparity reaches the point of an incommensurable difference and radical otherness that not only challenges anthropology's epistemological grounding, but its whole *raison d'être*. Thus, at the end of *Triste Tropiques*, Levi-Strauss, who set out in pursuit of Rousseau's dream of finding a people untainted by modernity, finds the Brazilian Indians he encounters too different to enable effective communication and mutual understanding. Indeed, the failure of Levi-Strauss' quest is telling, for certain aspects of human experience are destined to remain incomprehensible no matter how thick the description, how far one travels, or how deep the structural analysis.

Levi-Strauss journeyed from Europe to the Brazilian jungle, but it is not strictly necessary to travel vast distances to encounter difference and diversity. A number of the articles in this issue show how, even when close to home, it is possible to witness and be subject to moments of incomprehension, disorientation, and misunderstanding that cannot be easily integrated into pre-existing models of communication, behavior, or explanation. One of the most significant journeys thus concerns the sometimes radical threshold that marks the inside and outside of “home,” be that a physical structure, such as a house, or an environment and set of routines where one feels familiar (Rapport and Overing 2007). When a person leaves their home, they have the potential to come into contact with a whole range of social contexts for experiencing the world. Different creative possibilities of play are presented, for example, by walking purposefully or aimlessly on foot through a village, town, or city. The types of mood and experience that are brought to life by moving by a particular means or in a particular manner and by passing through places of a specific social character or personal significance are suggestive of a creative intentionality that allows people’s movements to define, at least partially, their existential experience of the present. However, while all forms of movement contain the possibility for creating the character and atmosphere of one’s environs, they can also result in becoming lost or returning you to certain places that you want to avoid: places with unsettling edges or that disperse judgements; places that bear witness to personal errors and intense memories and emotions. Accordingly, although people are able to create their own “mood” by walking or moving around, they may not (following Marx) always do so in the manner of their own choosing.

By moving within and between boundaries, be that the home, the neighborhood, or a physical or national border, individuals and groups increase the potential for coming into contact with a range of different social, moral, political, and economic contexts. To a certain extent, *how one moves* and *where one journeys* defines *who you are* (Rossi 2007) in that while the “indigenous” or “local” individual is mostly fixed to their terrain and bounded by national, economic, and epistemological borders, the “cosmopolitan” citizen glides over space and transcends both national and classificatory borders with relative ease. *Stasis* and *movement*, therefore, represent the iconic modes through which individuals and groups become accorded different categorical identities and different kinds of existential

Introduction

relationship to the land. Within the popular imagination – and according to certain social scientific epistemologies – it is not just people’s identities and bodies that are mapped onto land (permanently or temporarily), but also their consciousness, moral and religious beliefs, and behaviors, insofar as these, too, are often conflated with national boundaries and cultural context in a restrictive and highly limiting identification of people with the land they live upon. It is a control over identity and the ability to journey that is re-enforced through a nexus of political powers that place restrictions upon movement according to ethnic, cultural, and economic categorizations of “who” you are. However, the journey also offers a way out, insofar as whether journeying on a local or global scale, each step offers a slightly different perspective, brings about a slightly new horizon, and forms a new attachment to the land.

Seven Journeys

The seven journeys collected in this issue reveal how “experience” is not a category of the past. Instead, to experience something is to actively test out the circumstances of one’s being, in that *ex* signifies “out of,” while *peira* means “attempt, trial, test”. Moreover, as Michael Jackson (1996) observes, *peira* has the same root *per* as the Germanic *fahr* (“to travel”). Experience, therefore, rather than being concerned with the past, is also orientated toward the present and the future, and implies a type of movement toward something not yet known or experienced, rather than simply something retrospective. Moving within and through different environments allows us to detect properties of sameness and difference, and, therefore, allows people to form a comparative perspective and understanding of themselves and their relationship to the world. Accordingly, if people’s sense of self and their perspectives upon reality are formed, in part, through movement, then journeying creates the possibility for establishing a different sense of self and a different reality.

Each article involves a change in perception that is related to the environments that the traveler finds themselves in, and then, like the traveler, each article goes in a different direction, including exploring the political, the phenomenological, the confessional, the ironic, the historical, and the macabre. *Jonathan Skinner’s* article involves a meditation on absence

and the strangeness of re-visiting his fieldwork site of Montserrat, after volcanic eruption has radically transformed the entire landscape and the tourist economy upon which the island relied. *Nigel Rapport* is walking around Auschwitz on a package tour, himself being a Jewish person, and making connections between the different kinds of journeys made by those who walked on the same ground many years ago. *Atreyee Sen* suggests that “S” words in the anthropology of tourism – sun, sex, sea, sights, and sand – perhaps need to incorporate further slaughter, sleaze, and salvation. Her article explores voyeuristic walking tours of slums staged for “phorenere” in her home city of Calcutta. *Rupert Cox* explores the sensory modalities of two sets of tourist images of Nagasaki through a kind of “attenuated walking.” The first images are the sixteenth-century painted screens that show Portuguese traders and missionaries arriving by ship and walking from the beach side through the city, while the second are from the city’s atomic bombing and what is now a park in Urakami district, thereby offering two contrasting ways of representing and experiencing tourist spaces. *Akira Takada* works on navigation among San hunter-gatherers in the Kalahari desert. Although previously admired for their feats of navigation over deserts, increasing numbers of San are now losing their way in once familiar places rendered unreadable following drastic environmental changes. *Andreas Däfinger* considers how social relations, hierarchy, and history are expressed through physical movement and intricate journeys within the complex architectural space of West African settlements. Genealogical distances are encoded in the arrangement of streets and spaces, and are used to express changing social realities and transformations in kin relations. In my article, I use Louis-Ferdinand Céline’s journey from Europe to Africa to America, as recounted in his 1932 novel, *Journey to the End of the Night*, to explore some of the varying modes of corporeal experience and aesthetic appreciation that arise through travel and movement, and suggest that these constitute their own distinct types of knowledge and understanding.

It is, of course, somewhat paradoxical that in an era defined by the routine ability of certain groups to traverse the planet at unimagined speeds that the body itself is perhaps more sedentary than it has ever been, as people travel across vast distances sitting down. The extraordinary Swiss writer, Robert Walser, much admired by Walter Benjamin and Franz Kafka, was a compulsive wanderer, often taking extended forays into unfamiliar

Introduction

parts of the city throughout the night. His short story, *The Walk* (1917), suggests how essential walking can be to the processes of thinking and writing. It is apparent from the articles in this issue that traveling on foot still remains one of the most common means through which new and familiar landscapes are navigated, experienced, and understood by the tourist, the traveler (local and foreign), and the anthropologist. Many of these articles deal with walking as one of the principal means through which someone gets to know the social, cultural, and physical terrain. Different possibilities are presented, for example, by following straight-lines (Irving) or meandering ones (Dafinger), by being guided (Rapport) or “attenuated walking” (Cox). Nonetheless, whatever the mode, disorientation can set in (Irving), especially when familiar environments are radically changed (Skinner) through spectacle (Sen) or simply by losing one’s way (Takada). The types of movement available within a desert (Takada), slum (Sen), concentration camp (Rapport), volcanic island (Skinner), post-nuclear city (Cox), and West African village (Dafinger), all help redefine the existential experience of the present, on which note, we invite you to consider *Senses of Spatial Equilibrium and the Journey: Confounded, Discomposed, Recomposed*.

Organizing Events

The seven articles are selected from papers presented over four conference sessions at the Association of Social Anthropologists Annual Conference, *Thinking Through Tourism*, held in London between 10 and 13 April 2007, and the Canadian Anthropology Society Annual Conference, held in Toronto between 8 and 12 May 2007.

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