

## Round Trip Journey

Everything is measured, controlled and classified. There is nothing left on the face of Earth to be discovered. Just a few odd, very odd surprises, yet still bearable for the Cartesian variables; and the sky, this unthinkable infinite, which is the only aim of the large, cruises of Nowadays, the only aim that's left.

There are no heroes, no epic heroes like Ulises, who face the dangers of a great Odyssey through strange waters and unknown territories. There can't be, because there are no more strange waters or unknown territories; every single spot can be reached. One can even be a tourist – nor are there any more travellers, those who preferred knowing to recognising – in the Pole.

Or maybe these waters and territories do still exist, and they are much closer than we think, much more closer, and only some, a few, dare to explore them.

## Supplement

A.: O Aotourou! How happy wilt thou be to see once more thy father, thy mother, thy brothers, thy sisters, thy mistresses, thy compatriots! What wilt thou tell them of us?

B.: Very little, and that they will not believe.

A.: Why very little?

B.: Because he has taken in very little, and because he will find in his own language no terms corresponding to that little of which he has gathered some notion.

A.: And why will they not believe him?

B.: Because after comparing their own customs to ours, they will rather think Aotourou a liar than believe we are so mad."

Denis Diderot, *Supplément au Voyage de Bougainville*

In 1779, in the middle of the pre-revolutionary period, Denis Diderot concluded his *Supplément au Voyage de Bougainville* (Supplement to the Voyage of Bougainville), a Series of dialogues between two Frenchmen, A and B, that comment on a fictitious fragment that had been suppressed from the tale about the journey around the world that had been carried out a decade earlier by captain and mathematic Louis Antoine de Bougainville: the discourse of an elderly Tahitian on the eves of the departure of the European expedition and the conversations between the chaplain of the ship and Orou, one of the few natives that still spoke the Spanish of the first conquerors. From this trip, Bougainville took Aotourou, one of the islanders that he'd met in Tahiti, back with him. The latter soon became the attraction of the Parisian society, and, dressed the European way, with frock coat, trousers and shoes, was shown at dances and receptions. Treated as one more object in the collection, a wonder itself and, at the same time, testimony of an adventure, he soon wanted to go back to his homeland, the land of his predecessors. Generous Bougainville organised and paid for his trip back home. Neither A or B could have guessed that he never reached his destination. Aotourou died of smallpox on the way. He never got to narrate the crazy customs of the French. But A and B suspected, only suspected – in that Age of Enlightenment with many shadows, the shadows of the dungeons, where the uncontrollable, the incomprehensible, the irrational was locked in -, that the exotic, when travelling, does it with a return ticket – travelling always expecting the return-, and what is norm, normal, does not exist –

the unique is relative and uncertain -, and maybe they would also work out exotic, pieces of another collection, at the end of the day, strangers to themselves, fearing themselves more than they would others.

### There is no more need to travel, just wander

There is no more need to travel, just wander, wander with the own company, as Rousseau did in Geneva, because the strange is nearer than we think and goes unnoticed. We ought to explore other worlds. Worlds that are not distant but near, and study them almost as a scientist - a botanist or a zoologist – in an expedition of the 18<sup>th</sup> C., like Banks in Captain Cook's voyages, making notes, drawing sketches, reconstructing, constructing, making up the real, the own reality, so that oneself as well as the others may get to know it. Laura Lache, like a 19<sup>th</sup> C *flâneuse* that has opted for wandering rather than travelling, and being a traveller rather than being a tourist, appropriates the urban landscape. She breaks it, fragments it and takes it to her studio to assemble it, making it her own, turning it into an odd collection in her imaginary museum of natural history of architecture, somehow architecture of herself. She fakes it, like the scientist in an expedition of the 17<sup>th</sup> C, introducing new textures, almost real ones, one could say, and confusing macro with micro. She deceives, like Banks did in Captain Cook's voyages, with an intentioned reference to scales and architectural proportions that are supposed universal, when, in fact she uses her own scale, she is her only measure, and she knows. Re-presenting it, she demonstrates that there is not one city, one for everyone, but many, so many as citizens, as subjects that inhabit it: a subjective city.

### Journey around my room or stranger of oneself

Twenty years after Diderot finished his Supplement, the young Savoyan aristocrat Xavier de Maistre is condemned to stay in his room for several weeks because of his participation in a duel. During this, unquiet, unable to stay between four walls, he writes one of the strangest travel books known, *Voyage around my room*, which was followed by *Nocturnal Expedition*. Maistre, like A and B, maybe like Rousseau himself as he wandered around Geneva, realises that there is no more need to travel, leave your home and undertake an exploration, to find and bring the exotic, to domesticate it. It'd never been necessary; the own bedroom is sufficient, after all, one himself, the strangest, the most distant one, is sufficient. María Castelló Solbes, like Maistre, discovers it, there is no more need to travel, and she prowls her own room. Everyday life proves to be remote, day-to-day turns unfamiliar, the self as the definite other, the only exotic. She searches for the limits where dust and time gather. Objects, as if we were in Gulliver's Brobdingnag, become gigantic, strange, unknown. Nothing is what it seems to be. We discover ourselves to be strangers of ourselves.

Sergio Rubira