

## **TRAVELING AS AN EXPERIENCE OF FINDING ONESELF IN THE FIGURE OF THE INDEPENDENT TRAVELER**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The article reflects on the act of traveling as a significant experience essential to life, through a qualitative, descriptive and bibliographical approach. The purpose of this study is to analyze the development of the figure of the independent traveler, the subject of the study, who donates his or her time to travel and decides to travel without becoming attached to financial and social conditions. It verifies, in the process of travel, the construction of its image, whose experience exercised independently, can promote transformation, knowledge and self-knowledge. It turns out a search which is beyond the encounter with the other, the unknown, being rather a reunion with oneself. The subjective aspects of the act of traveling are considered when analyzing two literary reports of independent travelers.

### **KEYWORDS**

Independence; self-knowledge; travelers; traveling act

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## **A VIAGEM COMO EXPERIÊNCIA DO ENCONTRO DE SI NA FIGURA DO VIAJANTE INDEPENDENTE**

### **RESUMO**

O artigo traz como reflexão o ato de viajar como uma experiência significativa essencial à vida, por meio de uma abordagem qualitativa, descritiva e bibliográfica. Objetiva-se analisar o desenvolvimento da figura do viajante independente, objeto do estudo, sendo aquele que doa o seu tempo à viagem e decide viajar sem se prender às condições financeiras e sociais. Verifica, no processo da viagem, a construção da sua imagem, cuja experiência exercida com independência, pode promover transformação, conhecimento e autoconhecimento. Revela-se uma busca que está além do encontro com o outro, o desconhecido, sendo antes um reencontro de si mesmo. Consideram-se os aspectos subjetivos do ato de viajar ao analisar dois relatos literários de viajantes independentes.

### **PALAVRAS-CHAVE**

Ato de viajar; autoconhecimento; independência; viajantes

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## INTRODUCTION

The act of traveling is part of the process of social formation and cultural identity of the human being, who has been displaced since the beginning of human history, and reveals his quest for survival, pilgrimage, hedonism, influences from “culture and imagination” and movement to the desire to discover the *unknown* (Maffesoli, 2001; Trigo 1998, p. 25). At the same time that the act defies the “unknown”, it places the human being in the encounter with his own fear and strangeness, to the reconnection with himself (Cardoso, 2003).

In the Middle Ages, the act of traveling is limited to mystified fear and fecundated by Christian religiosity. But at the end of the seventeenth century, there is a change of mentality, and the taste for travel departs from exclusively economic interests for a “search for delight and emotions, for personal improvement” and aesthetic (Salgueiro, 2002, p. 2). The Grand Tour arises in the eighteenth century, a practice that is popularized and incorporated into European culture as a complement to the aristocratic formation. In the nineteenth century, there was an increase of aristocratic attendance in springs. And after the Industrial Revolution, advances in techniques, means of transport and new alternatives of locomotion, political, social and economic innovations, favor the organization of trips by Thomas Cook, considered by some scholars, as Trigo (1998), as one of the basics of setting the interest by traveling with the tourist molds.

With the advent of globalization, travel ceases to be just a status symbol and begins to express itself as an essential experience of the human being, the result of a hyperconsumerist postmodernity, the victim of a process of social uncontrol and liquidification, which seeks significant and sensitive experiences (Bauman, 1998; Giddens, 2003; Lipovetsky, 2004). Significant travel experiences assume a new style of traveling in the modern and contemporary world (Araújo, Congo & Pinto, 2015). From this scenario emerges the representation of mobility, the independent traveler (Salazar, 2017; Urry, 1996). Given this, the independent traveler is understood as the one who literally allows himself to be guided by the ‘destination’ as part of the experience, breaks social ties without temporal and financial concern and leaves the logic of the tourist market.

In this aspect, we investigate the figure of the independent traveler built in the course of travel, from the bibliographical analysis and the actual literary accounts of the trips of Chris McCandless (Krakauer, 1998) and Antonio Lino (Lino, 2011) on this type of experience as a meaningful experience. A qualitative (Martins & Théóphilo, 2007) and descriptive approach (Gil, 2002) was made, in which the central element is the independent traveler. The objective is the understanding and description of the phenomenon, starting from the premise that the trip realized in these terms can result in the learning and knowledge of self, the self-knowledge.

Self-knowledge, as a dialectic of the external world with the human interior in contact with nature and with the other (Cassirer, 1994) can be understood as an epistemological and philosophical base investigation, which occurs since the ancient Greece, by the constant interest in understanding the origin of human theory, as well as a religious-based quest or practice resulting from meditation and pilgrimage.

In the interdisciplinary bibliographical analysis with the reports, we identify the development of the construction of the image of the subject that travels independently, and the characteristics that compose it are the spirit of freedom, adventure and wandering (aspect of nomadism). It is understood that the independent traveler departs for and to the desire to travel. According to Matos (1997) desire is a symptom for a deep experience.

It is known that there are many experiences in life. However, in the case of travel, not all of them are understood by significant experiences, since significant experiences are evidenced by being “intense and refer to immediacy, specific conditions and subjectivity itself” (Trigo, 2010, p.30).

The concept of experience encompasses two visions inserted in the context of tourism (Panosso Netto, 2010): the economic (used as commercial marketing) and the philosophical (in its subjective aspects through the act of traveling). The term “experience”<sup>1</sup> is complex and broad in philosophical bias. However, without delving into the classical philosophical content, experience is reflected in its subjective aspects of the act of traveling. Travel is conceived as a cultural expression, according to De Botton (2012).

The act of independent travel breaks with the logic of the safety of mass scripts or acquired with purchasing power and experience the opportunities provided along the way, in their encounters and disagreements, in the most varied alternative forms these experiences. Among them, we highlight the informal and independent accommodation, forms and means of transport such as rides, bicycles (own vehicles) or by walking on the road. Contact with the other (local resident) happens naturally, without simulations, seeking new interpretations regarding natural, material and immaterial heritage turns the look to travel as significant experiences that break with the interest of the market, the conformity and comfort of daily life. The article is justified by trying to understand this form of tourism, analyzing the social phenomenon of independent travelers. It is thus perceived that the independent act of travel makes the experience of traveling even more meaningful for human enrichment.

## CONSTRUCTION AND TRANSFORMATION: INDEPENDENT TRAVELER

In the social history of traveling, there are several types of travelers that are named and synthesized by Figueiredo (2010), according to their travels: the exploring traveler<sup>2</sup>, the conquering traveler<sup>3</sup>, the merchant traveler<sup>4</sup>, the researcher-scientist traveler<sup>5</sup>, the

<sup>1</sup> The notions of experience, in general, are broad in their etymological applications. Among them, in the German term *Erfahrung* “coming” from the old high German *irfaran*, which means to travel, to go out, or to wonder (“to admire, to dazzle”, which is also the fundamental act of philosophical experience) (Trigo, 2010, pp. 24-25).

<sup>2</sup> The exploratory traveler is the one who is in search of an unknown in the discoveries, equivalent to the image of a scientist (Figueiredo, 2010).

<sup>3</sup> The conquering traveler brings a bit of the idea of discovery and the profile of the explorer himself, but has a colonialist character (Figueiredo, 2010).

<sup>4</sup> The merchant traveler to Figueiredo (2010, p. 236) is the negotiator, the merchant as “traveler’s archetype”.

<sup>5</sup> The researcher-scientist traveler ends up conceiving the trip as a field research, for studies and development of methods such as the ethnography of anthropology, in addition to the studies of naturalists (Figueiredo, 2010).

adventurous traveler, the *flâneur*, and the vagabond. Among them are: the adventurer, who stands before his own limit to challenge the *unknown*; the *flâneur* and the tramp. These three types stand out in the construction of the independent traveler.

The *flâneur*, a French character by Walter Benjamin of the 19th century, expresses “the slow traveler” that will emerge in poetry and philosophy (Correia, Pires & Andrade, 2017; Figueiredo, 2010; Peixoto 2003, p. 362). The street is like home. He perceives, through the eyes of the “other”, a presence and reflection, wishing to recognize an urban soul. It configures the image of the stranger, the stranger, the vagabond, the one with the potential of threat. However, the *flâneur* also deciphers the codes and signs of the diversities of things, because places are loaded with souls (Yázigi, 2001) and memories. It is guided by its sensitivity and interest, thus, by subjective elements, which are established as “functions that are given to the place” (De Botton, 2012, p. 224).

Tuan (1980) portrays the perceptions of the environment related to manifestations of love of place or *topophilia* – in Greek: *Topos* (place); *Philos* (friend) – in the broad sense, are bonds of affection with the environment, links between person and place that diffuse through experience, which can promote knowledge and expand the identity of the subject with the space (Matos, 1997).

The traveler, portrayed as the vagabond archetype, brings the “essence” of the traveler aimlessly or without destiny (Figueiredo, 2010), without many goals, only for the journey, the true guide that takes place in adventures often unusual and even with certain risks:

the vagabonds appear ambiguous: they are despised by capitalist society, because they give no value to labor, which does not dignify man, nor does provide for them the best ways of living. On the other hand they have a wise aura valued in certain writings. They are Prophets, and live according to their own ethics. (Figueiredo, 2010, pp. 236-237)

Bauman (1998) understands the vagabond and the tourist as figures that are mixed and envied, in which the vagabond has a greater detachment and freedom and the tourist, with his power of consumption, comfort, but that experiences his experiences with determined time, without much detachment.

Therefore, it is from the profile of the adventurer, the hobo “drift” and the *flâneur* that we identify the characteristics and aspects that can constitute in the process or the search, *a priori*, for significant experiences that go to the image that composes the independent traveler, as if he were a *flâneur*, “reissued” (Serrano, 2000, p. 51), whose presence revives the history of the other by identifying singularities that the other sometimes no longer perceives (Peixoto, 2003).

On the other hand, their presence can also cause envy, because it represents freedom, because:

presents an undeniable moral hazard, and this is the novelty. Indeed, these are the very characteristics of wandering... It bears witness to a “parallel

world”, in which the feeling, under its various expressions, is the vagabond, and in which anomie has the force of law. (Maffesoli, 2001, p. 43)

We return to the nostalgia that refers to the traveler (Avighi, 2000) in making trips that, at the same time, pose a challenge and refer to adventures, in other words, recover “the old feeling of insecurity” that would occur, especially in the period from the Middle Ages (5<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> century) and modern (15<sup>th</sup> to the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century) (Eco, 1984, p. 88).

For Ortiz (2005), in the face of globalization and technologies, it is not only the trip that trivializes, because it presents no more risks and because it is subject to the diverse interests of contemporary social institutions. Because, everything, in a certain way, is already predictable, until the imagination by the different (unknown) is anticipated. It is also perceived a banalization of the action and the current image of the traveler, criticized by Ortiz (2005). For, in the past, his actions were to mediate distances, charged with raising information from different cultures, and communication was through travel movements. Today, this movement is manipulated by the interest of those who elaborate their script, losing a little the sense of adventure.

Ortiz (2005) indicates that movement, circulation in the world, has also been domesticated. There is more “familiarization” when we are outside our country, than a certain “strangeness”, with only the language having a slight tension.

With the breaking of borders, the idea of the different is dismissed. Ortiz (2005, p. 41) raises the question of how we are going to travel in such a compressed space, because everything is going to make us feel “at home”. However, De Botton (2012, pp. 62-63) explains that however much travel has become domesticated, it is still through them that the human being can find its essence. “It is not necessarily at home that we find our true self better”.

On the other hand, Ortiz (2005) argues that popular culture will provide a “different” world for those who seek otherness. However, it is through the figure of the independent traveler, who refers to nostalgia, that the meaning of the trip is recovered and the experience of traveling as a “rite of passage”, source of transformation, formation and symbolic exchanges of life (Pezzi & Vianna, 2015). The exchanges are understood by Malinowski (1984) and Mauss (2003) as gifts, exchanges arising from the process of ritualization in the accepted or refusal to the other. They are conjugated to the codes of hospitality, which are established in the act of traveling.

Figueiredo (2010) exposes the existence of three ritualizations: the contact, the gift exchange / kindness and familiarization. But until they become familiar, “strangers” may have to give up their cultural identity or deny it.

For Ortiz (2005) the true travel experience, to be meaningful, translates into this way of approaching it as a ritual, which compares with “rituals of religious initiation”, as in *Candomblé*. There is a whole procedure: change of name, haircut, isolation for a certain time, distance from the previous life. The author makes an analogy to this process as if it were the experience of experiencing “another” reality, because when there is a return,

“the marks of his initiation will accompany him for the rest of his life”. It is perceived, in the trips, the propitiating element that separates the traveler from the family. “Later, an extended stay on the road, to finally reintegrate him in his own home in his home country” (Ortiz, 2005, p. 30).

It is understood a new philosophy of traveling, autonomously, influenced by a generation in the social literary history of the years 1950 and 1960, named Beatnik (Kerouac, 2012)<sup>6</sup>. The Beatnik are identified as “juvenile wanderers”, both for Maffesoli (2001) and for Labate (2000). They break with the order of obligations and with the financial obstacles, beyond the spatial borders. In the figure of an independent traveler, these juvenile wanderers sum up the cultural subject of action, with their few material possessions in their backpack or suitcase, where only what is necessary comes out of the logic of accumulation. The experience of travel, in a certain way, can thus become more meaningful, giving more meaning to the experiences, by releasing it, because “those who travel a lot on the road. In addition to what he leaves at the start, he goes on crossing “(Ianni, 2003, p. 30), without being attached to the social time of the now.

In this “crossing movement”, there is a mixture or dissolution of what one intends to encounter with the “discoveries” and even with the “frustrations”, and the one who travels “is not just an ‘I’ in search of the other”. Often it is a ‘we’ in search of ‘others’. The subject that seeks its autonomy needs travel as a form of sociability, to produce culture, to build learning, stipulating a counterpoint “present-past-future” (Ianni, 2003).

In the globalized world, the backpacker, popularized by signs of independence, adventure, financial economy and cultural and personal experiences, is popularized through the significant experiences of travel. The independent traveler may transfigure or be identified in the personification of the backpacker (Labate, 2000). But for Krippendorf (2009) there is a whole complexity in being a traveler, making it difficult to define it in a category. However, the most characteristic aspect of this experience is identified within the general framework of being an independent traveler: autonomy.

From the experiences lived autonomously with the act of traveling, they also build adventure, freedom. These are conjugated to the essential elements, inherited from the old social history in human formation in and by space through the wandering – the emergence of a contemporary neonomadism (Eco, 1984).

Ianni (2003) and Maffesoli (2001) identify the current traveler as the new errant, that is, the one with the spirit of movement. They are not the nomads, wanderers, migrants, or hippies, but they bring the aspirations of the vagabond or aimlessly, making part of their imaginary the road culture that will be nourished by adventure and the spirit of freedom. Follow travel, without social and personal guilt. The new errant associated with the figure of the independent traveler is consciously or unconsciously directed by an “initiatory search” through meaningful experiences, led to a discovery or re-encounter of his “self”.

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<sup>6</sup> Canadian writer beatnik, Jack Kerouac (2012), escrow the characters of travel adventures by the literary figure of Sal Paradise (storyteller / character) in the road of 1952. He starts his journey with only fifty dollars and alone, demonstrating a great desire in go west of the United States. Sal Paradise is analysed as one who shared his insights on the way of his travels to meet his friends.



Peixoto (1987, pp. 81-82) states that:

the search for identity has a special meaning (...) the history of each one is traced by the places where it has passed. But this search ... takes him from (...). The re-encounter of oneself can only be made through the journey.

When one comes across the construction of the personality of the traveler (Ianni, 2003; Maffesoli, 2001), both the deconstruction of the image of the epic traveler and the deconstruction of the tourist image are observed, since both are stereotyped by the social imaginary. However, Cardoso (2003) warns that it will not be every human being willing to indulge in traveling in this way, with total independence, detached from material comfort, from time, from normative and secure life, leaving himself lost on the path, guided only by desire to travel. However, the act of traveling gives a new meaning to existence, belonging and ways of being in the world. Through the act of traveling, the traveler seeks the encounter of happiness and pleasure.

However, according to Trigo (2010, p. 25), travel experiences do not always result in pleasure (hedonic) searches. They can also cause suffering, perceptible from the meaning of the word *travel* in archaic English “travail”, as one of the earliest concepts, “which also means labor pains”. Despite a negative connotation because of suffering, travel experiences result in “self-knowledge” and “the meeting of meaning and meaning of *life* for the traveler”. And they can even modify and deconstruct their way of thinking and seeing the world, the sense of its *self* in its cultural identity, for “the one who leaves is never the same who returns” (Ianni, 2003, p. 31).

According to Figueiredo (2010, p. 247), through the literary genre of reports, the figure of the traveler is established by a being who travels for “noble subjective motives”. The independent traveler brings boldness and curiosity as elements that also will lead to the encounter with the new. And it reveals the desire for the mix, not limited to any social layer. This is also constituted by grouping by the attraction of being-together with the other, resulting also in the sharing. Shared emotions and experiences result in a vector of creation, embracing social life in all its conjuncture and diversity, in the ethical composition of aesthetics, through wandering in the liberation of the self (Maffesoli, 2001).

For Maffesoli (2001, p. 87), existence has an “etymological meaning” and refers to “an exit from itself, an escape, an explosion. Explosion that is lived at the global level, that of the collective imagination, but also in the very bosom of each individual, therefore, “invoking” the departure.

The escape is the principle of the transgression of the social contract, rupture with the normative order “of established certainties”. It is crucial to break the maternal bonds with the place of origin, resulting in their denial (Maffesoli, 2001), in order to liberate themselves from the institutionalizing ties typical of modern thought and the “happiness of imprisonment”, which domesticates adventure and freedom.

It turns out that the independent traveler has as a starting point the escape, beyond the dreams and fantasies of experiencing unusual experiences. Escape, as an ancient and fundamental element of wandering, also influences social formation and refers to the

nostalgia of traveling. But in order to escape, one must suspend the day-to-day life and go beyond the limits of stability, if it loses itself and later becomes reunited (Maffesoli, 2001). However, it is not a definitive suspension (Figueiredo, 2010).

For Cassirer (1994) however much the human being is easy to adapt, there is a limit to deal with the unknown, which causes him to return to the place of origin. When the independent traveler reaches this limit, his return may mean that he has attained self-knowledge, even if this limit is even physical. On the other hand, the human being who does not dare to break with the sameness of normative social life and with maternal ties and place of origin, can experience a regression of itself and have a reduced view of the world, according to De Botton (2012).

For the psychoanalyst May (2012, p. 135), freedom walks alongside self-consciousness, because the freer we get, the more autonomy and conscience, being “the force of molding and creating ourselves”. However, this autonomy is based on the constitution of freedom, by taking responsibility and own actions with responsibility, which leads to this greater awareness of “itself” and impacts as an educational practice the learnings through the experiences in their formation and in their process of human maturity (Freire, 2011). Together with the courage, internal state that comes from the conquest by freedom to the external challenge, it surpasses the moral self, not putting modesty in experiencing the new and the chance (May, 2012).

Freedom is also part of the rite of passage (opening and closing) as a vital principle. The search for the distant one, coupled with the adventure, is conjugated, resulting in human experiences (Maffesoli, 2001). The adventure can be defined as “an extraterritorial event” that aims at a wide way to live experiences of all orders, is part of the restlessness of the traveler. Despite all technology, information and virtual simulations, it is only allowed in “real time”, in cultural experiences, and witnesses the cultural enrichment conceived through fantasies and mobility (Ortiz, 2005, p. 46). When opened to the world, it results in new identity reassignments.

The independent traveler may demonstrate dubious aspects of wandering, as he assumes roles of multiple identities. Regarding this, May (2012, p. 46) asserts that multiple identities are exercised by our *selves* (personal identity), but it is not a simple summation of our representations, but an awareness of different facets of our personalities exercised, which can evolve, but it is not a simple and sudden process. They establish a principle of pairs of opposites for both Durkheim and Mauss (1984), Maffesoli (2001), and Levi-Strauss (2009), stressing the formation of social and personal structure, for example, disconnect and root-err. It is by means of mistaking, deflecting and starting that the polarities of differences are evidenced and internalized, giving meaning to being (Hall, 2005). The territory integrates and interacts with the imaginary, with the symbolic world of existence.

Wandering, on the other hand, is also conducive to “rooting-dynamic”, since at the same time as expressing a “passage”, chance can also be intentional and rooted in what is punctual to the traveler’s interests. He knows the value of the need for distance, of undoing ties, and of detachment. Yet, at the same time as the traveler walks away, he takes



a part of himself in the memories and skills developed in the face of occasional situations and learning from the other. However, feeling free is reflected in *happiness*, in knowledge and ends up being predisposed to “adventures and encounters” (Maffesoli, 2001).

Happiness is paradoxical (Lipovetsky, 2007). It reveals a *homo viator* of the new times “of disproportionate aspirations and always dissatisfied desires”, found in the world of ephemeris, and this is one of the aspects of the social pathologies of hypermodernity (Maffesoli, 2001, p. 87). However, it is noted that the ephemeral is not only part of the suffocating daily life, but is part of the being itself, through the assimilated knowledge of cultural contact, language with the other. In this sense, the traveler presents a life with contradictory identities, constitutes a fragile figure, because it is an identity that is constructed and disrupts in movement.

Hall (2005) states that in postmodern thought, as in the course of Western globalization, the subject will not have a permanent identity. In the process of constructing cultural identity, displacement is part of the externalization that completes this construction, “impacted by space-time compression”. It can strengthen or produce new identities in local or global spheres, combined with the advent of tourism (tourism travel) that becomes one of the responsible for cultural pluralization or for reinventing or preserving traditional cultures and agent of social construction in the formation of identity. However, in this scenario of the effects of globalization, contradictory and connected, there is a crisis and fragmentation of the identities provided by a growing homogenization and heterogeneity of the culture and established by hybrid identities<sup>7</sup> by the imagined communities. These communities are built mentally through the systems of dominant cultural representation, supported also by rites, social codes, and everyday customs (Hall, 2005). There is a negotiation game in the production of identities, which impacts on the human being.

Woodward (2007) emphasizes that, in identities, their set is conflicting, but coherence can also coexist. The struggle for its authenticity is only a way of legitimizing itself, but it is always associated with cultural and historical construction, memory and ideological interests. And obviously, due to a situation of otherness, it is also associated with interpersonal relationships, which can give new meanings to the existence of being and can provoke feelings of social belonging when identifying with the other. For the author, identities are symbolic constructions influenced by culture.

In this bias, Ortiz (2005) understands that identities are virtual, in other words, they do not present a real existence, only when it has symbolic references in relation to culture, gender, ethnicity, and nation. However, identity is a historical rather than a biological construct (Hall, 2005). It is changeable in time however, and it is seen as a way of legitimizing existence, sustained by memory with memories in re-reading the past.

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<sup>7</sup> The phenomenon of hybridization, theorized by the Argentine contemporary thinker Canclini (2008), is a socio-cultural process that establishes the meaning of intercultural mixtures and dissociates it from the notion of pure and authentic, relating the phenomenon to the practices or structures that separate, combine and can form new structures, practices, productions of cultural creation to the collective or to the individual occasioned by the migratory movements, tourist, exchanges of the communications etc., consequent of the advent of the technology and deterritorialization. The author aims to deal with the concept of culture in an intercultural approach.

Candau (2012) affirms, based on the studies of memory theories, that memory is composed of memories, constituting and (re) formulating and (re) signifying our identity marked by the deeper experiences and learning that comprise to be in its totality, that is, according to its three dimensions: physical, social and psychological, attributed by Mauss (2003).

In this way, we need the nomad, the stranger and the foreigner who make up the traveler, to renew the culture, to produce and provoke the differences. Their presence may impact culture and identities only when there are exchanges (affective and social relations) (Matos, 1997). The cultural identity of the subject depends on the lived experiences and “multiple elements present in the cultural memory of the individual” and is assumed in several social roles manifested in evaluations of concepts and world values.

In this bias, Figueiredo (2010) expresses how rich the travel reports are, since they are more significant when recorded through personal experience. Personal enrichment (reformulation, adaptation and reconstruction of human values) and social enrichment is observed, that is, how the human being who travels sees the trip and how he reflects or perceives “others”. The stories make visible the transformation, construction and development of the figure of the independent traveler, based on fundamental characteristics: wandering, freedom and adventure. These conjugated characteristics within the traveler are transformed into meaningful experiences. To make an approximation with this assertion, we briefly observe the actual accounts of Chris McCandless (Krakauer, 1998) and Antonio Lino (Lino, 2011).

#### **INDEPENDENT TRAVELERS: LITERARY ACCOUNTS OF SIGNIFICANT TRAVEL EXPERIENCES**

In Chris McCandless’s case, his writings and memories of his deeds were reconstituted and organized through hypothetical conclusions based on meetings of letters, photographs and testimonies, and in his own young life story by American journalist and writer Jon Krakauer in the book *Na natureza selvagem* [Into the wild]. The journalist was very touched by the story after the editor of *Outside* magazine asked him to do a story about McCandless’s death on a journey to Alaska. After the book a film production was made, directed by Sean Penn in 2007, with the same title.

Christopher Johnson McCandless, 24, was a young man from the upper middle class of the East Coast of the United States. He drops the college (idealized by the parents), donating all the money destined to his study to a charity (Krakauer, 1998). This passage reflects all the personal, political and ideological conflict experienced by the young person in the middle of the 1990s.

The obsession with travel would also be a realization of a childhood dream, nourished more and more with its readings: go north, “live off the land”. Chris McCandless “sought the vital drive of existence” (Krakauer, 1998, p. 34). He cultivated the desire to be alone in the wilderness of Alaska. He himself referred to this experience as “the great odyssey”. He leaves the family, for which he never sent any news for two years (1990 to 1992), because he had a lot of resentment. Deny your identity. Start your destination on

foot after the disaster with the car in the desert. He burned his money as a way of denying all bourgeois life, for he claimed he did not need much, only what he could carry and carry in his essential bag. "Leaving Atlanta to the west (...) To symbolize the complete cut with his previous life (...). I would no longer answer for Chris McCandless; was Alexander Supertramp, master of his own destiny" (Krakauer, 1998, p. 34).

He lives great adventures, finds people who affected him and were affected by him, despite always looking at the distance. Alaska was a way to be alone with himself and with nature. The young man tried to avoid emotional burdens. Krakauer (1998) defines that Chris was not a vagrant or alienated: his walk was philosophical.

Follow the path north from Alaska to your ultimate adventure on the Strampede Trail, a 1930s trail made to clear the way for a mining project on Mount McKinley in Denali National Park. Nearby was a bus that was abandoned after the failure of the project that served as shelter and home (Krakauer 1998, p. 172). And it was on this bus that they find Chris's body. He left written in his diary that he was scared when he tried to cross the Teklanika River; "McCandless learned one of the fundamental (albeit paradoxical) axioms of the North: the best season to travel by land is not summer, it is winter" (Krakauer 1998, p. 173); but since he was very weak and with almost no suitable equipment, it would be impossible.

Krakauer (1998) interprets the writing of Chris "Alexandre Supertramp" like "euphoric" and independent when installed in the interior of Alaska:

an aesthetic traveler whose home is the road. (...) The final battle to kill the false inner being and conclude victoriously the spiritual revolution. Ten days and nights of freight trains and hitchhiking (...). To no longer be poisoned by civilization, he flees and walks alone on earth to lose himself in nature (Alexandre Supertramp, May 1992). (Krakauer, 1998, p. 172)

Alaska is seen as its great self-realization and rebirth. Wild nature is our own nature, "our quest, our meeting". However, tragic experiences and these moments of contact with nature, with the simplicity of life, carry us the sublimation of things and emotions and, in this process, constitute the bonds and the knowledge. Alaskan has stirred up Chris's troubles, as everywhere when he is silent and solitary, revealed in the desire to return to socializing in his writings for help. Especially in the writing Chris concludes by stating that true happiness was one shared with another, found in Boris Pasternak's *Doctor Jivago*, demonstrating wisdom and self-knowledge acquired by the journey, a meaningful experience for his existence. The isolation in Alaska made Chris realize that, beyond nature, human affection is also important. It is also verified in the writings of distress that Chris, when signing them, no longer identifies by Alexandre Supertramp, identity constituted in the development of his experience, but by his real name Christopher Johnson McCandless: "he abandoned the pretentious nickname that he had been using years ago, *Alexandre Supertramp*, in favor of the name he received from his parents at birth" (Krakauer, 1998, p. 205).

Evidencing that despite the experience suffered at times by the consequent isolation of winter and lack of food, it was also vital for a possible understanding of his own nature, of himself, causing him to sign with his own name; after a long time of living of seeds, ends up dying of *starvation*. Some believe that he confused an edible Alaskan plant with a poisonous plant that, because of his already weakened body, intoxicated him to the point of death.

Chris's wandering resulted in a show of affection, solidarity, and generosity. "He was not just an ordinary wanderer (...) McCandless left an indelible impression on a number of people, most of whom spent only a few days in his company, at most a week or two" (Krakauer, 1998, p. 59). Chris was an independent, solitary, dreamy traveler, whose formation and identity were developing and taking on other senses, built and unconstrained by experience, which had as its quest its essence, the meaning of life in the spiritual sphere, especially. And perhaps if he had lived, instead of being a hypothetical conclusion, a gathering of letters and depositions organized by a journalist, we would know from himself the day-to-day life in Alaska and the publication of his own journal as happened with Antonio Lino.

The story of Antonio Lino, entitled *Encaramujado: uma Viagem de Kombi pelo Brasil e pelos Cafundós de mim*, was published in 2011. Lino (2011) has the profession of writer. Figueiredo (2010) emphasizes the need for critical attention to travel writings. There is invariably an attempt to show to the reader a certain representation of the reality lived by the author. Lino (2011) reveals that the moment before the trip he was in need of inspiration and reflection for the journey of his life. In addition, he had a great ambition to know his own country, his culture and nature, when materializing, claiming the idealization through the experience, after reading *A arte de viajar* [The art of travel]<sup>8</sup> by Alain de Botton, reaffirms the desire for the trip. Although we were not interested in the means, but the experience, it became more significant because it was carried out in a van.

Lino makes clear in his report the yearning for an unusual experience but that is influenced by the reading of the work *Autonauts of the Cosmoroute* of an Argentine writer, Julio Cortázar, who realizes a trip by France with his wife, by Kombi. It was through this reading, Lino confides (2011, p. 24) that the starting point was: "taking a ride in the history of others, I decided ... my trip would also be in a Kombi", being a way of saving both in the lodging as in means of transport, which brings the allusion of the "snail". It metaphorizes the only home we can carry, our essence and our "selves", making it clear at the outset that our main objectives, besides the ambition to know Brazil, its culture and nature, are to know each other, seek oneself. It resolves, therefore, to discover its essence in the road, because for Lino (2011, p. 11) "to travel is to leave inside".

For De Botton (2012) and Ianni (2003) the trip has a narrow metaphor with the imagination. The traveler's imagination is present from the moment before his departure and is also produced by listeners or readers as they embark on reports of the travel

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<sup>8</sup> In the work *A arte de viajar* [The art of travel] De Botton (2012), on his trip to Amsterdam, associates his reflections to the place, through his literary, philosophical and artistic influence guides from the countries visited, such as Flaubert, who already said that the place that provoked our attraction and love was that in which was our identity, this would be the true place of origin.

experience of others. Fernando Pessoa (1986), poet and writer, with the semi-heteronym Bernardo Soares in the *Livro do desassossego* [Book of disquiet], warns that the traveler does not necessarily have to travel to travel. For the poet, imagination and creativity define the greatest traveler.

The trip to Lino only concludes a year after its idealization. This beginning of detachment from the day-to-day security of São Paulo is complicated. Lino is characterized at the beginning of the story as the “jailer” who holds his “I”, but who must feel, reflect, free himself ... to be anonymous. Drop the job, make some savings. In addition to the purchase of the van, he takes nothing more than himself: “in getting rid of surplus, ... the traveler expands to the essential” (Lino, 2011, p. 10).

Lino (2011, p. 11) gives himself up to the unknown and to the *acasos* of experience, at the age of 27 “with no place to go, nor an appointed time to return”, during a year and three months of travel. You come across landscapes that elevate you to a reflection on life. When he returns to São Paulo, he states in his account that the experience of travel entails a reunion of a bearded self with other convictions of life that are integrated with the other self (jailer) whom he had left behind: “the journey is also the journey ... I will test my ability to find poetry in everyday life. (...) I learned from the snails: I am my house ... walls do not imprison free spirits” (Lino, 2011, p. 252).

Peixoto (1987) argues that when the traveler is unhurriedly involved in the process of traveling experience, he may get to the point of perceiving the world as his abode.

De Botton (2012) explains that the return home, after a deep experience of travel, can be disturbing to the human spirit, as it happens in the perception of the traveler Lino to the reunion of the “bearded I” with the “I jailer”. However, at the same time, the return attributes new meanings and poetry to the hometown that were no longer perceived in the daily routine. De Botton (2012) concludes that the true pleasure of travel depends not only on the place but on our state of mind.

The travel experience that is interpreted in reports of independent travelers Antonio Lino and Chris McCandless, or among other fictional or real travelers, show that travel is a true “midwife” in order to lead us in conversation with our own monsters and conflicts, in reading about oneself, allied with freedom, wandering and adventure, leading to the development of self-autonomy in making one’s own choices (De Botton, 2012, p. 60). The process of travel experience ends up being an educational experience that transforms and shapes the human being.

Finally, journeys are seen as transformative practices of the meaning of life and are also aspirated as an art of human expression, resulting from these meaningful experiences, reflecting on the self-realization, the reformulation of cultural identity and a social and personal construction of the traveler independent.

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The journey, like life, is the true “art of meeting” the verses of Vinicius de Moraes<sup>9</sup>. Travel is like our passion, for which we lose and also seek. The act of losing oneself in

<sup>9</sup> Music: *Samba da Bênção* – Vinicius de Moraes and Baden Powell, 1960s.

the trips can generate education that is configured with the significant experiences being part of our history and memory linked to the other. “Travel is the memory of the journey ... Travel is the traveler’s encounter with himself (...) is not just to move” (Matos, 1997, pp. 134-135).

Travel experiences are meaningful because they make people live their freedom, collect sentimental values, enhance their imagination, their concerns, or even the frustrations of those who travel. They can even change the meaning of time and space, give the human being new ways to draw the world: they are true marks in the human essence. They reveal themselves as a search for other “qualities we lack”. When linked to a place or someone, the “values that are lacking in our culture” and identities can narrow (De Botton, 2012, p. 90).

May (2012) points out that only in rare moments, in singular acts, when something special is experienced, does self-consciousness and creative praxis take place, the sense of self and action for the subject, which will influence identity, it is in the formation of ourselves, for self-consciousness implies self-knowledge, self-affirmation of self. It is usually caused when you move away from routine time, as in travel, and when you are predisposed to open yourself to the other than yourself.

The experience of independent travel is analogous to the rite of passage or to a movement of crossing in the experience to another reality, providing the (re) encounter with its “other”, unrecognizable to itself. Thus, it is shown as a sacred and at the same time profane moment (Ianni, 2003), arising from freedom, adventure and wandering. The independent act of traveling affirms itself as a significant experience, since it is configured as “the way of discovering the ‘other’ ”, as well as “a way of discovering the ‘I’ ” (Figueiredo, 2010, p. 251).

However, the travel experience can reveal unforgettable moments and times for life. When unattended and independent, travelers are free to express their oddities and decisions. “Every trip is designed to cross borders, either by dissolving them or by recreating them. (...) It projects in space and time a nomadic I, recognizing diversities ... at the same time they recreate identities, diversities proliferate” (Ianni, 2003, pp. 13-14). Significant travel experiences form, deconstruct, modify, and construct this autonomous *self*, the independent traveler, for as he dives into himself, he loosens himself, frees himself, launches “by the way and by the imagination”, the habits change and skills develop: the “way is done”.

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