

‘.... one of my greatest desires has been to travel-to see and touch unknown countries, to swim in unknown seas, to circle the globe, observing new lands, seas, people, and ideas with insatiable appetite, to see everything for the first time and for the last time, casting a slow, prolonged glance, then to close my eyes and feel the riches deposit themselves inside me calmly or stormily according to their pleasure, until time passes them at last through its fine sieve, straining the quintessence out of all the joys and sorrows’. But it was also the exiled aspects of me externalised through restless behaviour and actions of temporary fuge. Toko-pa Turner (2018) writes that ‘the gift of restlessness is that it provides an oculus into our ways and habits. It serves to undermine those places where we might be struggling, mimicking, or falling into false belonging rather than moving with the rhythms of our inner life’.

Additionally, like so many of us I had forgotten that I was an intrinsic part of this universal ocean of intelligence, and maybe I had never been properly invited to the table. So, whenever time and money allowed, I took the opportunity to leave and go to places. Living on an island made the need more imperative at times for despite its scenic beauty and surface tranquillity, it sometimes felt stifling or a place of unconscious self inflicted exile, but *wherever you go, there you are*, to quote the title of one of Jon Kabat Zinn’s books. Old patterns and dynamics often played out in new contexts, but they did not stand out so much in my field of perception because in these new places I got lost in the new and the beauty of the small details, like the paint peeling off old doors in Malta, the light on an opaque glass object in Venice, the whiter than white buildings of the Cycladic islands, the intense sweetness of Turkish delight that scratches your throat in Istanbul, the stillness of the Mediterranean olive groves in summer that stirred vague images of ancestral ties and old stories, and also, of Jesus praying, a beautiful collection of cacti plants on a Cypriot porch, fine bleached sand running through my fingers on a beach on Naxos, while the children were burying themselves and our new puppy, Caramel, in the sand, not anticipating her untimely departure in less than a year, the breath taking views from the Caldera of the island of Santorini, where during a stroll a guy with a vague German accent had stopped me in my tracks, or the cheap retsina wine, the juke box and loud men at a school friend’s village tavern in adolescence, the crossing of the Cretan Samaria Gorge that splits the rocky topography in two, our ending

up in the middle of nowhere and sleeping in the midst of a gypsy settlement in Northern Crete, the delicate cyclamen coming to life through the cracks of a stone wall on one of the stone Byzantine churches in Monemvasia, the plateau above sea level linked to the tip of the Peloponnese peninsula by a 200 metre causeway.....

Travelling indulges the senses: saxophone jazz music and the smell of musty beer in a brown cafe in Holland, soft sweet puffy pastry melting in my mouth in a Vienna cafe with soft red velvet upholstered seats, the stringy performer on stilts, who bowed and gave me a rose, the ochre coloured delicate paper model of Mozart's house that we tried to assemble in a cafe in Salzburg, the snow globe souvenir with the miniature golden Vienna in the centre. Every time I shook it the snow blizzard obliterated the tiny city and then after I put it down the snow gradually settled and allowed the gold to emerge, like a busy monkey mind that finds peace during meditation and within that space of quietness golden nuggets of truths surface. The warmth of my son's little hand during walks and the light in his eyes, each time we caught sight of yet another red squirrel in the parks of Vienna. We wondered if like the squirrels in Beatrix Potter's tale of Timmy Tiptoes they had buried and stored nuts in the ground and in secret tree pockets, but we fed them anyway.....

A decade earlier in former Yugoslavia the bus that was supposed to pick us up and bring us back to Greece did not arrive even though we had pre-paid our tickets at a travel agency back in Athens. We wandered around the city aimlessly for a day without food or drink and I slept off my weariness on a bench in Belgrade and on the train all the way back to Athens with a faded Jean Rhys paperback book as a pillow. The islands of Asia Minor had the familiarity of a memory or a page from a novel and the trip on the Bosphorus River triggered inexplicable bitter-sweet sadness. An elderly foreign woman on the boat invited me to teach English in Istanbul and a woman in a hamam told me I didn't look Greek because my skin was too white and I had too many freckles. Something stirs in my memory as stories seem to repeat themselves relentlessly across time, embellished replicas of the same themes, but I usually find ways to distract myself. A couple of Greek origin we bumped into treated us with jasmine tea and baklava in a beautiful café with a kiosk in a posh suburb of Istanbul, and a group of young Turkish men, supposedly studying in Germany, insisted on paying for *mezedes* and wine in a tiny smoke filled tavern, while I fervently argued against women's oppression.....

In the 1990s I met one of my old history teachers on a rattling bus on one of the smaller Greek islands. She was limping and her voice was coarser than ever and despite the years that had gone by she seemed to me more or less unchanged. I wasn't that eager to approach her in my worn out shorts and flip flops and wondered if she would even remember me, but my friend, who considered this great irreverence on my behalf, had literally pushed me to the back of the bus where she was sitting. During our short conversation fragments of an old history lesson entered the foreground of my awareness. It referred to Pausanias the Spartan Commander-in-Chief of the victorious battle of Plataea against the Persians, who died of starvation in a tomb-jail for treason. The first stone in his tomb was laid down by his mother, Theano. It brought shivers down my spine and I had remembered how even during my school days I had found it difficult to understand how people valued and held ideas and beliefs above their offspring. I think at some level and to some extent we all do this; the objectifying and diminishing others, encountering them at the level of their views, ideas and constructed identities and failing to experience them as whole human beings beyond and above gender, age, size, status, colour and beliefs, and depending on how entrenched this way of perceiving is, we may then go on to marginalize them, blow them up or wedge wars on them.

Whether at home or whether travelling the weaving of our tapestry never ceases and ever changing contexts simply add more threads and colours to it. Unless we are sufficiently awake dynamics can be replicated and until we awaken to the ways of things and our truths. Several years later I will be lured to Africa. Morocco is beautiful, but it also bombards my senses and my European sensitivities or maybe my personal thresholds to the heat and dust. A woman grabs my arm and insists I have a henna tattoo, another woman selling runny yoghurt or kefir offers me some, as a wave of nausea washes over me, and a man in a hand dyed and woven fabric store becomes inexplicably aggressive. He insists that I am English because of my accent, but he gradually calms down and ends up talking about a friend of his living in Greece and about the world being a very small place indeed. At night I sometimes experience dyspnoea because of the unbearable heat so when I get my period I cancel the trip to the desert and decide to spend the day in the cool room until the sun goes down. There is a magazine featuring India on the bedside table. There's a piece on Mahatma Gandhi's early life and later work and battles, right up to his assassination in 1948, and photos of the Taj Mahal, an architectural miracle on the banks of the Yuma River in North India, built by a prince in memory of his deceased beloved wife. I have a magnet on my fridge from a visit to Brighton of an English pavilion and the summer seaside

residence of King George IV, a mixture of Indian architecture and rich Chinese interior decoration, which looks like a small replica of the Taj Mahal. On the island where I live a guy standing next to me during an epitaph procession on Good Friday tells me that the small epitaph decorated in flowers resting on the four men's shoulders in front of us resembles the Taj Mahal. There is no real physical resemblance or measure for comparison, but I ponder on the association; one built in memory of an early deceased wife and the other a ceremonial symbol of the Passion of Christ.

Nikos Kazantzakis wrote: 'I am a weak, ephemeral creature made of mud and dream. But I feel all the powers of the universe whirling within me'. We are all made of stardust and we all inherently belong here, we only need to get to that level of being and awareness where we feel in union with everything out there and where the knowledge of our being an intricate part of the Universe really finds a seat within us. This type of sense of belongingness and rootedness can serve as a buffer when we are in some sort of exile or when too many parts of our self have been exiled within the depths of our memory, and hiding in nooks and crannies of our body. So, in some sense through disengaging the sense of home from a particular place or context we are better able to manage the experience of exile or forced dislocation knowing that our truest origins and belonging are connected to something more expansive than family and community, and from that place we can begin our return and perhaps resume our place at the table, which requires of us to honour our place in the world and to commit to our dreams. And we need to first belong to ourselves in order to be able to experience any sense of true belonging; disconnection from our true essence and desires ultimately and at some level leave us alienated, in a world that is perhaps more connected and at the same time more fractured than ever before.