

**OUT OF PLACE: GENDER, IDENTITY, AND SPACE,  
AND THE EXPERIENCES OF CONTEMPORARY SOLO WOMEN TRAVELLERS**

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## ABSTRACT

### Out of Place: Gender, Identity and Space, and the Experiences of Solo Women Travellers

Melanie McArthur

Travel has been theorized as an allegorical commentary on modernity and postmodernity, enacted by the characters of the voyeur, the consumer, the hedonist and the discontent. Emphasis has been placed more on travel as an event, than on the subjective meanings of that event. As embodied movement through time and space, however, the journey speaks not only of changing geographical location, but also of changing personal location.

By engaging and exploring the narratives of contemporary solo women travellers, this thesis examines the configuration of gender, space and identity as it changes place and context on the journey. Engaging the contemporary debate in the social sciences about structure and agency, it addresses issues of place, subjectivity and movement. Why do these women travel and what does it mean to them? Do they change place? As well, issues of safety, which are premised on a geography of fear that is particularly poignant for women, are also discussed.

The activity of travel is presented as a mobilizing influence that encourages new perceptions and understandings which are embodied and enacted. Solo women travel in body and in spirit. Rather than a quest with its narrative of return, however, they articulate a journey of perpetual motion and new horizons.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is often not the usual and predictable routes that give us the greatest joy, but the unexpected pathways. They appear and pique our curiosity. They beckon us with their promise of something and somewhere different; new terrain, new challenges, and new possibilities. These promising pathways can be rigorous, demanding and overwhelming at times. Our energy can flag. We can even lose our way. At these times it is helpful to have a compass, a map and some moral support.

This thesis is part of my own life's journey, a pathway taken. Along the way I was fortunate enough to have the help, support and encouragement of several people who were my compasses, maps and guides. I am deeply indebted to them, and truly appreciative of their counsel.

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"Enjoy!" Whenever the pathway became strenuous or I was unsure of my way, my friend Teresa Deccico reminded me to enjoy the journey. Her advice kept me on course and renewed my resolve. It became my motto. Thank you, Teresa, for the walks, the talks and the advice.

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## Chapter One

### INTRODUCTION

They share the love of travel, not the easy travel of packaged tours and booked accommodations, but the solo journey of serendipity and spontaneity. They may "hook up" with other travellers for awhile, but to a large extent their preference is to follow their own path. They go alone by choice. The journey might be a month, or it might last three years. They choose jobs that allow them this freedom or quit jobs that do not. They involve themselves in relationships that understand their passion for travel, and leave relationships that do not. They work along the way if necessary. They are the solo women travellers whom I had the privilege to meet and listen to.

Many freely admit that there is a strong element of selfishness to their travel, that the journey is about them.

Travel is a selfish pursuit in that you nurture what you want. Chloe

I travel because I am a selfish person. I want to see and do what I want with my time and money 100% of the time. I want my travel experiences to be mine and mine alone. Karen

I would not be the same person today if it wasn't for my travels. It's so much about me. I think travel is a selfish thing especially women travelling on their own. It's very selfish. I've ruined twenty relationships. I was willing to leave and think more about the fact that I wanted to do this for myself. Amy

Perhaps this idea of selfishness is premised on social expectations and gender definitions that invoke service to others as a moral creed. It also reflects, however, the need to "know thyself."

Economical travel is their signature. They stay at hostels, cheap hotels and even camp outdoors. They generally buy food from local vendors or eat at inexpensive restaurants. They use local transport, buses, trains, and for some the occasional hitched ride. It is personal finances and the prolonged duration of their journeys that necessitates these economical measures, but they would not have it any other way. Being alone and "on the cheap" nurtures contact with other travellers and more importantly with local people.

The rigors of their travel style are evident in Debbie's travel tip "eat when you're hungry, sleep when you're tired." A somewhat obvious piece of advice to most, it is the focal point of daily travel for more than half of the women with whom I met and who I designate as Group A (see Figure 1 on page 5). According to Sarah,



The activities of daily life are continually strained. Travelling is about survival. Things that you don't worry about normally, like where to get your food, where to get your sleep, how to maintain simple hygiene so you don't end up viciously ill. I mean we are not talking about staying clean. Who cares? It is living in the same clothes. It is making sure that the shitty food that you are eating, because you are going to eat anything and everything, just doesn't make you sick for the rest of your life. That's travelling. It is dealing with the day in day out difficulties of life that makes you a traveller.

Totally in agreement, Jill adds her own vignette that demonstrates just how challenging and uncomfortable her journeys can sometimes be. Having always hated bugs as a child she has reluctantly learned to like them. "Afterall I have shared a bed with them on so many nights when travelling."

These rigorous conditions induce a particular mode of travel where the activities of daily life become extremely important. Also contributing to this style of travel is the relatively long duration of the travel period, and the fact that many of the areas visited and explored are beyond the more familiar and comfortable tourist trails and sites. The women of group A, many of whom are inveterate travellers, have all taken extended trips that have lasted between one month and three and a half years in duration. They prefer to venture "off the beaten track" to areas of Asia, Eastern Europe, Africa and South America that have not yet been "scoured by tourists" (Sarah). At home, all of these women

live modest lives for the express purpose of saving money so that they can travel. Travel is their primary interest, as well as a mode of life. As Wendy admits,

Well, I don't have a car, I have a TTC pass. I either go on a trip once a year or I have a car. I don't eat out much. I don't buy new clothes very much. I get most of my books from the library. I mean I really pay the price in my daily life, which is not hardship by any means... I can go to the Middle East, I can go to China, and that means I have to make certain sacrifices, so it's all what you value and what's really important.

The women in Group B (see Figure 2 on page 6) are more likely to explore Europe, North America and occasionally Central or South America. They also adopt an economic style of travel finding accommodation in hostels, university dorms or bed and breakfasts, buying food at local markets or from street vendors when possible, and using public transport. Generally, the duration of their travel is several weeks rather than the several months (or more) that Group A women prefer. Consequently, the fundamental differences between the women of Group A and those of Group B are the destinations they choose and the duration of their journeys. Destination and duration, however, do not seem to be major factors in how the journey is experienced. As a result, an accounting of each woman's travel history that lists specific destinations and itineraries does not seem relevant or necessary.

Group A Figure 1

Name	Age	Marital Status **	Education	Number of Languages	Economic Status ***	Parents Ec. Status	Travel As Child
Sarah	29	S	BA	4+	low/mid	mid	yes
Jill	48	S	MA	3+	low/mid	mid	car trips/relatives
Leslie	54	D	BA	1	mid	low/mid	car trips
Vanessa	62	M x2	MA	2	low/mid	low	no
Jean	74	D	BA	2+	low	low	no
Michelle	27	S	BA	2	low	mid	yes
Claire	33	S	BA	2	low	low	car trips/relatives
Nancy	41	M	BA	2	mid	mid	no
Anne	54	S	PhD	2	mid	low	no
Esther	71	Sep	MA	2	mid	low	relatives
Wendy	37	S	MA	3	low	low	car trips
Amy	26	S	MA	2	low	low	camping
Pamela	66	S	MA	3	mid	low/mid	very little
Debbie	33	M	BA	2	mid	low	car trips/camping
Margaret	29	S	BA	2+	low	low	no
Chloe*	28	S	BA	2+	low	low	no
Joy	74	W	BA	2	mid	low	no
Judy	57	D	BA	3	low/mid	low	no
Mina*	22	S	BA	2	low	mid	yes

\* email interviews

\*\* marital status S = single, D = divorced, Sep = Separated, W = widowed, M = married (x number of times)

\*\*\* economic status as designated and described by each participant, elaborated in their narrative, and observed during the interview.

**Group B Figure 2**

Name	Age	Marital Status **	Education	Number of Languages	Economic Status ***	Parents Ec. Status	Travel As Child
Irma	76	M	BA	1	low/mid	low	no
Heather	35	M	BA	1	mid	mid	yes
Mary	38	S	MA	1	low	mid	car trips
Karen*	45	S	High School	1+	low	low	car trips
Audrey*	53	M	High School	1	low/mid	low/mid	car trips
Amanda*	53	M	College	1	low/mid	low/mid	relatives
Susie*	29	M	BA	1+	low/mid	low/mid	car trips
Marilyn*	45	S	BA	2	low	low	no
Tanya*	34	S	High School	1	low/mid	low	no
Joan*	68	D	High School	1+	low	low	no
Pat*	25	S	BA	2	low	mid	yes
Sally*	29	S	BA	2	low/mid	mid	no
Annette*	62	D	High School	3	mid	low/mid	no
Gail*	53	M x2	BA	1	mid	low	no
Emily	48	D	MA	2	mid	mid	no
Leona	70	M	BA	1	mid	low/mid	no

\* email interviews

\*\* marital status S= single, D= divorced, Sep= separated,  
W= widowed, M = married (x number of times)

\*\*\* economic status as designated and described by each participant, elaborated in their narrative, and observed by the researcher.

The solo women of both Group A and Group B describe travel as a way of life. For many it is almost a compulsion. One of the main themes that constantly recurs in their narratives is a desire to see the world, to experience other cultures, to meet other people and to get to know and understand how others feel and live. With this in mind, many punctuate their journeys with lengthy stays in one location.

Getting to know how other people think, how they live their lives and how they view themselves and the world is a predominant interest of the solo women with whom I met. For them, exploring another culture is a sentient experience. They enjoy the sights, sounds, tastes, smells and the texture of other places. More importantly, however, they are interested in understanding how people in other places live their lives and how they experience their own culture.

I have this insatiable curiosity about... how do other people think, how do other people view the world, what's different, how do you view us.  
Nancy

Basically I've always travelled for adventure - go out there and see what happens, go change your mind, go see things; so adventure and discovery. But I have always been interested in people, so talking to local people, going to local markets, seeing some of the monuments and sites, but not too much. It's mainly to get involved with people and see if I can make friends. Jill

In 1978 on Jill's third trip to Morocco she settled into a village four hours drive south of Agadir on the edge of the Sahara Desert.

I was living there. I took the customs. I was eating with the people, I was learning the language, doing chores, being somewhat integrated and living constantly with Moroccans and not spending any time at all with foreigners. It opened my eyes and I don't think I thought it out this way but I think something happened inside of me that made me decide from that point on that this was how I wanted to travel...not just go to a country and see the sights. I spent six months in China fairly recently and I haven't seen Beijing. I haven't seen the Great Wall. I haven't seen Shanghai. I just stayed in small cities or villages in the south of China, mainly in regions that are not as touristy.

Jill works as a freelance simultaneous translator which allows her great flexibility for travel. She sublets the flat that she owns and then departs.

I can put somebody in here for nine months, somebody I don't know and say goodbye to my things and I've really liked you and I hope you're going to be here in one piece when I get back, but I won't spend nine months thinking "Oh my God what if?"

Laden with a backpack, she has traversed the globe since her first trip in 1971, preferring to visit what she sees as more remote places. Jill attempts to stay away from the well-travelled tourist routes and has recently begun exploring the natural reserves and parks of various

countries, where she does extensive hiking that involves cooking and sleeping outdoors.

When I'm aged and I can't carry 50 pounds on my back then I'll think, oh, I'll go to Rome. Now I like to do the type of trip that is more difficult because I am physically fit to do so. Let's face it, two weeks in Rome is going to cost me the same as two months on Easter Island.

According to Jill, travel has taught her that she is autonomous and independent, and that she thrives on adventure. Travel stimulates her imagination and gives her new energy. "I don't get lonely and I'm never anxious to come home." She likes to spend time in one place and has used her ESL (English as a second language) qualification as a means to extend her stay in a specific place. Although in these instances she is working as a teacher and residing in the same place for a designated period of time, Jill still considers this to be part of the travelling experience. For Jill, it is being in a different place and experiencing a different culture that qualifies it as travel.

Many other women feel the same way. Judy spent several months in Guatemala working at an orphanage. Margaret worked as a nanny in France. Pat is now working on a relief project in Africa, while Leslie is teaching in Malaysia for two years. Throughout her career as an educator, Pamela availed herself of as many overseas exchange and employment opportunities as possible. Indeed, it was the diverse

possibilities for relocation and travel that initially attracted her to the teaching profession. Nancy, Wendy, Sarah, Debbie, Jean, Joy and Amy have all combined volunteer work, regular work or their own education with a desire to see other places and meet other people. Rather than a superficial experience, these women want to develop an intensive understanding of another culture that involves meeting and getting to know local people. Hence, they all avail themselves of opportunities that allow them to travel to other places where they both immerse themselves in local culture and explore the surrounding areas.

Although they are people-focused, many of the solo women travellers I met are also drawn to the more traditional tourist attractions as well. Several articulate an interest in art and architecture which often leads them to galleries, museums or historic sites. The joy of meandering through countrysides or cityscapes, through cultured gardens or natural landscapes is a favourite activity of many. A delight in local food, local wine and local beer is also often mentioned. But the predominant theme that recurs in their narratives of travel is an interest in people, in how other people live, and what beliefs they hold. Given this focus, markets, town squares, cafes and local buses provide the best opportunities for meeting and speaking with local people. They are potential contact zones where different cultures meet and exchange



becomes possible (Pratt 1992).

As the medium of knowledge and understanding, of contact and communication, language is of vital importance. It is the window into culture and intercultural exchange. Making an effort to use local language is often interpreted by local people as a sign of respect and they are highly appreciative of the gesture. The solo women travellers I met demonstrate a deliberate interest in learning other languages and the majority of them are multilingual. Of the 35 women I interviewed only 9 are unilingual, 3 are unilingual but feel that they can function adequately in a second language, 17 are bilingual (of these 3 have the fundamentals of a third language), 5 are trilingual (one of whom also has a grounding in both Mandarin and Arabic because of her extensive stays in Morocco and China), and 1 speaks four languages fluently and is conversant in a fifth.

Language fluency is seen by these women as a vital cultural bridge. Jill remarks that it opens doors. She feels that people appreciate and respond to the fact that you are willing to make an effort to speak in their language. "It means that you value them and are trying to know them on their own terms." All of the women who travel extensively in non-English speaking countries attempt at the very minimum to learn at least a few local phrases, not only to facilitate their own passage, but also as a gesture of

respect for and genuine interest in the local citizenry.

The solo women travellers I met have a passion for travel. They experience it physically, emotionally and spiritually as passage, as both literal and metaphorical mobility. They enjoy the experience of travel, of going different places, of meeting different people, of movement and change. Travel, in this sense, is an act of physical mobility that involves departure from home.

Travel is also a metaphor for their personal journey. They see life as a process of growth and change and as a personal and spiritual odyssey. This journey is enhanced by the act of physical mobility. Thus, to travel is to move to other locations, both geographic and personal. Travel affords an opportunity for reflection. It nurtures self-discovery. It symbolizes personal growth. Travel is both a process of change and of being changed.

Travel also has a more pedantic meaning. In everyday parlance it is generally equated with commercial tourism. As such it has been theorized as a consumeristic response to glitzy advertising campaigns (Ritzer and Liska 1997), as a quest for signs and sites (MacCannell 1976; Culler 1981), and as a specular smorgasbord of visual delight (Urry 1990). These positions do not adequately reflect the experiences and intentions of the solo women travellers with whom I met. For them, travel is a personal and spiritual event that

promises "new energy," "space," "personal growth" and "challenge." Not content to stay put, they seek to engage the world, and in doing so they discover more about themselves. Travel reflects a curiosity about the world, a search for new knowledge, and a desire for quality of life. As Vanessa asks, "Aren't I allowed an interesting life?"

Thus, travel is a complex and symbolically rich concept that embraces ideas about tourism and the literal act of geographic movement, as well as the metaphorical passage that mobility makes possible. Solo women move and travel in space and in spirit.

#### Worldly Women

Championing travel for travel's sake, Beverly Gray's narrative enthuses about the world and the myriad adventures of travel by wistfully declaring "for my part, I would cheerfully go round the world to count cats in Zanzibar, not caring in the least whether or not I found any cats to count." (1997:2) While many women have felt a similar zeal to know the world, to be more worldly, the world, at least the Western world, has not always been equally enthusiastic about the image of the travelling woman.

To be worldly implies familiarity with the world. It refers to geographic knowledge and an acquaintance with wider spheres of culture, politics and world events. Worldly also has a sexual connotation that refers to

experience in matters of sex and love.

Western culture is uncomfortable with the concept of worldly women. The history of exploration and adventure in the West is a male narrative, replete with male heroes, masculine exploits and male descriptions of penetration and civilization (Pratt 1992). Symbolizing independence, intellectual curiosity, and even heroism, mobility, in the form of travel, continues to be perceived as a male activity (Kinnaird, Kothari and Hall 1994; Swain 1995; Richter 1995).

In many societies being feminine has been defined as sticking close to home. Masculinity, by contrast, has been the passport for travel. Feminist geographers and ethnographers have been amassing evidence revealing that a principal difference between women and men in countless societies has been the licence to travel away from a place thought of as 'home'. (Enloe 1990:21)

It would seem that masculinity and travelling are inextricably linked, often to the exclusion of women who are viewed as cultural stability, the imagined female to a travelling male (Ebron 1997:228).

Foucault posits that through actions on the body and through the control of space, a regime of supervision and discipline is enacted (Rabinow 1984:17; Foucault 1975). His discussion of the panopticon that operates as a specular form of enclosure and confinement is directly relevant to women's experience of immobility and spatial containment. Travelling women confront and challenge a narrative of

domesticity, dependence and confinement that is a recurring theme in women's lives, and that finds expression in the roles and expectations of women as wives, mothers, and caregivers (Rose 1993:15; de Beauvoir 1953). As well, the discourse of femininity invokes a moral geography, a system of social and sexual boundaries, that is incompatible with the 'worldly' content of travelling. "Men's desire to confine women to their proper place must be understood - at least in part - as a desire to (legally) control and (morally) order sexuality." (Alexander 1994:291) Finally, the perception of the world as an unsafe place has particular implications for the woman who seeks mobility (Valentine 1989; 1992).

Despite this discourse and practice of travel, that some suggest operates "to exclude or pathologize women" (Enloe 1990; Wolff 1995:115), women have travelled, and continue to do so in increasing numbers. If 'all the world's a stage' these women refuse to be confined to the audience. Instead they are performers engaging the world and thereby moving beyond the boundaries of their culture and self to enact new roles and investigate alternate ways of being. Travel becomes a road to enhanced geographical and cultural knowledge, as well as self-knowledge. As Adler suggests, travel is a "self-consciously performed secular art" and "one means of worldmaking and of self-fashioning." (1989a:1368)

Initially instigated by the stories of historic women travellers who circumvented prevailing discourses and engaged the world, this research is focused on the experiences of contemporary women travellers, and specifically women who travel alone. They are worldly women who enjoy a geographic imagination and a restless curiosity. Lured by the promise of new experiences and new knowledge, they travel not only to see different places, but also to explore and understand different ways of thinking and being in the world. To some extent they leave behind the familiar and venture into the unfamiliar. They change place. But what does it mean and how does it feel to spatially and temporally distance oneself from one's own culture? What does departure and changing place mean to contemporary women travellers' perceptions of themselves? We know that travel entails a change in geographic location, but does it also involve a change in 'personal location'? Can we change identity by changing place? Engaging in travel and changing place provide an alternative context for understanding social beings, for as Appadurai suggests, it deterritorializes social identity (1992:191). It uproots social and cultural identity from its usual niche and relocates it into a new and different context. Travel provides a new context for understanding sociocultural identity, for as Crick notes,

What is an especially attractive opportunity here is that much classical social theory has dwelt on rationality, work, production, structure, and the like, and with tourism, at least some suggest, we get the exact opposite - leisure, play, consumption, indulgence, and freedom from restraint. (1994:5)

This research explores the configuration of gender, space and identity as it changes place and context. The activity of travel is seen as a mobilizing influence that encourages new perceptions and understandings which are both embodied and enacted. Chapter two looks at the literal and metaphorical content of travel and relates it to the contemporary debate in social science that revolves around issues of structure and agency. Envisioning structure as the provided script of place, and agency as a form of mobility wherein social actors enact other subjectivities, this chapter looks at what the event of travel portends. It suggests that travel can be viewed as a metaphor for independence and social possibility. Chapter three discusses some of the current travel/tourism theory with respect to the experiences and perspectives of the participants in this research. Travel is posed as a deep, sentient and bodily engagement not only with other places but with other people. Chapter four interrogates the geography of fear as a discourse that portrays the world as a dangerous place for women. Is safety an issue for solo women, and if so, what strategies do they use when

travelling? Finally, Chapter five pulls together the discussion of travel, place and identity, and acknowledges the limitations inherent in this research. It also attempts to engage some moral issues which travel raises.

### Methodology

Solo travel is metonymical, standing for both mobility and solitude. As an enigmatic character, the solo woman traveller contradicts and contravenes our culture's essentialist notions of relational womanhood that binds women to their maternalized roles as lifegiver, nurturer and caregiver and to the protected space of home. But how do solo women travellers see themselves? How do they juggle home and away?

Before I begin it is important to be clear as to what I mean by solo women travellers. For research purposes I define the solo traveller as someone who travels alone by choice. Thus, business travel, group packages and 'unaccompanied but not happy about it' trips are not solo travel.

To explore how solo women see themselves and what travel means to them, and to understand the context within which women travel, I listened to what I call abbreviated life histories. As respondents to notices placed in travel magazines or as volunteers who I had personally contacted,



my informants were aware of the focus of my research. That focus undergirded the narrative process. The travel adventures, recollections and reflections of my informants were the thread we followed together through their discussion of their life and journeys. They provided a verbal precis of their personal history that they crafted to suit our shared interest in travel. An inherent process of selection was involved.

Abbreviated also refers to the fact that life history is never fully a soliloquy. I began the discussion, prompted it at times, asked questions and generally intruded. There were specific issues that I raised and questions that I asked. Some of these were: What precipitated your first solo journey? Why solo? What are the obstacles to travelling alone? What are the benefits? What has travelling meant to you? What do you do when you travel? How do you spend your time? What have you learned? What do people say when they hear that you are a solo woman traveller? How does travel fit into your life? Many times these questions had already been answered within my informant's narrative. However, I often asked for further clarification or explanation. Also, as the research process progressed, I realised that certain themes and issues were consistently being raised by the women I met. Consequently, I encouraged my informants to explore and to elaborate on these issues. As a result, their life histories were not

soliloquies. As the researcher I was part of the process of narration. I was cognizant through this process of Rabinow's musing that there is no utopic methodology (1986:15).

On the other hand, as raconteurs, my informants narrated their journeys and navigated mine. Rather than the "overvaluation of sights, signs and symbols" that Fabian suggests is endemic in ethnography (1991:xiv), life narration encouraged these women to explore their subjective experience and the context of that experience. Personal narration provided them as narrators and myself as listener with the opportunity to discern and explore the meaning of experience, and to understand the impact of cultural boundaries and parameters as mediators of that experience (Anderson and Jack 1991:23-24). As an inclusive methodology, an ethnography of the particular (Abu-Lughod 1992), it facilitated exploration of such themes as identity, travel and structure.

Life history is personal and idiosyncratic. Rather than stressing the coherent and similar, as a methodology it reveals the myriad of different experiences and the specificity of 'personal locations'. If my focus on solo women travellers belies my own preconceived categories and background assumptions, personal history invites participants to reconfigure those categories, to tell their stories, and to voice their different and distinct

viewpoints.

Of the 35 women who shared their travel stories with me, 22 involved personal meetings and a life history/interview format. The other 13 women live at too great a geographic distance, but were eager to participate, so we undertook email dialogues. I was able to extend my research across Canada, the United States, and as far as South Korea. Thirty of my informants are Canadian, three are American, one is Indian and one is Korean. Geographic reach is email's greatest advantage. On the negative side, this geographic reach renders the ethnographic encounter an impersonal contact. I missed the nonverbal cues, the emotion and the intimacy that face-to-face meeting generates. As well, email exchange is a stilted process that tends to take on a question and answer format, and that leaves thoughts hanging, to be continued at another time.

One characteristic that all my research participants share is a profound interest in travel and in my research topic. Many women read my notice in the publications Journeywoman, Connecting Solo Travellers or Travel Scoop, and volunteered. Indeed, these travel publications were my primary source of informants. Once the research process got started, however, a network began to evolve. Someone would know someone. In this way, I was provided with the names and phone numbers of other solo women travellers. I became seasoned at contacting women who I had been told travelled

alone, explaining my research interest and asking if they would like to help. My invitations to participate were always greeted with enthusiasm and with a sincere eagerness to share their story, to hear other's and to read the results of my research.

### Introductions

Throughout this text, I shall introduce some of the women who have shared their journey with me. Their words speak of their lives and travels. This seems a good point to introduce three solo women travellers, Jean, Vanessa and Margaret.

### Introducing Jean

Jean, age 74, admits that "I always ached for not having had the experience of being loved as a youngster." Her mother was committed to an institution when she was eighteen months old, and the family dispersed when she was three. Jean was placed in the care of a non-related guardian. "I never felt as though I belonged to anybody or with anybody and so being alone wasn't anything I ever questioned, it was a given." Through much of her life, Jean admits that she was pushy, abrasive to the point of irritating people and very lacking in self-confidence. Always rebellious, any suggestion that a particular action was inappropriate incited her to pursue that action. "I had

no role models. I had never been told, you know, that I was worthy so it took me decades. I ultimately did realize it and did accept my self, warts and all, and it made life a lot easier. But by this time I was in my late fifties."

In 1945 on her release from the army, Jean bought an army surplus motorcycle, a Harley Davidson, and "bummed around the country," sleeping in cornfields, parks, hostels or the YWCA. After 2 years in Art School, sponsored by the American GI Bill, she crossed the United States on a bicycle. She did marry, had 5 children and parted company with her husband in 1967, moving with her youngest 3 children to Mexico.

Jean stresses that travel has been a way of life for her. "Being an artist, it is all a part of the package. When you are an artist everything else you do supports the art, and in my case, it's the travelling." "A lot of the time it was pure impulse. I just simply arranged what all my circumstances were at the time around it. I made domestic circumstances accommodate me rather than for me to accommodate myself to the domestic circumstances."

To a large extent, it has been a life of relocation, of following whims. Reading a story in the newspaper about a man who was planning to circumnavigate the world by boat, but who needed a crew, she moved to the Virgin Islands and volunteered. As it turned out, due to a variety of circumstances, she did not embark but remained on the island

for eighteen months working at a sail shop sewing sails.

For Jean, the inner journey has been pivotal; learning to know and to like herself. "My mental perception of what my life has been, including all the travel, has always been that it's a forward process. In a sense, I never come back." Jean says her epitaph will read, "SHE TRIED."

#### Introducing Margaret

Margaret, age 29, grew up in a working class, multicultural, urban neighbourhood. She was raised by her single mother within an extended family network dominated by women. "So I come from a family of very strong women, but it is within the realm of the household for sure. I think coming from that and being nurtured around that, has helped me in the travel."

According to Margaret, travel is an elaboration of her interest in geography, in history, and in other cultures. However, it also provides a reflective interval and an opportunity for personal growth.

Sometimes you can find it (growth) at home, but for me, it has been finding it elsewhere. Home is when I get tired of confronting it, and I want to relax and I want things to be somewhat the way I know they are, even though they have changed, because I've changed. When I come back I am not the same person who left.

Margaret participated in a Canada World Youth exchange as a youth, but now works as a facilitator, arranging and supervising youth exchanges to Russia. She has travelled extensively in Europe on her own. In the future she plans to use English language instruction as an avenue to travel.

As a woman of colour, Margaret finds she elicits mixed reactions, from curiosity to anger, as she travels. "I travel first as a person of colour, and secondly as a woman of colour. People see my race first." She feels an ambassadorial responsibility, in that what she does and how she acts will impact on other people of colour as they travel. Margaret's experience reminds us that travel is not only a gendered experience but a racial one as well.

#### Introducing Vanessa

Vanessa, age 62, likes to challenge herself both physically and emotionally.

I always go without any plans, without any reservations, without anything. I like the challenge of finding. And I am a budget traveller. I use a backpack. I am not interested in staying in nice hotels or any of that stuff, not at all. I am a very, very inexpensive traveller. I guess I see some challenge in working out train schedules in different languages, figuring out the buses, looking at maps. I love maps.

Vanessa cites her first travels as her hitchhiking exploits

in the 1950s. Since then she has travelled extensively on all continents except for South America. Her own moral opposition to totalitarian government has dictated the exclusion of certain destinations from her itinerary.

From a working class background, Vanessa has most of the requirements for a PHD in political science completed. She credits an independent spirit and her love of reading as the inspiration for her interest in travel. She has a vivid memory of her mother, who was married at 16, always having a book on the go.

Now retired from her job as a teacher at the college level, she has reduced her travelling time from about 12 weeks per year to 8. Despite her modest means she says that she would never let money be an obstacle to travel. She would borrow the money before she would stay home. At our meeting, I asked her how travel has influenced her life. "Well, it hasn't made me restful. It would be nice to think that, you know, that you travel and then you're satisfied, but it's never complete."

Restless or not, she does credit travel with fortifying her self-confidence.

I was a candidate for the NDP here. If I had never travelled I would never have done that because I have hillbilly roots here. I am talking of a huge educational and social jump up to candidate for a federal party, one that wouldn't ordinarily be possible. I would never have been even a candidate, stood for candidate, without the experience and the confidence that I had received



from travelling, where you think things are possible and you learn things are possible.

Married twice with two children, Vanessa says that she has never deferred to social expectations or demands. In her straight-forward manner she asserts,

I am not exactly a shrinking violet and I always had a very, very positive sense that I had a right to an interesting life, and I am not sure I got that from my parents. I can't identify that but I certainly thought that I had a right to do what I wanted to do and at a time when travelling by myself - with my husband and two kids at home - was not considered socially acceptable. Bugger it, you know.

Describing how her independence and travelling plans were received by her second husband Vanessa says,

Well, it was never a big deal. Frankly, it wouldn't be anything I would ask. Somebody asked me what Joe thought of my going on the camino and I said "well, hell, I don't know." Joe is my second husband. I said, "well, I don't know, I never asked him. Why would I ask him?" It just never occurred to me that he had anything to say about it to tell you the honest to God truth, and he doesn't either. I still don't think he does.

Referring to her first marriage and to the responses that her travels elicit from people in general, Vanessa states,

It didn't last that long. We were only married ten years, and I had been to Europe maybe four times in that period and to Turkey. You have to

be willing to be unpopular though. It doesn't make you likeable...Most women want to be liked. I have never given a shit whether I'm liked or not. So whatever that all adds up to I don't know, but there's no question about it. It makes you unpopular. It makes you unpopular with women. It makes you unpopular with men.

For Vanessa, restlessness has been an abiding theme. Since her early days of hitchhiking as a teenager she has enjoyed movement. Rather than on a destination, her focus is on the process of movement and change. She has successfully ignored and resisted the social expectations and entrapments that would keep her in 'place'.

#### Historic Women Travellers

There is a growing biographical and analytical literature on Victorian women travellers which suggests that their act of travel was an implicit, albeit not always consciously deliberate, challenge to the narrative of domesticity and respectability that bound women within a gendered location (Blunt 1994; Mills 1991; Birkett 1992). According to Mills, rather than infrequent, this challenge was enacted by hundreds of women in the nineteenth century (1991:1). It is noteworthy that while middle class women were the exemplars of bourgeois ideals, they were also the group from which most women travellers heralded (Mills 1991:27). They had the time, finances and social networks to realize a journey.

Mills points out that a discourse of femininity made a virtue of powerlessness and invisibility, while a narrative of imperialism facilitated women's journeys (1991:94). Imperialism accorded women both a safe passage and a structural advantage within the setting of empire. Their mobility was nurtured by a political climate that confined the movement of others. Moving between locations of patriarchal alterity and imperial centrality, Victorian women occupied contradictory and ambiguous identities along the way (Blunt 1994:36-38; Blunt and Rose 1994:11). Rather than an easy dichotomy of public and private, home and away, women moved through the multiple and shifting terrain of gender, class and race.

Mary Kingsley provides one example of this fluidity and ambiguity. She ventured away from the constraints of Victorian respectability and into the masculine terrain of exploration and science, but at the same time maintained a "circle of familiarity," the symbolic trappings of Victorian dress, demeanour, and social networks (Ingemanson 1993:12). Traipsing through West Africa with parasol, lace and petticoats belies a transplanted femininity. Blunt reconciles this paradox of Kingsley's accentuated "femininity" with her "masculine" exploits of adventure and science.

...her behaviour was seen as both spatially and temporarily differentiated, with potentially

masculine traits distanced in time and space from the celebration of her femininity on her return and current activities at home. In this way, although Kingsley could be praised as superior to other women, this conceptualization did not challenge patriarchal constructions of women's subordination because it was located away from 'home'. Overall, the complex ambivalence of constructions of gendered subjectivity illustrate the reflexive relationship between the arbitrary and retrospective constructions of 'home' and 'away' and the distinctive representations of a woman who travelled between them. (1994:141)

Kingsley's multiple positions, however, can not be so easily spatialized. While an ardent, self-professed imperialist who used her "class net" in Africa (Russell 1986:210), Kingsley was also a vociferous political activist at home, campaigning against the hut tax that was being imposed on Africans, and lobbying on behalf of free trade and merchant interests. As a political activist and lecturer, Kingsley crossed the boundary that delineated gender spheres and blended the attributes of 'home' and 'away.' She enacted a position that took advantage of her experience of travel.

Much of our understanding of Victorian women's journeys is derived from their travel writings and diaries. Mills reminds us that the politics of the production and reception of these texts reflects male emblems of power (1991:44-45). Literary style, access to publishers, and readership were governed by male tastes and networks. Like travel, the act of writing and publishing was gendered. But equally, our

retrospective analysis of women's journeys and writing is marked by contemporary knowledge and epistemology that reinterprets and rewrites the past. Our understanding is, and will always remain, partial.

It is necessary, however, to dispel the aura of exceptionality that renders Victorian and contemporary women travellers an anomaly. Perceiving them as intrepid or eccentric articulates a discourse of exclusion that locates these travellers beyond the realm of 'normal' behaviour and peripheralizes their activity. Women have travelled alone in the past and continue to travel solo today. What is important is why they travel and what travel means to them.

With regards to Victorian women, Cardinal asserts that,

the practice of journeying into unknown territories may be said to have functioned as a fundamental trope for aesthetic and psychic exploration. (1997:135)

Distance attenuated the provided script of social and cultural roles, and nurtured the possibility of improvisation. Women improvised in new contexts; they enacted a different way of being. The performative quality and content of travel which involved a process of "self-fashioning" is evident in the diaries, narratives and biographies of Victorian women. It is equally resonant in the narratives of contemporary solo women travellers. They travel, move and relocate in spirit and in space.

## Chapter Two

### NO CONSTANT PLACE: SHIFTING MORAL GEOGRAPHIES

Perhaps there are as many reasons for travel as there are travellers. Place, departure, journey and return all have different meanings for different people. A consistent observation recurs, however, in the narratives of the women I interviewed. Being away provides an opportunity for self-reflection and self-discovery.

It allows me to find and understand myself even more. Travelling has developed me into a different person from the me who didn't travel. I learned that I can do anything. I can do anything I want or nearly. There are many, many choices in life. I never had this view before travelling. I can go here and do this or go there. Also, I am more free. I am not tied down to anything. It was really hard for me to let go before I started travelling. Now I can't believe how easy it is and why did I think it was so hard? If I don't like a place, I can pick up and move. Basically the world is my oyster. Chloe

I think we travel to define ourselves. It allows and even forces me to step outside myself, my thoughts, my attitudes for weeks at a time. Travelling enlarges my knowledge of myself, the world and my place in it. Karen

Travel provides both space and time to know and to care for the self. It is also a ludic interval (Crick 1994:6; Cohen 1985:205; Turner 1969) that nurtures improvisation and

the enactment of a more aesthetic self. It can be a period of metamorphosis.

Van Gennep's (1960) model of ritual can be secularized and employed as a means to analyze travel (Adler 1989a:1368). Van Gennep differentiated three distinct phases within ritualized rites, a period of separation or detachment where customary roles and statuses are abnegated and the initiate is disrobed of his/her social person, a period of ambiguity, liminality, where the initiate remains divested and outside structure, and finally a period of reintegration in which the participant is invested with new social threads and reincorporated into the social order.

Travel follows a similar pattern with its usual format of departure, journey and return. Departure implies a spatial and temporal detachment from "the network of social relations and understandings" that constitute the space of home (Massey 1993:62-63). We leave 'place' when we travel.

But what exactly do I mean by place? Place implies residence, permanence and a degree of immobility. We have a place and are assumed to know it. It scripts us as cultural citizens, gendered beings, and as social individuals. In the Foucaultian sense, we are attached to our identity and allocated a place, subject to prescriptive social conventions and cultural codes. Reposed in discourse, power "permeate(s), characterize(s) and constitute(s) the social

body" enacting its effect on every individual (Foucault 1994:211). Such positionality locates an individual within a social world that circumscribes behaviour, within a symbolic order that imbues all roles, identities and statuses with meaning, and within a spatial reality that provides the stage upon which the human drama takes place. Place is a matrix of habits, discourses and practices.

Departure can provide a reprieve from some of the aspects of place with its incumbent expectations. Amy's first solo journey at age 16 was a flight from expectation. Born into a family of educators, she says she was expected to go to university. Instead she ran. She spent a year travelling solo. "It was so easy and there was comfort in being by myself and thinking about everything and coming to grips with everything and escaping it and getting to know myself." Now 26, she has had several more solo journeys, 2 of which lasted a year. At present, Amy is employed with a federal government agency in a job that involves travel to Third World countries where she organizes conferences that address such issues as poverty alleviation and health and safety concerns. She is working on her Master's degree in urban planning, but credits her travels as a primary source of her education.

You change every trip. You become a little more cynical about the world, I find myself. I do a lot of Third World travelling now. I come back and I get cynical about materialism and about



people in their idea of right and wrong, and what's important and what's not. Amy

Sarah, age 29, quit university after a few months and undertook a year long solo trip, much to her parents' dismay. Following this, she later returned to university. She has recently returned from several years in Russia and the former USSR where she both worked and travelled. Sarah rejects the social niche which has been prepared for her.

I come from a middle class Jewish family and there are a lot of expectations. The expectations on me growing up, without them being verbalized, were certainly there. This is what you do. You go to school. You do well. You go to a good university. You do well. Then you find a job. Then you find a husband. Then you produce children. Then you live in the suburbs. Then you start the whole process all over again. I find it very claustrophobic here and I find when I am out and about in the world you have a sense that there is a whole world outside middle class suburbia.

Sarah wants to break her life's narration, a narration that she feels is culturally bound with gendered impositions and expectations. She feels stifled by her Jewish-Canadian background and its attendant cultural expectations, by a middle class script and by her family. She seeks the reprieve and escape that travel offers.

I have never been a conformist woman and part of what I think felt comfortable in the world of travellers was you didn't have to be conformist. I have people around me all the time telling me that it is inappropriate and trying to get me to

fit into the norm. So even though deep down I am very secure in what I know, and I am very secure in knowing that I can achieve anything I want, when people tell me I should do x, y, z, and I go yeah, yeah, yeah, and I don't do it, they think there is something wrong with me. But that does not mean that I am not affected by what is said around me all the time, and what the nonverbal expectations are of me. So when I leave, I am me. When I am travelling I am me. I am totally and completely me. I am me the independent woman. I am me the confident person. I am me inquisitive, exploring. I am me personality wise, whether it is totally exuberant, whether it is hyper, whether it's inquisitive, whether it's you know "I really need to fall asleep right now." I never feel lonely. I never feel like I am an incompetent human being, not knowing where I am going or what I am doing. I never feel like I am doing something wrong. Travelling for me is my drug. It's like self-medication. It's my release from the pressures of North American expectational woman fitting into x, y, z form of society. "Thirty is just around the corner" my mother says to me, "and you are going to have to have kids and you are going to get married, and isn't it time to settle down." I am the last of the grandchildren who "doesn't have a life" you know.

As Sarah attests, the relevance of gender is an important consideration in how social beings experience their life, in how they are scripted. Culturally configured, gender reflects the socially learned behaviours and expectations that impose a pattern on the lives of individual men and women. With regards to women, by conflating biological sex and social function, society has carved a "maternalized place" and normalized an expectation that women should reside there (Rose 1993:66). Mothering is perceived not only as a physiological function but also as an innate, ascriptive core of being that is imbued with such

'natural' qualities as nurturance, gentleness, emotionality and reticence. Mother becomes a prototype for all women (Lakoff 1987).

Essentialist perceptions establish the parameters of expected womanhood and deny the multiple and varied spaces and positions that are women's reality. Essentialism is a form of enclosure, a point noted in the recent debates on feminist discourse which challenge founding feminist politics on assumptions of a unified community of perception and experience for women.

The enclosure of essentialism aligns with other discourses to contribute to a recurring theme of confinement for women (Rose 1993:144). Discourses of femininity, respectability and safety conspire to perpetuate gender prescriptions, to reify gender as a category of difference and to keep women in place and in sight. Gender relations are constituted within an asymmetrical social organization of sexual difference and division which makes place an especially poignant issue for women.

Probyn disaggregates the metaphor of place into locale, location and local in order to reveal the layers of discourse and epistemology that impact particularly on women (1990). Locale is the locus of gendered conventions and understandings, but it is also central to emotional wellbeing. Location involves the categorization of knowledge into a hierarchy that is implicitly gendered.

Local reflects how gender is actually practiced in the everyday of life. Together, locale, location and local constitute place.

It is within the locale that women experience gender as a political category that is discursively determined. Women are scripted with roles, attributes, impediments and expectations, and these are naturalized as innate or as commonsensical (Probyn 1990:177). Gendered roles and perceptions of appropriate feminine places, such as the ones that Sarah articulates, are examples of locale.

Anne, now 54, grew up as the oldest girl in a large, working class, Catholic family. She says she was always responsible for chores and for keeping her younger siblings in line. Working part-time in high school she managed to save enough for her first trip away. "By going away I created a world of my own. I created a life for myself. Away I was more myself, but one that others didn't recognize at home." Her father's reaction to her journeys, which he articulated with the statement "all I wanted was a normal girl," is an indication of the presumptions, expectations and consequences of locale.

Probyn's location is the epistemological terrain that privileges particular knowledges (1990:183). Drawing from Foucault's work on knowledge and power, she suggests that knowledge is hierarchically ordered in such a way as to dismiss or subjugate other (subaltern) knowledges. An

exclusionary tactic, specific voices and views are privileged. According to Probyn, this tactic conceives of women's knowledge as intuitive or irrational and omits it from the domain of valid, rational discourse (1990:185). For Probyn, location is a discursive practice of exclusion and oversight that discredits or silences women. In a later chapter the validity of women's knowledge becomes important as we look at discourses of fear and the strategies that women travellers use to ensure their safety.

Finally, local is seen as a conjunctural 'here and now', a "fragmented set of possibilities" and "momentary politics of time and place." (Probyn 1990:187) 'Here and now' encompasses prevailing discourses and conventions, but is also open to innovation and opportunity. I would submit that the very act of leaving 'place,' of departing, is a function of the local.

Leslie, age 54, may most dramatically express what place and departure can mean to a woman. Leslie says she knows that her core being was established by the experience of being the helpless female child who was sexually assaulted by her father, and at a time when issues of violence against women and of incest were not acknowledged publicly to the extent they are today. Secrecy prevailed and "I said nothing." Leslie erected her own boundaries and comfort zone and incarcerated herself within them.

It's typical of incest survivors to really need to be in control, to know exactly what's going to happen next, to not have to take any risks because suddenly there's a real safety issue around everything in your life once you've been through that experience, so, I had no interest in travel. I wanted to be at home, to get my house in order, keep my house under control, get my life under control and that was it.

Leslie says she operated very much as a loner not really trusting anyone. However, looking at her father in his coffin after his death she realized,

Wait a minute. He can't hurt me anymore and that means now the only limits are limits I'm placing on myself. So what are the limits? Why am I limiting myself?

She eventually became involved in a relationship with a man who enjoyed travelling and she agreed to travel with him, albeit reluctantly at first. Since then she has continued to travel and now goes solo. According to Leslie, travel "pushed the window of my comfortability, stretching my comfort zone." Travel has meant pushing boundaries and leaving both the place her father 'built' and the one she constructed for herself.

Social roles and gendered expectations are instrumental in motivating many women to travel, especially for the first time. Twelve of the women I interviewed, however, strongly refute this explanation. They travel by choice and do not feel that their choices have ever been constrained. When

exploring this idea with them, they cite the following four factors as contributory: strong mothers or female models, family involvement in social activism with an emphasis on equality and fairness, childrearing practices that do not make gender differentiations, and family support and encouragement to "be all that you can be." Alone or in combination these factors have a positive impact on how these particular solo women see and enact themselves, emphasizing clearly that subjectivity is contingent and provisional, a process rather than a script.

Vanessa offers a good summation to the discussion of place and how place is performed.

I will tell you that the woman who wants to travel just has to say bugger off to that. It was totally unacceptable for me to travel as much as I did and I just said "that's tough."

Discourse is the scenery, the backdrop, and even perhaps the stage upon which actors perform. It is not necessarily the performance.

Using Van Gennep's model, I have posited departure and separation as analogous, with both involving distance from the everyday of structure. Continuing with the model, travel's journey can be seen as a liminoid event, a "moment in and out of time" and "in and out of social structure." (Turner 1969:96) The traveller is adrift, out of place and

out of familiarity. As Turner notes, this liminality can be provocative and imaginary, a welcome reprieve from structure's pragmatism (1969:133). Spatial and temporal distance from the familiar and the habitual nurtures an opportunity for subjective reflection and transformation (Turner 1975:213). The journey provides a new time and space, an opportunity for metamorphosis, a "geography of the possible" (Probyn 1993a:6). It is an aesthetic event that encourages travellers to explore other ways of being. Thus, the journey can be both literal and metaphorical.

Travelling alone provides a lot of time for thinking about my life as it has been and as it is now, about future plans and my hopes. So in a way I suppose I'm exploring myself. Susie

Travel is a journey within my journey. It's another experience, it's another adventure, it's a new chapter in your life. Claire

There is a strong perception that travel provides an opportunity for a better acquaintance with self, or even the enactment of a different self. But what is the self? Are we the unique, bounded, and fixed individuals of Western philosophical tradition?

Increasingly we are recognizing that subjectivity, who we are, is multiple and layered and is contingent on time and place (Hepburn 1994, 1997). Most aptly, Wolff refers to the provisional and contextual nature of identity as



"nomadic subjectivity" (1995:117). The self is restless and mobile, subject to discourse and practice but also open to experience and invention. Never rooted in one location, subjectivity moves beyond provided horizons of meaning and understanding (de Lauretis in Alcoff 1994:110). Travel, as a literal act of movement, nurtures this restlessness and provides an opportunity and impetus toward ongoing relocation. As Foucault has suggested, "the main interest in life is to become someone else that you were not at the beginning....The game is worthwhile insofar as we don't know what will be the end" (in Martin 1988:11).

Foucault's writings on the technologies of the self provide a means with which to reconcile the constraints of structure with the agency of the travelling self. But what do we mean by structure? Structure implies that there is an objective social reality that imposes patterns upon social life. Those patterns underlie how we think and feel and how we act (Jenkins 1992:78). If life is a game, then structure fashions the players and provides the rules.

The imperative of structure has been and continues to be an abiding theme in the social sciences. For Saussure, human action and thought is the product of linguistic and semiotic systems. For Freud, it is deep psychological structures that define and control human emotion and action. For Marx, the material means of production and reproduction articulate our place within the social and economic order.

Foucault's early work elaborates upon a "mode of subjectification" (Deleuze 1995:105), the process by which subjects are scripted and attached to an identity. Technologies of production, of sign systems and of power subject subjects to prevailing epistemologies and to normative practice (Foucault 1988:18). In daily life, these are the gender behaviours, the social norms and expectations, and the cultural codes which constitute our social being.

In examining the genealogy of local experience, Foucault recognizes the regimes of power, knowledge and truth that are inherent in all social constituencies. The technologies of production, sign systems and power have an objectivizing impetus, a momentum of determinacy upon which structure builds. Subjects are subjected to structure (1988:18). Critics of post-structuralism have extrapolated this to imply an impotent subject denied of any innate character, personal intentionality or even a consciousness separate from the scripts and dictums of the wider social and ideological order (Alcoff 1994:103).

Foucault, however, sees power as dynamic and diffuse, and subjectivity as a process, not a relation. Conflict and struggle are ever present.

Nevertheless, we are given the important insights that the construction of subjectivity is a pervasive form of social control and dominance but that resistance is possible at a microsocial level and in many and varied

forms. In Foucault, people are never just victims, they are free subjects with the ever present possibility of alternatives through resistances. Individuals are encouraged not to discover who they are but to refuse what they are and to imagine and approach what they could be. By resistance he means the struggle against the form of power which pervades everyday life and constitutes individuals as subjects in the sense of being subject to somebody by control and dependence and subject to their own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge. (Wearing 1992:326)

Subjects can refuse their subjection and institute an optional course of life (Rabinow 1984:22). Subjectivity is mobile. This becomes increasingly evident in Foucault's later writing wherein he articulates a concern with those "specific techniques that human beings use to understand themselves." (1988:18) He investigates the philosophical heritage of care of the self and knowledge of the self, and elaborates the technologies of the self as technologies,

which permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality. (1988:18)

Rather than the subject as an object of power, Foucault becomes increasingly interested in subjectivity as a process of creation.

Foucault conceptualizes subjectivity as a three dimensional map which can be folded and refolded along

continually new lines to reveal the engagement and disengagement of power, knowledge and subjectivity. This "mode of subjectification" is creative and envisions the subject not only as a product of power and knowledge, but also as a form of artistic impression, of invention and of new folds (Deleuze 1995:113). I shall quote at length from Deleuze's Negotiations.

What Foucault felt more and more, after the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*, was that he was getting locked in power relations. And it was all very well to invoke points of resistance as "counterparts" of foci of power, but where was such resistance to come from? Foucault wonders how he can cross the line, go beyond the play of forces in its turn. Or are we condemned to conversing with Power, irrespective of whether we're wielding it or being subjected to it? ...Crossing the line of force, going beyond power, involves as it were bending force, making it impinge on itself rather than on other forces: a "fold," in Foucault's terms, force playing on itself..It's no longer a matter of determinate forms, as with knowledge, or of constraining rules, as with power: it's a matter of optional rules that make existence a work of art, rules at once ethical and aesthetic that constitute ways of existing or styles of life. (Deleuze 1995:98)

There is creative space in subjectivity; space to grow, to change, to go forward, or backward, to take chances. Subjectivity exercises an artistic will and creates new forms along the way. Improvisation, however, has its limits. The trinity of power, knowledge and subjectivity is a continual and enduring process of negotiation. "The subject is defined by the movement through which it is

developed. Subjectivity is that which develops itself" (Deleuze 1991:85). The subject and subjectivity must reconcile and cohabit. Life is a journey.

Travel is a journey within life's journey. It has all the elements of performance with the journeyer as lead character. Travellers imagine, improvise, enact new identities and develop personal styles.

Travel lends itself to dramatic play with the boundaries of selfhood, and the character ideals of the performers and their audiences are as various as the performances...For, in the final analysis, all performances of the travel art are best understood as conjuring devices for inducing one of many possible worlds, grounding unique forms of subjectivity, to reveal itself. (Adler 1989a:1385)

The liminality of travel nurtures the creative spirit and delves into the mystery of self. It is a revelatory process and a signficatory romp. The traveller gets to know the self better and comes back changed.

Going to a different place you can be anything you want to be. I think that's why travel for me, well, I felt that I came back a different person, because I was allowed to be what I wanted to be and by then, by the time I came back, I was that.  
Debbie

A co-worker asked "how did travelling affect you, ...how did you change?" and I said "what do you mean" and he said "in what way" and I said "in every way." I can't say oh it just changed my ideas about capitalism, or it changed my ideas about women's roles in the family. It's very

frightening, but I feel I'm a completely different person than I was. Michelle

Travel is such an important aspect of my whole way of living. It became a part of me. It wasn't something external to me that I did, or that I had this and I went off and made a trip and came back again. It was my lifestyle. Jean

The traveller returns changed. As a ritual of mobility, travel crosses new boundaries, extends autonomous practice beyond the realm of locality, and in doing so reaches new spatial, temporal and personal dimensions that confront the practice and discourse of home. If subjectivity is always transient as postmodernism claims, then the literal act of mobility only serves to enhance the process of process.

Like Van Gennep's initiates, the women travellers I met stand alone and enjoy an autonomous liminal journey (1960:185). They "craft" themselves (Kondo 1990), improvise, and revel in their own narrative of passage. The experience of travel leaves an indelible mark upon who they are and how they know themselves. Embodying their journeys and experiences, and enacting new positions and new perceptions, they return changed. The rhythm and movement of subjectivity is recast by the aesthetic forms created along the way. The possibilities that travel evokes speak of other possibilities.

Themes of transient subjectivity, of literal and

metaphorical mobility, of process and flux demand that we re-examine Van Gennep for a moment. Van Gennep's model of rites of passage posits three separable and discreet phases of ritual process with fairly rigid boundaries and divisions that are spatial and temporal. Similarly, the travel experience can be perceived to accommodate a three stage model bounded by the event of departure, movement and the inevitable return. In both scenarios liminality provides a reprieve from structure and an opportunity for self-reflection and personal growth (Turner 1969). The journeyer returns changed.

Within Van Gennep's model, however, the place of departure and return remains fixed, a static point of reference that individuals leave, rather than a dynamic and ongoing nexus of ever-changing social relations. He erects discreet boundaries that locate people either in structure or temporarily out of structure. For the most part, mobility is severely hampered. How applicable is this to actual travel? Do such discreet categories as absolute departure or absolute return ever really exist (Game 1998:44)?

According to Van Den Abbeele, there is always a "temporalization of space" which shifts the meaning of space so that the place of return is never the same as that of departure (1992:xix). In addition, the 'place' of home goes with us as we travel so that we never completely leave

locale, location or local behind. They are a part of who we are. Many of the women I met admit that emotional ties and family concerns are constant companions. Jill is the only child of elderly parents and she worries about their health. Vanessa misses her grandson when she travels. Sarah, Amy, Michelle, Mary and others contact home on a regular basis in order to reassure family and to assuage their own emotional needs. There is no easy dichotomy of home and away.

As well, rather than an separable event the journey becomes incorporated as part of our being which is always an ongoing process. Jean's sentiments that "my mental perception of what my life has been, including all the travel, has always been that it's a forward process. In a sense, I never come back" bear reiterating. The journey is ever forward.

Social life and subjectivity are both processes involving continual movement and change, a nurturing of impermanence. Game warns us not to valorize travel as a singular and discreet spatial and temporal state, or as fleeting moments of non-fixity (1998:43-44). Instead of stages or doors, she suggests that travel is about spatial, temporal and personal bridges that link home and away, and facilitate the travelling of our nomadic selves. In agreement Mina states "I am part of all that I have met and it is part of me."

The rhythm and movement of subjectivity is continually



being recast by the aesthetic forms that we create along the way. As social beings, we are always on the road.

Braidotti acknowledges that as "libidinal surface, field of forces, threshold of transcendence" the body underwrites much of our subjectivity (1989:98-99). It is both a site of power and the locus of memory (Rabinow 1984:17; Foucault 1984:55-62; Jenkins 1992:75). As well, as the instrument of travel and the sentient core of the travel experience, the body is both the actor and the audience.

One valence of our subjectivity is gender. We have a "fleshy, material reality" (Alcoff 1994:116), a sex that carries with it gender implications. Gender is a provided script that casts characters according to social and cultural expectations. It accords place. However, the script is full of inconsistencies and of opportunities for innovation, so that impromptu performances are possible. Players do not just act their part, but interpret and change it as well (Henderson 1994:129). They may 'have' a gender, but how they 'do' gender can vary, thereby making gender a multidimensional reality (Bohan 1993:14-15). Ultimately, it is how they negotiate through discourse, practice and institutions, how they travel so to speak, that defines their way of being.

While not denying that gender is relevant, my solo

women downplay its importance. Vanessa asserts, "I certainly thought that I had a right to do what I wanted to do and at a time when travelling by myself, with my husband and two kids at home, was not considered socially acceptable. Bugger it, you know. I'm doing it anyway." Jean moved to Mexico with her 3 children after she and her husband parted company in 1967. She found someone to care for them and hopped on a bus. Anne is beginning a new relationship with the understanding that she will continue to travel alone. Finally, although she has co-habited with a male partner, Wendy does not like the restrictions and expectations that a live-in relationship entails. Preferring to establish her own schedule and not wanting to feel obliged to anyone, Wendy chooses to live alone. She travels whenever she feels like it.

There are ways to negotiate through social life, to 'do' gender differently. Much of social theory has emphasized the embeddedness of subjectivity in social and cultural predicament (Rosenberg 1990:180). We have been quick to locate individuals, to root them in social and cultural subjectivity, and to deny the multiple folds and nomadic possibilities of subjectivity. There is, however, a multiplicity of gendered practices and a repertoire of ways of being, and they attest that gender and subjectivity are always contested, interpreted and enacted (Swartz 1997:88). More emphasis is needed on the creative, rather than the

created, aspect of subjectivity. There is no constant place. Culture and identity are always on the move. Woman as a travelling subject is a metaphor of social possibility.

## Chapter Three

### TOURING THE TOURIST BODY

It was with some academic arrogance that a respected sociologist turned to a colleague seated beside him during a session of the 1998 International Sociological Association Congress in Montreal and was heard by me to say "there are no more travellers, only tourists." His pronouncement of the demise of the traveller sounded wistful, rather like a refrain from the folksong 'Where Have All the Flowers Gone.' Instead, his 'Where Have All the Travellers Gone' expressed lament at the passing of that romantic figure, the traveller, and at the evolutionary trajectory of travel's subject from traveller to tourist to post-tourist. Rather than gone to young girls or soldiers which was the flowers' fate, his lament sees travellers succumbing to modernity and consumerism, and tourists to the superficiality and nihilism of postmodernity.

Contrary to the recurring obituary that much of the theoretical literature on tourism suggests, reports of the traveller's demise are premature and unfounded. The traveller is alive and active. Indeed, all the women I interviewed insist that they are travellers, not tourists. For them, the difference lies in how they travel, why they travel and what they do as they travel. Rather than a

leisurely respite or consumeristic foray, travel for them involves enormous physical and emotional effort and commitment, a measure of insecurity with regard to the activities of daily living, and a willingness to open oneself to serendipity and spontaneity, to follow whims and opportunities. Despite, or maybe because of, its rigours, discomforts, and inherent insecurities, the solo women I met are passionate about travel. It inhabits their soul and their imagination and has become an integral part of their life. As well as literal mobility that acquaints them with new places and people, travel offers an opportunity for metaphorical passage, a spiritual and emotional odyssey. As Mina describes,

Backpackers have the most organic style of travelling. Budget travel throws you into the culture. You're compelled to live with and like the local people. That, in my opinion, is true travelling. This sort of interaction with a culture questions your culture, beliefs, civilization and philosophies on life. This affects, alters and changes you, not necessarily to the ways of the country that you visited but to a higher state of your own self..of your place in the world. It incorporates a spirituality to what was mere existence.

For these solo women the intensity of experience and depth of meaning that is an inherent part of their travel journey distinguishes it from what they see to be the organized, commercialized and superficial act of tourism. Somewhat disparagingly, they reiterate a familiar

characterization of the tourist as preoccupied with "leisure, play, consumption, indulgence, and freedom from restraint" (Crick 1994:5). The following are some of their many comments that posit tourism and travel as separate and distinct activities and that qualify the content of each category.

I don't want to be a tourist. I want to travel and learn and not just go somewhere and lie on a beach and relax. The tourist wants to not have to work. The tourist is going to a new place because a change is as good as a rest, but don't make me work at this. For example, my Dad goes to the Caribbean and he wants his beer cold and he wants it right now. He wants his meat to taste like it does in Canada. He doesn't want to try new things. He'll stay in a fancy hotel in order to get his cold beer and familiar food. I think the traveller is someone who is more willing to open up and interact. It means work and it means thoughtfulness and it's not relaxing. It's just never relaxing. Nancy

I look upon travelling as truly experiencing the culture versus tourism where it is the shotgun approach of seeing all that has to be seen. That's just a checklist. Debbie

The traveller is the individual who makes their own decisions about where they are going to go and how they are going to get there, whereas the tourist is guided by other people, or by tour books. Pamela

Tourists want amenities. They want to spend 2 weeks in the sun drinking rum punch. They go places that are cheap and never wonder why its so cheap or what consequences there are for local people. Susie

Travelling takes effort and energy and patience.

It's a lifestyle, while tourism is part of the norm. Sarah

I've found that the cheapest or low budget trips are the ones that expose you closest to the culture. Tours screw it up because of their agenda to impress you. Tourism is such an industry and that ruins it all for me since I see myself as a traveller not a tourist. Mina

The best part of travelling is the unplanned parts. For many people it's difficult to know that staying in one place for a while just to see what happens, or not knowing until you get there where you'll spend the night, can lead to the best memories. Years from now it's the people that you meet that will be recalled, not the museums or the many cities crammed into some itinerary. Amanda

One distinction is that there are people who view challenges as problems and there are other people who view challenges as opportunities. If you are willing to view challenges as opportunities then you might like travelling. But if you view everything as a problem then you had better sign up for a tour and be taken care of....I went to India by myself and spent 8 weeks living with people, doing what they did, going out and weeding the fields, bringing in the water buffalo, sleeping on rolled beds with a different quilt every night and getting head lice. I found that a really incredible experience. It was really core at addressing where am I at? What is life about? What is common to all people worldwide and what's different? What's unique about me? I would call that travel. Leslie

Tourists generally require a particular level of comfort, mental and physical. They go to see things, instead of experiencing travel with their heart. Joy

Travel is more than a break from work. It makes history come to life. It forces me to step outside myself, my thoughts, and my attitudes for weeks at a time. It subjects me to different value systems, to different political and cultural

systems, to different religions. It allows me to understand how centuries of religion, war, politics, and economics have shaped a people into who they are today. It allows me to see how the changing of the seasons affects the rhythm of people's lives. Travelling enlarges my knowledge of myself, the world and my limitations in it... Travelling widens your perspective of yourself and of others if you let it. Karen

I think that a tourist is really superficial. They never forget that they are Canadian. I like to forget that I am Canadian and be part of the milieu where I am going. Esther

The difference between travel and tourism is depth. The traveller wants insight more than just a quick sensation. It takes more time and effort. It is savouring, not a quick fix. A true traveller takes time to digest things. It's not task oriented. Instead, the traveller takes time to feel the life pulse of the people and the place and to invest in their own emotional wellbeing. It is a passion and it bothers me that people have fewer passions now. Anne

Time, effort, an economic style, an intensive experience, a willingness and openness to opportunities and adventure, and a definite interest in the people who are one's host are all reiterated as qualifications that constitute the experience of being a traveller. Personal passage that is physical, emotional and spiritual is also a recurring narrative. These descriptions seem almost antithetical to the portrayal of the tourist as inveterate consumer, voyeur, disenchanting symbol of modernity and co-conspirator in the cyber-reality of postmodernity (Ritzer and Liska 1997; Urry 1990; Veijola and Jokinen 1997; MacCannell 1976; Rojek 1997). Yet the



traveller is subsumed and eventually lost in the category 'tourist'. Academia has toured the tourist, analyzed and diagnosed, probed intent, discerned reflexes and reactions and established discursive parameters. The result is a narrow body of theory which reduces diverse experience to quantifiable interpretation. The depth of individual experience and motivation, and the complexity of social and gender relations which are inherent in the travel process, are often overlooked. Circulating around the statement "there are no travellers anymore" are assumptions, presumptions and verdicts that deny human experience. The event takes precedence over the subjective meaning of that event. The traveller gets lost.

The allegorical comment inherent in the travel/tourism process is multidimensional and diverse. It speaks of different social locations and relations, of gender considerations, of cross-cultural exchange and ultimately of global processes. To homogenize the travel experience, to exclude divergent experiences and meanings, is to silence a commentary that is revelatory and instructive.

"There are no more travellers, only tourists" is an unfortunate opinion. Travel lives in the hearts and bodies and spirits of the solo women I met. They are travellers. Their journeys have been both geographically and metaphorically extensive. If they are absent in much of the tourism literature, it is because no one has asked for their

comment.

The Touring Body: Eye for an I

You can't depend on your eyes if your imagination  
is out of focus.

Mark Twain

Failure to recognize and acknowledge the traveller is more than an oversight. It betrays a narrow predilection for predictive models that comfort social science's persistent preoccupation with positivism. Objectivist inclinations govern how we view the traveller/tourist and how we circumscribe and contain their experience (Lakoff 1987; Foucault 1980:112). Quantitative research denies the qualitative, personal world of feelings and sensations, and of cognition and meaning (Smith 1997:56). As a consequence, both the potential and possibility of space itself and the multidimensionality of both meaning and subjectivity are overlooked (Hebdige 1990: vi).

The encompassing narrative of tourism discourse betrays an inclination toward immobilizing the tourist/traveller within theoretical parameters and homogenizing their multiple and diverse experiences. The traveller is rewritten as a tourist. Instead, emphasis needs to be put on emancipating subjective experience from theory's tendency to confine and on acknowledging multiplicity and alterity.

The traveller/tourist is both the subject and object of travel, the one moving and being moved, motion and emotion. The body is at the centre of that process. It wears the blisters, endures the variations in climate, responds to sensory stimulation, feels thirst, suffers hunger and fatigue, enjoys sensation and knows rapture. The world is experienced through perceptions, the senses and ultimately the body. As the locus of sensibility, sensitivity and sensuality, it is both the canvas upon which experience is written and the instrument for that experience's expression.

Despite this experientialist reality felt by real bodies in a real world (Lakoff 1987:206), the analytic discourse on tourism has generally dismembered the traveller and, from a theoretical perspective, left the body at home. It has presumed a generic tourist, usually white, male, and Western, who is otherwise generally devoid of context (Veijola and Jokinen 1994:127; Richter 1995). What is privileged in the theoretical literature is the sense of sight. The eyes stand in for the I. The traveller is reduced to a spectator.

This "hegemony of vision" has an entrenched heritage in Western epistemology (Adler 1989b; Levin 1993:5). We perceive visibility and insight as inextricably linked. To see is to know. The mind and sight take precedence over the body. The preoccupation with the mind/eye, however,

creates a blindness that refuses the rest of body experience, as well as the emotional, spiritual and psychological content of I. Academic discourse on tourism has itself been very ocularcentric to the exclusion of other sensory and bodily perceptions (Veijola and Jokinen 1994). As Veijola and Jokinen ask, does contemporary travel theory leave

any place for meanings, experiences and knowledge created by, in and for the body? Is the gaze really detachable from the eye, the eye from the body, the body from the situation? (1994:136).

The theoretical literature has set its sights upon the tourist and has been inordinately concerned with the tourist gaze and the objects of that gaze. MacCannell views the tourist as an allegorical character who displays society's discontent with the superficiality and predictability of life, and engages in a secular quest for authenticity (1976). His is an allegory of salvage that seeks an imagined idyll, wherein Eden is the ultimate referent (Adler 1989a:1376; Williams 1975:9-12). MacCannell's tourist scours sights, signs and markers in an act of visual consumption. Temporary relief from modernity's alienation is attained by the purchase of fantasy and by a rhetoric of moral superiority ( MacCannell 1976:9; Williams 1975:9).

Urry's tourist is also discontent with the everyday and

seeks solace and reprieve in the extraordinary that travel offers (1990). As well, being an accomplished voyeur, Urry's tourist has a wandering eye that peers, spies and captures in a fervour of specular delight. Feigning innocence, the tourist gaze consumes people and places in a context of asymmetry that presumes mastery. The returned gaze is never contemplated.

For Rojek, cyberspace and virtual reality are making spectatorship increasingly easy. His tourist is busy indexing and dragging images and impressions from one visual medium to another (1997: 53-54),<sup>1</sup> ultimately creating a "tourist collage" of transplanted fragments (1997:62). In need of ever new distractions and thrills, the 'jaded' tourist undertakes a succession of superficial and ultimately unsatisfactory excursions (Rojek 1997:56). Given the proliferation and mass distribution of its visual treasures, the world is increasingly rendered a mundane exhibit of banal sights that do not live up to expectation.

Finally, as idioms of postmodern society, Cohen's tourists are confirmed cynics who collaborate in a visual smorgasbord of simulation (1995). They are content with artifice and staging and incorporate it into their imaginary as an "aesthetic enjoyment of surfaces." (1995:21) Indeed,

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<sup>1</sup>Rojek defines indexing as textual, visual and symbolic representations of an original space or place. Dragging refers to the combination of elements from separate files of representation to create a new value.

they engage in a search for inauthenticity that insists on simulation and crafted artifice (Ritzer and Liska 1997:107).

In all these theoretical perspectives, vision retains a paramountcy that it does not deserve.<sup>2</sup> Concern with sights, images, views and vision privileges one sense to the exclusion of all other body senses, perceptions and responses. Inevitably, the tourist remains a sightseer and the spiritual, emotional, sensual and experiential content of travel is overlooked. As a result, the diversity of meaning that travel evokes is circumscribed and theory is immobilized.

One other instance of theoretical myopia needs to be addressed. There has been an implicit assumption within both the tourism industry and the theoretical literature on tourism that presumes a male tourist (Swain 1995; Kinnaird, Kothari and Hall 1994; Richter 1995; Enloe 1989). Richter suggests that tourism operates within a "sexualized environment" that influences who travels and how they travel, that determines employment patterns within the tourist industry, and that portrays people and places within a discourse of exoticism and consumption (1995:78). Reviewing the history of tourism, Rojek and Urry describe the gendering of myths and fantasies and the sexualized

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<sup>2</sup> There are contrary interpretations of what the tourist experiences. See Harrison 1999, 1998.

nature of travel as a "spermatic journey of conquest" and of unfettered male libido (1997:17). The perception that travel is a male activity has influenced the production, presentation and consumption of tourist infrastructure and services, and the analysis of tourism as a social phenomenon. If, as Craik suggests, "the dominant position of spectatorship is thus as if through male eyes, irrespective of the gender of the spectator," then the relevance of the 'tourist gaze' to women's experience becomes even more suspect (1997:130). Do women really want to conform to established itineraries or tourist destinations that are intent on attracting a male gaze?

In fact, the solo women I interviewed do not describe their travel experiences in terms of the gaze. Indeed, when asked they eschew sight as the focal point of travel. They find it a narrow and inadequate 'view'. While many articulate an interest in art, architecture, museums and/or natural landscape which are all interests that involve looking, they deny these pursuits as the primary focus of, or motivation for, their journeys.

Travel is a whole body experience. It's my whole body that goes through it. It gets sick from the change in water, smells the new smells, sees the sun rising over the mountains, and it has to carry me from place to place. If I don't put my whole being into travel I don't learn anything new. Pat

Learning, experiencing and feeling, rather than

viewing, are described by Wendy as her primary motivation for travel. In fact she advises that "you can miss what's around you if you focus on something particular." With this in mind, Wendy leaves her camera at home. She recounts an episode that took place at an Israeli airport. Security officials were searching her knapsack convinced that she was engaged in some kind of illegal activity. Her claims that she was a traveller yielded the response, "How can you be a tourist? You don't have a camera." Obviously, the sightseer and the voyeur are well entrenched characterizations. They are narrow representations, however, that the solo women I met decline adamantly.

Five of the women that I interviewed do not take cameras with them on their travels. These five suggest that the journey is imprinted in their mind and their memory. They feel that taking pictures would detract from the moment and the experience. As Debbie explains,

Your camera or your movie camera gets in the way. I studied film, but (on a trip) your movie camera becomes the eye which disconnects you from the reality of the moment.

While most women do take photos, they concur that sight and sites are only a very small part of the travel experience. The eye is not the I. Instead, they describe travel as a body and soul event that is experienced sensually,



emotionally, physically, psychologically and spiritually. It is inextricably linked with their shared proclivity for challenge, learning and personal growth.

It is not only the eyes but the entire body that savours the travel experience, and enjoys its sensual delights.

Travelling alone I feel in closer contact with the world and with the people I come in contact with. Travel is so much: its emotional, being in touch with your feelings and thoughts about life; sensual, being aware of your surroundings - colours in landscapes, textures of the geography, local smells, sounds, tastes of the local food; and its also spiritual, a stretching of my wings, exploring who I am and living in a spirit of adventure. Amanda

It's a whole body experience. Certain smells combined with the feeling of the sun or the slant of light can take me back to Italy if I close my eyes. Being in a busy downtown street smelling exhaust and feeling a mist can take me back to London. It's more than a memory, it's a total immersion in what you are feeling at the time. Susie

My love for travel and for new adventures, places, smells, sounds and people has grown exponentially. I love the sounds of languages that I can't understand, syllables that are gibberish to me, but in them lies a whole language and a whole understanding for someone else. Mina

These savoured memories are the poetics of travel that inspire personal subjectivity and stir the imagination. Challenging theory to look beyond the sociological and biological, Braidotti describes "the insight of the body as

libidinal surface, field of forces, threshold of transcendence" (1989 98-99). It is a body that can not be written out of the travel experience. Both the experience itself, and the memories of that experience, evoke a sensual and emotional response that involves the entire body, inclusive of the mind, in the travel process. As Bordo suggests, we live our bodies as the building blocks of experience and of meaning (in Sawicki 1994:291).

At a more mundane level, Jill, Michelle, Sarah and others also stress the body's complete commitment to the travel process, but in more pragmatic terms. Their emphasis is on the challenge of daily routines like finding food and clean water, ensuring personal hygiene and locating somewhere to sleep. Sarah's statement that,

the difference between travelling and tourism is that travelling is simply about survival...where to get your food, where to get your sleep, (and) how to maintain simple hygiene so you don't end up viciously ill...It is dealing with the day in day out difficulties of life that makes you a traveller...It's not about seeing a specific place. The place is an added bonus.

demonstrates the body's centrality to the travel process. Debbie's advice "eat when you're hungry, sleep when you're tired" reinforces this perspective. Meeting bodily needs is a preeminent occupation given the rigour of these solo women's travel style. The body has its demands. It also has its pleasures. Those demands and pleasures, as well as

sensations, perceptions, intuitions, longings, despairs and joys are all a part of the travel experience.

The emotional content of travel is almost tangible in the narratives of the women I met. Remembering their journeys makes them glow with enthusiasm. The adventures and the mishaps, the joys and woes, the people and the places are all remembered with an intensity of feeling. As well, many solo women describe a self-conscious process of emotional growth, "of pushing limits." Amy, Michelle, Sarah and others suggest that travel pushes the traveller's emotional limits beyond their normal bounds where they feel comfortable, and thereby expands their comfort zone.

According to Amy,

Travel pushes people into new situations and experiences where they feel anxiety, discomfort, even fear, and they have to deal with that. It forces them to deal with new situations and eventually to expand their comfort zone. It pushes back their protective bubble.

The idea of pushing one's limits, of testing oneself, comes up repeatedly in the narrative of the solo women travellers I met. The contingency of travel makes both physical and emotional demands upon the body. It is also understood, however, as a pathway to personal growth.

To ignore the emotional content of travel with its accent on subjectivity, on feelings, and on personal growth is to circumscribe the meaning of travel for real people

with real bodies. Travel is a physical, sensual and emotional journey, the mobility of I.

Presumptions that vision orders the travel experience ignore the diversity of meaning that travel can have. Instead of a sightseeing venture, travel is a personal and spiritual event that engages the body in its physical, mental and emotional entirety. Travel is also an ontological journey. As one solo traveller explained, "I go to hear my own voice."

The women I met cherish the unpredictable, savour the sensory and sensual, and invite challenges. They avoid the tourist bubble of "transplanted familiarity" which they feel is a protective zone that anaesthetizes experience (Ritzer and Liska 1997:99). Rather than the conveyor belt of Fordist tourism, they prefer and embrace serendipity and spontaneity. Their pathway meanders through ontological landscape, sensory delight, physical challenges and cultural exchange. Indeed, if as Veijola and Jokinen suggest, "the book of travel is infinite - written by each and every travelling body," then these solo women travellers author their own journey (1994:148).

**Did You Get A New Haircut?**

Since I am exploring some of the theoretical

speculations about tourism, this seems a good place to briefly address the issue of travel as symbolic capital (Bourdieu 1986). Does travel confer recognition or status on its participants that they can convert into economic or social advantage? This question derives from the fact that travel does require both time and money which would suggest that a class dynamic may be involved (Craik 1997:119; Hughes 1987:209-210; Rojek 1997).

Many of the solo women who I met neither come from a privileged class background, nor enjoy a privileged one now (see Figures 1 and 2). This self-evaluation of economic status seems to be born out by their personal narratives which provided details about their daily lives, and by my own observations made during my visits to their homes. What they do have, however, is cultural capital. Twenty nine of the women have university degrees and one has a college diploma. Despite this, their employment situation, and consequently their income, ranges. Many choose jobs that allow them flexibility for travel. Jill provides an example of someone who makes her work schedule adapt to her travel plans. She spends several months each year travelling which has a direct impact on her income level. Five of the women have chosen some form of teaching as their career precisely because it allows them a bulk of time for travel in the summer. Nine women have had intermittent employment, a few work as they travel, and several women are now retired.

What they all share is that they describe travel as a priority. They consider it a way of life and not just a respite from work, and they are very willing to make sacrifices in order to travel.

These solo women are very aware that their style of travel does not appeal to most other people. As discussed earlier, they prefer a meandering itinerary that is purposefully economical. In this way they feel that they get a better understanding of the local culture and people. Yet as Sarah says, "It is never easy. It takes effort and energy and patience." The rigour, the uncertainty and the lack of familiar amenities would dissuade most people from engaging in such an endeavour. It is a style of travel that is not leisurely.

As a result, the solo women who I met definitively decline any suggestion that travel confers status or advantage. To the contrary, they find that people have no interest in hearing about their solo travels. Jill says,

..people aren't interested. I come back from nine months and the reaction is usually 'did you have a nice trip?' and before I've hardly begun to talk they'll say 'I bought myself a new car' or something like that and cut you off. They just aren't interested. So you don't travel for others, you have to travel for yourself.

Vanessa has experienced similar responses and gave up even mentioning her travel experiences long ago. Sarah says she and a friend, who also travels, have a code they call 'did

you get a new haircut?' According to Sarah,

People will say 'tell me all about your trip' and I will start 'oh, it was really amazing' and before long they will interrupt with 'did you get a new haircut?' or something else that is not related. People don't really care. Or sometimes they will cut you off with 'when are you going to settle down?' They don't understand an obsession with experiencing the world.

Many of the other women have had similar experiences.

Indeed, several women admitted that one of the reasons that they responded to my notice was that it would provide them with an opportunity to remember and recount their travel experiences.

For these solo travellers, travel is not a form of symbolic capital. They are not seeking higher status or economic advantage. They are also not inspired by notions of an idyllic place, by consumeristic indulgence, or by voyeuristic impulse. Their journeys are personal texts written by and for the body, a body that incorporates the mental, emotional and physical. These solo travellers return momentarily content, only to be stirred by a restless spirit that yearns for the emotional, sensual and physical engagement of further travel.

## Introducing myself

In the preceding text, I have attempted to recount the various narratives of travel as they have been related to me by the solo women travellers with whom I met. Ever mindful of my position as writer and editor, I have tried to clearly and honestly represent their experiences and the themes of their journeys. I am also aware, however, of the interpretive process that is an inherent part of both research and writing.

Not being a solo woman traveller myself, I have relied on my informants' narratives. I have constantly returned to them for guidance and direction. As well, I have tried not to intrude too visibly into the discussion of their experiences. The next chapter, however, discusses a geography of fear and a discourse of vulnerability that is experienced by all western women, and that accompanies these particular solo women on their journeys. Because this perception of vulnerability informs the daily movement of all western women in the everyday of life, I have chosen to use the pronoun 'we' and to enter this text as a woman who is subject to the discourse of fear.



## Chapter Four

### OTHER SPACES, OTHER PLACES

"Aren't you afraid going by yourself?" is the inevitable question that is constantly asked of solo women travellers. It is invoked by our perception that a woman, on her own, in unknown spaces, is in danger; that in venturing away from home she compromises her safety. The persistent posing of "aren't you afraid?" reveals an entrenched discourse of vulnerability that portrays women as potential victims, especially of sexual attack, and surmises that women need the protection of familiar places and familiar people, and of men in particular.

Women's bodies are central to this discourse of fear. As Susan Griffin suggests, a fear of rape

keeps women off the streets at night. Keeps women at home. Keeps women modest for fear that they be thought provocative. (in Gordon et al. 1980:145).

Drawing from statistical research compiled around the world Mazey and Lee claim that sexual aggression and the threat of sexual attack intimidates all women no matter what their age, class and race (1983:40).

Women learn to be wary, to be vigilant and to not compromise their safety by being in the wrong place at the

wrong time. We develop mental maps of environments, grading them on a scale according to their relative safety or potential for danger and then practice avoidance of areas deemed unsafe or questionable (Valentine 1989:386). We restrict our movement. We learn to read the signs; the furtive glances, hostile stares and flagrant suggestions that threaten our person. Part of the everyday, we often fail to recognize how these comments, catcalls and gestures invade our personal space and dictate how we negotiate through public space. We know that even 'safe' streets can harbour ill intent. Ever mindful of who is on the street and how they are acting, we watch our backs. We develop strategies of protection and self-defense that involve a self-conscious awareness of where we are and what time it is. We are street savvy. Darkness, even fading light, can compromise our safety and so both space and time are always considered. These strategies travel with us as we move about but they can also circumscribe what route we take.

In going alone, solo women travellers say that they use the well-honed safety strategies that they have practiced all their lives.

I mean I don't go out in a city that I don't know at night, or as it starts getting dark. I look at the street and I see if there are women walking alone. Are there local women walking alone? How big are the groups of people who are walking together? I use those signs. How I deal with safety is always by being aware of where I am, who is on the street and who isn't and I always carry

what I call safety money with me which is cash for a cab if there is such a thing. Wendy

I am cautious and aware at home and I should be just as cautious and aware when I am travelling. Chloe

I don't party at night. I normally do not drink. I eat my evening meal near my lodging and turn in fairly early. I do not invite any kind of sexual activity or put myself in a position or location where it might become a possibility. Karen

I don't know why that safety didn't frighten me. I think probably because I have always been careful, like even in Canada, I am careful all the time. Nancy

The lessons learned in the everyday of life are ingrained as part of our consciousness. For many women the discourse of fear is intimidating and confining, and so they wonder how other women manage to travel alone. Yet, as the solo women travellers themselves attest, the tactics and strategies that we use as we negotiate public spaces are equally relevant no matter where we are. Whether at home or away travelling, these women survey the streets, are always aware of their surroundings and are careful, especially at night. 'Beware the wrong place and the wrong time' is an abiding motto.

Underlying our ideas about safety and about the wrong place and the wrong time, however, are premises that separate space into a public and private dichotomy. A moral geography of space and time presumes private space to be familiar and safe, but public space to be differentially ordered into

degrees of unsafe (Valentine 1992). Public space may harbour imagined crimes and acts of violence, and so we move self-consciously in public space. We also restrict our movement.

From childhood, we learn that the streets are not safe, particularly for women, and especially at night. As a result, if a woman is sexually assaulted while walking home at night, we question her commonsense and her integrity. We blame her lack of caution. She should have known better than to be out alone at night. What was she thinking? Or we blame the space as dangerous. After all, deserted streets, dark nights and unfamiliar places are known to harbour crime and violence aren't they? We participate in a "regime of truth" that locates the where and when of safety and persuades women to confine themselves to those safe places and times, or to not venture out alone (Foucault 1984:73; 1994:211). We collaborate with an ideology that de-emphasizes the aggressor or perpetrator of violence, usually a male, and instead transfers blame to spaces, to times and to victims (Valentine 1992:25). It is a gospel of vulnerability that intimidates and encloses.

In this way "the politics of everyday fear," (Massumi 1993) as moral discourse, works on and through bodies, particularly women's bodies. It renders women potential victims. While statistically men are more likely to be victims of personal violence, it is women who are seen as most vulnerable because of the threat of sexual attack (Valentine

1992:22; Baumer 1978; Warr 1985). A compelling and pervasive discourse, the fear of sexual violence insinuates itself into women's lives and experiences. It makes us wary. It restricts where we go and when. Ever aware that the wrong time and the wrong place can have dire consequences, we confine our movement. We discipline ourselves. We police our activities and become our own guardians, without confronting the tactic of disciplinary control that makes it all necessary (Foucault 1980:55). We should be asking why are the streets unsafe, especially at night? Why are women considered to be more vulnerable when much more crime is enacted by men against men? Who benefits from an ideology that perpetuates the need for women to restrict their movements or to feel compelled to seek company and companionship? How do peril and propriety interact?

In his discussion of sexuality, criminality and insanity, Foucault explores how bodies are governed by discourses and practices that designate appropriate behaviour and spatialize where and how that behaviour should take place (Rabinow 1984:17). Foucault sees a governing impulse that is intent on creating a docile body, a process of surveillance and supervision, and ultimately the elaboration and institutionalization of self-discipline (Bennett 1994). Similarly, the discourses of fear and safety elaborate an inextricable link between the control of space and the control

of the body. It is a masterful tactic of power employed on the battleground that is the body,

...a dynamic of noncentralized forces, its dominant historical forms attaining their hegemony, not from magisterial design or decree, but through multiple "processes of different origin and scattered location" regulating and normalizing the most intimate and minute elements of the construction of time, space, desire, embodiment. (Bordo 1997:347)

Experienced as a part of the everyday, an activity of the ordinary, a commonsense reality, the issue of safety induces us to censor our bodies and to willingly comply to a discourse that seems to be in our own self-interest. We learn early that we are vulnerable, that there is a wrong time and a wrong place, especially for women. We learn to discipline ourselves and to be ever mindful of where we are.

To venture into the unfamiliar, to go different places, or to go out at night, we learn and generally accept that companionship, especially male companionship, offers protection. According to Valentine, we participate in and perpetuate an ideology of vulnerability and dependence which articulates that one man can protect us against all other men (1992:24). The governing impulse inherent in a discourse of fear and safety imposes a form of supervision, and culminates in the process of self-discipline whereby women accept the limitations imposed by fear, and the blame if something does happen (Rabinow 1984:17; Foucault 1980:55).

An implicit assumption that familiar places are safe places informs where we go, when we go and how we go. According to Mazey and Lee, the sanctity of home is equated with and supposes to ensure the moral quality of women's lives (1983:38). As the place where we live, home is assumed to be a haven, the locus of safety and protection. This ideology of home as safe is extended and extrapolated onto a zone of familiarity. We mentally map environments on a scale so that our neighbourhood, our hometown, our country, people who look like us, or who speak our language, are graded as more familiar and therefore safer than places and people that are different. The farther away from the familiar of home that we go, the more exposed and vulnerable we feel. An implicit process of 'othering,' this scale of vulnerability assumes the 'other' to be dangerous, unpredictable and threatening (Said 1979). There is a normalization of the conceptualization of the world as unsafe, a process which the media reinforces constantly with its narrative of the danger, crisis and instability of 'other' places. The world is portrayed as dangerous.

The perception that danger and violence are public activities that occur in unfamiliar places can be misguided. Crime against women is usually enacted within familiar spaces, often the home, and by familiar people. Contrary to images of home as haven, Canadian statistics paint a grim picture of

domestic violence with 70% of all women killed in 1988 being murdered at home (Probyn 1993b:271). Yet we continue to equate danger with public space and to see the stranger as the villain. The media conspires in this situation with its under-reporting of domestic violence.

The solo women travellers with whom I spoke are well aware that home is not a paragon of safety. For Leslie, it was in her childhood home that she was least safe. She endured both her father's incestuous advances and his physical wrath. Vanessa says that the only physical assault ever directed against her person was enacted by her first husband. Accordingly, she remarks that the number of women who confront a dangerous situation while on a trip is insignificant as compared to the huge number who are injured at home by husbands or other males in their lives.

Similarly, Canadian and American neighbourhoods and cities cannot necessarily be posed as safer than foreign places. The scale of vulnerability and the rhetoric of 'other', which mentally map spaces according to their level of familiarity, presume that distance and difference spell danger. Home is the reference point from which other places are judged. Perceived as zones of familiarity, as imagined ideals, our homes, neighbourhoods, cities and country take on a mantle of security that they do not necessarily deserve. They are seen as safer. It is an ideal that overlooks, even conceals, our own social problems. We relativize our own



situation by positing other places as less sanitary, or as less hospitable, or as backward, or as unsafe. They are different. We presume that the world beyond our own terrain of familiarity harbours danger.

The solo women travellers I met challenge the scale of familiarity which posits North American homes, streets and cities as safer.

The first thing people ask me is aren't you afraid to go alone. And my reaction is why would I be afraid. I live in the downtown of a Canadian city. There have been a few murders and rapes around here. I mean, why would I be in danger abroad? Because they are a different colour? Because they are a different people? I think that has something to do with it. People fear what they don't know.  
Jill

There are times when I am more fearful in this city than I ever was travelling. I guess I tried not to put myself in a situation, but of course that situation can come up no matter what. It can come up here in Toronto and I think it's more likely to come up in Toronto. I find in Toronto I am walking with my purse and I am in a business suit on my way home from work, and I am much more likely to be attacked or mugged or worse, than I would be travelling with my backpack. Amy

A friend of mine was raped in Los Angeles near her home. I've been all over Asia and I always felt way safer there. Chloe

Mary adds her own perspective to the issue of fear and safety by drawing on her personal experiences. Of African American descent and physically handicapped, Mary grew up in

the northern United States. She has fond memories of lengthy car trips taken with her family which she credits for her own interest in travel. She also remembers, however, that her family would always pack a picnic because they were never sure if they would be welcome in restaurants.

There are always people with attitudes. Even in their restaurants, they won't tell you to get out, but they make sure you know that they really don't like you being there.

Race is a relevant aspect in any discussion of how space is experienced and has been underexamined within travel discourse. As Mary attests, racial attitudes and prejudices are dispersed throughout the zones of familiarity, revealing that issues of safety, security and race are inextricably linked, and cannot be easily mapped. Local streets, neighbourhoods and cities may be far from friendly, especially for people of colour.

I live in Detroit. I live here every day. What more can I say. It's just not that safe but it is my home.

Mary's encounters with racism at home have made her more wary when she travels.

I always consider what the racial climate is and I am always aware that people might approach me more because of a stereotype that they've developed about people of African descent. There's this

thing about we're looser and all that stuff. When I travel alone then I have to be aware that people might get the wrong impression... And if you run into trouble, you learn that you cannot count on the authorities being on your side either. Not in all places.

The nature and visibility of Mary's physical handicap has meant that she has had to overcome both physical challenges and emotional barriers. She has had to deal with her own insecurity and fear, as well as with the reactions of others to her disability. She says, however, that she has come to a point where she accepts who she is.

I am different and there is nothing wrong with being different. I think that helps me with the racial thing too.

Mary has faced many obstacles, but she says that she "intellectualizes them as challenges."

She nurtures her love of new experiences and new challenges through travel. She tells the story of a man who is in Hell and who finds a door that may offer a way out. Since he doesn't know what is on the other side of the door he decides to stay where he is. Fear keeps him in Hell.

So my whole life has been facing that door, if nothing but for the physical handicap which is not the biggest, most major handicap in the world. My whole life has been learning to tie my shoelaces three times. I was 12 years old before I could open a pop can. I was 14 years old before I could comb my own hair. So my whole life has been pushing

that door, trying over and over to do certain things. We never really know what's on the other side of that door. But you have to have the willingness to face the unknown, to not know what's going to happen, and do it anyway. Feel the fear and do it anyway. You don't stop doing something because you're scared...I guess it's all part of having to deal with myself and coming to terms with how different I am. So I guess that travelling by myself is just part of that. There are things I wanted to do and people thought that I couldn't do. They were wrong. You can't let your fear get the best of you.

For Mary, the issue is not only how to keep ourselves safe, but how to conquer our fear.

Western women embody and enact the symbolic content of the discourse of fear. We live it in our daily lives. Conscious of our vulnerability, we avoid the wrong places and the wrong times, because we are mindful that all spaces can harbour potential problems. As a result, we learn to strategize, to read spaces and people, and to not provoke unwanted attention. Our acceptance of a rhetoric of vulnerability, and our strategies that read the human landscape, that practice avoidance of certain times and places, and that perpetuate a preoccupation with safety, all bespeak our consent to the discourse of fear.

We incorporate our experiences and understandings into a body awareness of where we are, how we should act and how to best take care of ourselves. It is a strategy of self-conscious awareness which is always with us as we move about.

The solo women travellers I met take these strategies with them as they travel. They move beyond the bounds of familiarity into the unfamiliar and in this way they seem to challenge the confining impulse of fear. Indeed, their response to the question "Aren't you afraid?" would unanimously be "NO." Wendy perhaps speaks for them all when she defiantly and angrily states, "This is my world too and if you're the one who can't control yourself then you stay home because I'm going!" By travelling, and particularly by travelling alone, solo women travellers seem to repudiate the concept of limited mobility and confinement that a discourse of fear prescribes. Is travel, however, a competing discourse or does it just displace and relocate fear's workspace? The fact that women must employ strategies of self-awareness and restraint while on the road, that they must watch the street, beware the night and not appear provocative tends to suggest that the discourse of fear and vulnerability is also mobile.

All the women I met agree that travelling safely means extending the strategies that they employ at home to other places and spaces. They share a tacit understanding that they are vulnerable and need to use a 'travel savvy'. On the other hand, many also found that being a woman has its advantages. Amy suggests that,

being female and travelling is sometimes even easier because people do treat you well. They are much more willing to help out or rescue a woman

than they would be a man.

Similarly, it has been Jill's experience that,

Being a woman is an advantage, because you are not threatening. Nobody is afraid of a 5 foot 3 inch, 45 year old woman on her own. I mean I am no threat. So women will take me into their homes but they would not take a 6 foot 2 inch or even a 5 foot 8 inch man in. A mature woman is not only not threatening but is perceived in traditional society as someone who has a certain amount of knowledge about a certain amount of things. I meet friends in India and other places because women my age ask me into their homes to have some tea and to talk.

Michelle suggests that women are less likely to be the targets of theft while travelling for two reasons. Firstly, she posits that many cultures see carrying money as a male prerogative so that would-be robbers are less likely to target women. Secondly, she feels that in many places it would be perceived as beneath a man's dignity, or unmanly, to rob a woman. Nancy agrees. While she is always careful, Nancy says that her solo experiences have been nurtured and enhanced by various "guardian angels"; men and women who have come to her aid along the way. According to Nancy, being a woman on her own, she evokes curiosity but also compassion.

The perception of woman as non-threatening yet vulnerable is paradoxical. On the one hand it impedes women's passage because of concerns for safety, on the other it opens the door to opportunities and encounters that are often denied to men. The individual narratives in the books Women Travel (Davies and Jansz 1990) and More Women Travel (Davies and Jansz 1995)

elaborate this theme of cultural exchange and opportunity. They are stories of shared moments and experiences, of being rescued or helped by men and by women, and even of being taken into a woman's sphere, that the authors suggest might not have happened had they been men rather than women. Being a woman can be an advantage. These books, however, are also a resource for female networks, for safety tips and for women-only opportunities that rearticulate women's need for protection and for circumspection. In this way, the narratives in Women Travel and More Women Travel parallel the experiences and the ironies encountered by the solo women who I met. They portray a world that beckons and that excites the imagination, where adventure is possible and even probable, yet they reaffirm that women's repertoire of safety strategies are essential for the trip.

What are the specific strategies that solo women use to guard their safety? Primarily, avoiding the wrong places and the wrong times is paramount. Solo travellers state that they survey the street, they do not venture out too far at night, they gather local knowledge which maps the landscape into safe/unsafe zones and they try not to provoke attention. These are familiar strategies employed in unfamiliar spaces. But more specifically, solo travellers speak of using their intuition, their ability to sense how a situation or a place feels. They read landscape with their body and with their emotional antennae. They use embodied knowledge.

In response to questions about safety Michelle offers,

I use anything and everything, but mostly I use my common sense. Women develop a way of knowing, a strategy for assessing. Your intuition is there for self-preservation. It's primal and that's why you should listen to it.

The idea of an instinctual sixth sense that is honed by experience is a continuous theme, articulated repeatedly by the solo women I met.

I try to be aware of my surroundings and if my intuition tells me I'm conspicuous I retreat in a dignified way and have had no problems. Amanda

There are reasons why your instinct is telling you "I'm not comfortable in this situation" and you have to trust them because they're the only thing you really can trust many times. It's something you observed. It's something you have noticed that's just off. It just doesn't seem right. I've had some really valuable experiences by taking risks but I've also passed up seemingly valuable experiences because it just didn't feel right. Debbie

I think safety is an overrated tourist preoccupation. You develop savvy as you go along. You have to trust your feelings because your intuition is very valid. Women always strategize about safety. They map out space and never lose control. They learn to be vigilant. Anne

I think intuition plays a huge role. There were definite times when intuition told me this is not a place I want to hangout. I always listened. Sarah

I had entrusted myself to him through this jungle that had no trail. And he could do anything he wanted to me. But there was a softness to his eyes, a gentle curve to his lips, and I knew he



would not harm me. When you travel alone you learn to read those inner maps. You learn to trust a landscape that is familiar only inside your head.  
(Mary Morris 1988:79)

Intuition is obviously integral to how women experience place and to how they read the landscape of social relations. The body reads social and environmental space. Women draw from the memory of past situations and experiences that is stored as personal and embodied knowledge.

...what is instinct but a kind of knowledge internalized from daily, secular repetition of actions, impressions, and meanings, whose cause-and-effect or otherwise binding relation has been accepted as certain and even necessary? (de Lauretis 1984:158)

As embodied thoughts (Rosaldo 1984:137-8), feelings represent a pragmatic strategy used by women in a variety of social circumstances. As has been noted, they are particularly relevant for the woman who travels alone.

The idea of feelings and emotions as pragmatic and strategic, as embodied knowledge, confronts and challenges Western cultural assumptions that privilege the tangible and concrete. Our heritage is immured in positivism and the exaltation of science as truth (Foucault 1994:204). It is a discourse that separates mind and body, thinking and feeling, rationality and irrationality and imposes a universal appreciation of reason as intellectual and unemotional (Rose 1993:7; White 1990:46). The body and emotion are dislocated

from the objective, rational process of thought.

It is our objectivist legacy that we view rationality as being purely mental, unemotional, detached - independent of our imagination, of social functioning, and of the limitations of our bodies and our memories. (Lakoff 1987:183)

Subject to historical and cultural definition, emotions are designated to be natural, irrational and even dangerous. They are perceived as inside the person, as subjective and therefore somehow idiosyncratic, and hence potentially beyond the bounds of reason and predictability. Equated with marginality and disorder, and with the natural, emotion is found lacking and is excluded from the domain of objective knowledge and scientific truth. If culture represents, and results from, cognitive process, emotion represents the raw and the natural (Lutz 1986:295).

As both an analytic and an everyday concept in the West, emotion, like the female, has typically been viewed as something natural rather than cultural, irrational rather than rational, chaotic rather than ordered, subjective rather than universal, physical rather than mental or intellectual, unintended and uncontrollable, and hence often dangerous. This network of associations sets emotion in disadvantaged contrast to more valued personal processes, particularly to cognition and rational thought, and the female in deficient relation to her male other. (Lutz 1990:69)

As Lutz points out, Western culture has entangled women

and emotions and devalued both. The canvas of woman is painted in hues of emotionality, blended with natural tones, and framed as a portrait. Woman's potential maternity provides the background scenery, the muted confirmation that women are innately more emotional. A flagrant manipulation and impressionistic endeavour, it posits emotion as a form of labour rather than a social skill (Hochschild 1983 in Lutz 1990:82-3). Emotion becomes a character flaw with which women are afflicted. Like nature, women and emotion are seen as unpredictable, prone to extremes and potentially dangerous, and thus in need of society's protection and control. Consequently, a "rhetoric of control" is invoked and operates to conceal the socially constructed content of emotion and to normalize a scale of emotionality that sets limits and boundaries to the expression of emotion (Lutz 1990:72; 1986:299).

A product of our symbolic system and cultural life, emotion has been subjected to objectivist categorization and rationalist interpretation which dictate where, when and how much emotion is acceptable, and thereby set boundaries which define what is normal and what is not (Abu-Lughod and Lutz 1990:19). Emotions are rendered to be a personal responsibility. We are expected to control ourselves. Those who overstep the bounds of appropriateness, whose emotions are too intense or too prolonged or deemed inappropriate, are chastised, demeaned or perceived as 'out of control'. Beyond

the bounds of 'normal' emotion lies the medical terrain of abnormality and disease. Viewed as a slumbering impediment, emotion is seen as unpredictable, eruptive and pathological, in need of medical attention and definition. The rhetoric of control has a disciplinary impetus that circumscribes the expression of emotion, and that implicitly and continually reaffirms emotion to be irrational, natural and potentially threatening.

That Western culture questions the validity of emotion, sets boundaries on its expression, engenders it as female and installs it within a medical discourse demeans its potential as a source of knowledge. Emotion is seen as an "unreliable and senseless guide" that leads people into dangerous mental and physical territory and renders them vulnerable (Lutz 1986:293). It would seem a poor companion for the woman who travels alone. My informants, however, find that given the insecurity and unfamiliarity of new times and new places, and the physical and emotional challenges that are inherent in travel, it is their intuition on which they rely. It bolsters their awareness and provides them with a repertoire of past experiences and pertinent knowledge from which to draw. Their emotions are their commonsense, and they trust that sense.

The way you can spot strange situations at home, all those signs are universal. You can spot people who are behaving abnormally. You can spot people whose interest doesn't feel right. I hate to use the word commonsense, it has gone so much into disrepute, but you have to use your commonsense.

You can identify when things aren't the way they should be, but it's either experience or some kind of sixth sense or some kind of intuition working.  
Vanessa

Call it intuition, or commonsense, or sixth sense, but emotion is a perceptive guide. Women rely on it in the familiar. We learn to read human landscape and to strategize accordingly. We embody both our own personal understandings and experiences, and the cultural discourses of fear and vulnerability with which we are confronted. Emotion is a way of knowing and a strategy for assessing. Emotion is intelligent.

As women travel they continue to rely on their emotional compass. They feel and sense their way through unfamiliar space and time. Safety remains a tacit issue, one that the solo women I met address almost unconsciously. In answer to the often asked question "Aren't you afraid?" their answer is a definitive "no". And they aren't. They find the world stimulating, challenging, exciting, alluring and wonderful. Rather than unfriendly and threatening, they suggest that unfamiliar places are often welcoming and very friendly. Interestingly, in contrast to the assumption of the familiar as safe and the unfamiliar as unsafe, solo women contend that other places are often safer. Home is not necessarily a haven, and North America's record of crime and violence contradicts its self-image as a zone of sanctuary. Yet,

implicit in their movement and actions is an awareness of safety as an issue, especially for women. They self-consciously map their journey using intuition as a guide. They avoid certain areas and recognize that the night harbours potential danger. They strategize using the tactics and knowledge that are accumulated wisdom, but which Western culture generally demeans as emotional and therefore irrational. Often misrecognized, the discourse of fear moves with them.

Concerned for their safety, women impose voluntary restraints on how they move about through space, on their body postures and the messages those postures send, and on where and when they move. The fact remains, however, that women do strategize and they do move beyond the bounds of familiarity. Women are travelling throughout the world and solo women travellers are doing it alone. From a positive perspective, this is a compelling narrative of agential action whereby women negotiate through space and move beyond the boundaries of the familiar.

Safety remains a tacit issue, however, and women strategize accordingly. They develop a street savvy and a travel savvy, a way of reading the human landscape. Ever mindful that there are wrong places and wrong times, they become their own guardians (Rabinow 1984:19).

Implicit in their restraint, in their self-censoring, is a control of the body through the control of space. It is a

form of subjectification with which women collaborate. In his discussion of how "dividing practices" induce a process of social, temporal and spatial compartmentalization, Rabinow looks at the growing discourse of social welfare with its avowed interest in the wellbeing of the collective, which began in the seventeenth century (1984:8). According to Rabinow, the sciences of demographics and statistics provided an opportunity and even an incentive to subject the public to scrutiny and to a process of evaluation that was legitimated by a rhetoric of progress and reform. Populations became rife for analysis within mathematical and scientific frameworks which posited medians, averages and norms (1984:8-11). Similarly, Foucault elaborates on medical and judicial models which establish the parameters of normal behaviour and thereby distinguish between sickness and health, insanity and sanity, criminality and obedience (1963;1965;1980). Rather than a search for origins or conspiracy, Foucault is interested in how discourse develops, how it is articulated and experienced and how it becomes incorporated as truth (1984). He discusses how discourses, practices and institutions submit subjects to control and surveillance, evaluate them using established parameters of normalcy, and spatially exclude or confine those individuals who are deigned as beyond the bounds of defined normalcy. Criminality is defined and criminals incarcerated. Those beyond the bounds of established parameters of behaviour are deemed insane and institutionalized. Those with

contagious disease are segregated from the healthy population and often banished to sanitariums and other marginal oases of contagion. Science and the law prove unrelenting and ever vigilant arbiters.

Ultimately, the content of scientific and judicial discourse becomes incorporated as truth, as commonsense understanding, and the social body enacts its own censure on those who appear to be beyond the bounds of accepted behaviour or defined wellness. The panopticon is internalized and a process of self-imposed restraint develops as individuals, groups and populations begin to practice "normalizing judgement." (Rouse 1994:98; Bennett 1994) They police themselves. The dividing practices inaugurated by science's vigilant gaze continue as processes of separation, confinement and self-enclosure that are deemed by most individuals to be in society's best interest.

The discourse of fear is a dividing practice enacted through the body. It controls how women experience space. Indeed, women consciously and self-consciously survey human landscapes and strategize for safety. They impose limitations upon themselves in the name of safety. As previously attested, the solo women travellers I met traverse the world feeling confident, independent and exhilarated. For the most part, they have found the world to be safe and friendly. But they do substantiate that their passage involves an ongoing and deliberate practice of appraisal and assessment which



impacts on where they go, when they go and how they go.

If many of the safety strategies employed by women can also be perceived as a form of self-imposed dividing practice, then we need to ask what the growing number of "for women-only" travel opportunities implies. In the last few years the number of women-only tour packages, women-only accommodations, women-only train cars and taxis, and finally gender specific travel publications have proliferated. These innovations can be seen as windows of opportunity that facilitate women's travel by allaying their fears about safety and by guaranteeing female company and camaraderie. They may represent an entrepreneurial response to the growing market niche provided by the increase in disposable income available to women and by their accentuated interest in travel as an activity. Women-only facilities and opportunities, however, can also be read as a dividing practice that segregates women and that institutes a new form of surveillance and exclusion. By using women-only tours and transportation, or by staying in exclusively female accommodation, women voluntarily separate themselves from the wider community of travellers. We need to ask, are women-only opportunities a new spatio-temporal means of discipline erected and nurtured by women themselves? There is no doubt that they make travel more amenable for many women and indeed encourage women's travel by supplying a safe place, but are they really expanding women's horizons by providing bridges or are they erecting new walls? Are women subscribing

to a form of self-discipline, and thereby establishing themselves yet again as guardians of their own enclosures? The discourse of fear is implicit in these recent innovations and opportunities. By proffering safe places they specify that women are vulnerable, and they nurture a process of segregation and discipline. Fear confines.

Wendy's comment "this is my world and if you're the one who can't control yourself then you stay home because I'm going" reflects the sentiment of all the solo women with whom I spoke. Rather than be immobilized by fear, they strategize for safety. They are not afraid, but they are not reckless either. Honing and relying on the tactics that are part of their street savvy in the familiar, they are careful in the unfamiliar. None of them, however, are interested in women only experiences or facilities. Instead, this group of solo women travellers follow the more diverse path of economical travel that leads them to hostels, local homes, and public transportation. Enjoying a more itinerant style of travel that is open to adventure and to new encounters, they venture off the beaten track.

To some extent solo women's travel is an act of mobility that bends and folds the rules. After all, despite hegemonic ideas about women's vulnerability, they do travel into the unfamiliar. And they go alone. However, the discourse of vulnerability with its imperative of safety goes with them,

and they map their route accordingly. They are ever mindful that there is a wrong time and a wrong place. Although they extend its boundaries and challenge its premises, the discourse of fear is an implicit companion and guide. Subtle yet provocative, concern for safety is a fundamental imperative and constant reality for all of these women's journeys.

## Chapter Five

### MOVING ON: TRAVELSCAPES

#### Thoughts and Limitations

Travel means engaging and moving about in other spaces. It is inherently about mobility. Geographic mobility entails physical motion. The traveller crosses borders and moves into new environments. Literally, travel takes people to geographic places beyond the original place of home.

Similarly, travel is a useful idiom for exploring changes in personal or ontological location. While spatial metaphors situate, position and locate people in social and cultural predicament, metaphors of travel symbolize the possibility of resistance and change. People move and are moved. They improvise and change. They experience departure from normative and everyday cognitive maps, they negotiate and traverse personal boundaries, and they remap subjectivity. As nomadic subjects they defy the bounds of static place. They travel.

This research explores the experience of both personal and geographic mobility, of being out of place, as narrated by solo women travellers. Despite its emphasis on identity issues, it is not an attempt to perpetuate the liberal humanist discourse on individualism. Rather than a search for some authentic self, this thesis posits subjectivity as

multiple, shifting and contextual, as "fictions" that are neither fixed nor stable (Butler 1990:298), as reconfigurations.<sup>1</sup> It attempts to address what Haraway calls the "geometry of identity" (1991:170), that is the interface between discourse, practice and subjectivity, between identity and sociocultural situation.

At the centre of this research are the narratives and experiences of 35 women who travel alone by choice. How they embody and enact both geographical journey and metaphorical passage has been employed to address the interconnected issues of space, gender, identity and 'mobility'. Both their shared experiences and understanding of travel, as well as many points on which they diverge, have been included in the analysis.

It is impossible, however, to follow all the pathways that the research process uncovers. As a result, a process of editing occurs. Within this thesis, the fact that most of these women keep daily written journals as records of their private thoughts and experiences is not discussed. I also do not address the pragmatics of travel: how they prepare for a trip, what they take with them, when they feel the journey begins, how they know that it is time to go home and what travel publications they use. Finally, the road is peopled and these women do meet both other travellers and local

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<sup>1</sup> Hepburn argues this point in her discussion of travel/tourism in Nepal (1994, 1997.)

citizens along the way. They describe an ebb and flow of personal relationships that are remembered with intensity. Although I heard many stories of personal encounters and relationships, there is no concentrated discussion of them in this text. Given the scope of these women's lives, travels and experiences, I could only follow so many pathways.

Another limitation that needs to be acknowledged is that solo women travellers are a very specific and limited research group. Indeed, the very qualities that they share connote their specificity. Their self-designation as travellers, their economical style, their meandering itinerary and their emphasis on independence and autonomy all speak of individuality and personal determination. Their path is not one that other women or men would necessarily want to follow.

While the solo women travellers I met have provided many insights into the meanings of space, place and travel, especially as experienced by women, a wider constituency would certainly facilitate a more thorough understanding. It would have been helpful to have had discussions with women who do not go alone, but who travel with companions or in groups. What are their experiences of place and of travel? Do they experience the same process of reflection and even metamorphosis? As well, a comparative analysis with men who travel alone by choice would have been interesting. Do they describe travel as a way of life? Is introspection and self-discovery as much of an issue for men? Do men put as much

emphasis on getting to know local people? Many of the women I met suggested that men are more concerned with "getting there," with the destination itself, while women are more interested in the process. Also, it was their cursory opinion that men made fewer interpersonal connections, both with fellow travellers and with local people. These observations reveal the need for more research on both the ontological and epistemological content of travel, and on the gender component of the travel process.

"I Go To Hear My Own Voice."

Having suggested the need for more thorough research especially with regard to issues of gender and tourism, I would like to return to the solo women whose narratives are the core of this thesis. Why do they choose to go alone?

It never occurred to me to not go alone. I probably instinctively knew what I consciously know and that is that I wouldn't have enjoyed it as much. I have read, and it's true, that if you go with a partner you focus on each other and you really don't open up to the trip itself or to the environment that you are going into. Jean

Going alone you have more time to spend thinking. You do discover and learn things about yourself... I appreciate solitude. I appreciate my space. Esther

My trips give me freedom. I am more prone to introspection. Just by the fact that you are by yourself, you are more prone to meditate about your trip and to share your thoughts with your mind.

You have more time to think about things, just by yourself. Claire

I'm a person who is reasonably satisfied with myself. I don't mind being on my own. And the advantage is that you can go pretty well where you want, the way you want, when you want. And, you will meet many more people. Pamela

These reflections reveal the introspective quality of travel which is facilitated by being alone. If subjectivity is a life long journey, then these solo women travellers suggest that travelling alone nurtures that journey. It provides both the time and space for personal reflection. It nurtures a personal metamorphosis. As one woman expressed, "I go to hear my own voice."

As well, they recognize that having a constant companion would compromise the experience of both literal and metaphorical travel. Instead, they want to set their own pace and map their own journey. They may connect with other travellers for a time, but inevitably they return to a solo path.

Travelling has made me learn a lot about myself. It's a cathartic experience. There's only so much of a book that you can read. The rest of the time you've got to deal with yourself. I love the feeling of being on the road, of both loneliness and camaraderie, of meeting fellow travellers and bidding adieu. But, ultimately, I love being alone. I love being free and unfettered and making my own way. Mina



I want to see and do what I want with my time and money 100% of the time. I want my travel experiences to be mine and mine alone. Karen

While the solo path is preferred, it is not an easy route. It takes energy, and determination and patience. As Sarah remarks, "It is never easy." Nancy adds her own comments.

The hardest part of travelling alone is how tiring it is. You have to make all the decisions for yourself. If you are on the train its "do I go to the bathroom now or do I wait? Do I take my knapsack with me or leave it here? Can I trust people in this compartment or do I lock it up? Can I ask them to watch it?" and on it goes. So even going to the bathroom is a major production at times, whereas if someone is with you it's easy.

Many of the solo women also acknowledge that there are moments when having someone to share a particular experience with would be nice. They add, however, that those wistful moments pass quickly and are never so poignant as to be worth compromising their freedom and independence. As well, they recognize that having a travel partner can create an insularity. The partners rely on each other and are less receptive to wider possibilities or contacts. Also, a pair of travellers may be seen as less approachable, especially by local people, who might be more comfortable dealing with a single traveller. In this regard, Amy adds a gender dynamic and suggests that,

being female and travelling is sometimes even easier because people do treat you well. They are much more willing to help out or rescue a woman than they would be a man.

Amy's perspective is born out by the numerous experiences recounted to me that involved being rescued, befriended, accommodated and regaled by local people eager to lend a hand or ask a question. The solo women I met are convinced that it was their solitary state that encouraged people's benevolence and curiosity. Given their interest in local people and local culture, this becomes a major consideration.

Rather than a solitary trek, the solo women travellers I met experience their journeys as personal passage and as opportunities for growth and learning. Solo travel provides a unique opportunity for subjective wandering, the nurturing of the restless self. For these solo women travel is a means to expand their comfort zone, to know and care for the self, and to hear their own voice.

A geographic imagination is also an integral part of the journey. Travel provides an opportunity to explore other geographic spaces and other cultural ways of being. However, as the next section suggests, the space of travel is peopled and a "politics of mobility" undergirds many host/guest relationships.

**Travelscape: Is place departure a space invasion?**

**Expanding the boundaries of self and exploring other places is**

an integral part of the journey. Travel relocates this personal passage in other spaces. Neither the performance of travel nor the process of personal mobility, however, occur in isolation. Other people are always involved. Home is inhabited and so is away.

An ideological event, travel is never neutral. As bell hooks remarks, one person's mobility is often predicated on another's immobility (1992:343). Veijola and Jokinen's allegorical flaneur embodies and enacts this asymmetrical relationship, and suggests that inequality is entrenched within the tourism process (1997:24). The flaneur wanders into other people's spaces with narcissistic abandon, free to enjoy the possibility that travel offers. The flaneur allegorizes the asymmetrical confrontation between those who possess the opportunity for leisure and those confined by the pragmatics of daily existence.

Massey also recognizes a "politics of mobility" whereby economic and social disparity manifest as a differential access to travel that is inextricably linked to the configurations of class, gender, race and nationality (1993:62). With regard to the tourism industry in less developed nations, many theorists have suggested that tourism is a neo-imperial and consumeristic incursion that exploits local labour, resources and culture without much perceivable benefit for the local citizenry (Nash 1978; Davis 1978; Bruner 1989:439). Rather than the proclaimed panacea for economic

underdevelopment and debt, they see the growth of tourism in many nations as occasioning growing social and economic disparity and contributing to a deepening of national debt. As well, they note that tourist revenues are not adequately 'filtering down', but are instead filling the coffers of a local elite and of multinational corporations. For the most part, the tourist industry is managed from the boardrooms of the developed world. With this in mind, Crick suggests that tourism is like a "gigantic potlatch" except that it facilitates conspicuous consumption without providing any redistributive efficacy (1994:6).<sup>2</sup>

Ebron describes travel trajectories as trajectories of physical, sexual and consumeristic desire cast in transnational space (1997:242). Inducing a process of "spectacularization" tourism commodifies both people and culture, and recycles such themes as the sexual, exotic and anachronistic 'other' (Crick 1994:5). In this way, tourism is instrumental in the production and reproduction of difference within a global context of political and economic asymmetry. The tourist exercises his/her privilege and purchases a fantasy. People and culture become commodities.

The practice of tourism can not be separated from the political, social and economic processes which provide its

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<sup>2</sup> Leheny offers a discussion of both the liberal economic and the dependency views on tourism (1995).

stage. The ability to travel geographically is a privilege that few of the world's citizens will ever realize.

The solo women with whom I met, and particularly the 19 in Figure 1 who prefer destinations in the less developed world, are fully aware of the moral issues inherent in travel. As Michelle reflects,

The fact that you can take the time and travel is something that most people in the places you visit will never have. They will never get to leave where they are and that creates such an inequality.

Wendy relates her story of being detained at the airport by Israeli security, an incident which evoked a realization of her own privilege and ingrained assumptions.

...when I was leaving Israel and I was interrogated for 2 hours and my luggage was gone through, kit and caboodle. And then from Tel Aviv I was going to Rome and I was interrogated again, and they took off my shoes and scanned them for bombs and they took my hand cream and scanned it and I thought they were going to go for the whole body search. I was afraid. My fear was what if something I don't know was there is found. What if they decide that I am a big enough suspect and they lock me up. What if this happens and I can't get to a Canadian embassy. I was afraid but I was also pissed off. But I also understood, knowing the history of Israel, why they had to do this. The event has stayed with me and I've thought, looking back, that part of what I felt beside fear was insult. And I'll tell you why. Because I'm used to being treated like a white, english-speaking, Canadian and people don't treat white, english-speaking Canadians like that. People welcome us into their countries. I am used to being treated like a privileged person in this world and that was a

shocking reality for me because I think of myself as liberal left wing. But the truth is that I am used to being treated in a certain way. I sound like an absolute snot. It makes you realize how many people are harassed on a daily basis because of their colour. That experience made me very aware that being a white, english-speaking Canadian I am privileged.....I incorporate experiences like this into my life, into the way I see the world and I spend a long time thinking about them. I incorporate my travels into my life, into who I am and I draw on those travels a lot and I use them as a means to new knowledge.

Raised in a family deeply committed to social activism, Wendy says she has always had a social conscience. She is presently very involved as an activist in environmental, feminist and gay issues. She is painfully aware of the inherently asymmetrical context of travel that was symbolized for her in this Israeli airport incident.

Wendy sees travel, however, not only as a personal odyssey of self-realization, but also as an avenue to knowledge and to a greater understanding of the world. She says,

I know that my ideas about the world have changed 180 degrees, no, more likely 360 degrees because I have travelled...When I travel I learn to question what goes on here...Also, there's a whole different reality when you see a news story and you've been there. People are real. Like the news from Israel is now more poignant for me. It makes the world a smaller place and a grander place all in the same breath.

Mina agrees and states,

Travelling has certainly sharpened my political senses and made me more aware and interested in

political issues.

Many other solo women articulate similar sentiments.

Travel has made me capable of seeing the world from a perspective other than my own. It has enabled me to reach out to strangers in a way that I never did before. It's made me more understanding of other cultures and other ways of thinking. Karen

I spent 8 weeks in India. I had to examine all of my values and my materialism and my western viewpoints on everything. We are wedded to this western, comfortable, affluent way of life. Travel is an experience that we can all benefit from, even just in terms of environmental awareness. In terms of shifting my world view I would say that I'm much less western centred than I used to be, much more inclusive and less judgemental. Leslie

I do a lot of Third World travelling now. I come back and I get very cynical about materialism and about people and their ideas of what's right and wrong, and what's important and what's not. Amy

The women with whom I met are profoundly aware of the political and economic asymmetry that undergirds the structure of travel. They recognize the privilege that they possess, and the statement that they make as visitors to someone else's home. They acknowledge the inequality and realize that they can never redress it. They also recognize travel, however, as a road to greater knowledge, one that confronts many of their western presuppositions and categories of thought. A destabilizing influence on identity, travel nurtures the opportunity to understand,

..what it is to be them and what it is to be ourselves in their eyes. (Lugones 1990:401)

As Amanda says,

I think that the best thing that I've learned is how many ways there are to live and none is innately better than the other. I never noticed before I travelled how caught up in things people are and how uneducated we are about the rest of the world; how smug we are as a society with no justification for feeling that way. Being an American is a wonderful thing in many ways, but we are not superior, and to connect with people whose exterior lives bear no resemblance to our own is a wonderful and comforting thing. It removes layers of fear and distrust.

The solo women I met move on. They incorporate their travels into who they are and how they see the world. For many there is a sense that travel has made them better global citizens who are more sensitive to other places and other ways of being. It has made the world more familiar. Embodying the lessons learned on the road, they try to extend them into their own personal lives, and for many, into their political work.

Many solo women also suggest that the way they travel may help to create bridges rather than erect barriers. By choosing to linger in one place rather than pass through, by attempting to meet and interact with local people, and by making an effort in the local language, these women abjure the image of the flaneur. As Anne says,

You make a personal choice as far as the attitudes you adopt and how you present yourself. It's



important to make an effort to dispel stereotypes and to be inoffensive.

The solo women with whom I spoke make a sincere effort to nurture connections and to dispel the stereotype of the tourist. They consciously attempt to observe and respect local customs. This is particularly evident with regard to dress. In countries where modest dress is a cultural requisite for women, they make every effort to clothe themselves accordingly. Nancy states,

I don't want to go into a culture and act like a whore. I don't want to seem ignorant or offensive. I don't want to be this person travelling through leaving a swath of bad opinions.

With regard to the economic disparity that informs many host/guest encounters, these solo women recognize its implications. They also maintain, however, that their economic style, their demeanour, and their limited and often utilitarian belongings negate, albeit only to some extent, the image of the affluent tourist. As well, they find some consolation in their own hope and belief that their style of travel is much more likely to contribute to the local economy.

I try and spend my money in an ecological manner. I want the people to benefit from my dollars and not some corporation or stockholder. Mina

I am quite sensitive about how patronizing a westerner can appear to be. There's no way to solve that though. You can either stay home because of it or still go. One thing is I am not

interested in the kind of travel that removes me from people. In some ways I feel that with the way I travel at least the money I do spend goes to the local levels of the economy and not to the Hilton International or the Holiday Inn. Vanessa

As mentioned earlier, these solo women stay in local accommodations, eat in small locally owned restaurants or buy food from local vendors. In this way, they feel that any monetary benefit derived from tourism does reach the local people who are the service providers.

The solo women I met make a conscious effort to bridge the cultural divide and to nurture a travelscape of mutual respect. As travellers, their emphasis is on connection not confrontation. Poignantly aware of the asymmetry of travel, a politics of mobility, they tread as carefully and lightly as possible, aware that they are visitors in another's home. As Vanessa remarks, the inequality of travel is not easily resolved and "you can either stay home because of it, or still go." The solo women I met choose to go. They travel.

#### Ever Forward

The self is restless and mobile. It travels. Subject to discourse and practice, it is also open to experience and invention. It moves beyond the provided horizons of meaning and understanding, in a process of ongoing reconfiguration. Travel, as a literal act of movement, nurtures this restlessness and provides an opportunity and an impetus toward

continual relocation.

The solo women I met move on. Indeed, they see their life as an ever forward process of learning and growth, of mobility. Lured by the promise of new experiences and new knowledge, they travel not only to experience other spaces, but also to explore and understand different ways of thinking and being in the world. They enjoy a geographic imagination and a restless spirit. Incorporating their travels into who they are and how they see the world, they never come back.

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