

**Universidade de Lisboa  
Faculdade de Letras**



**WOMEN'S FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT:  
FROM WALKING TO SOLO TRAVEL NARRATIVES**

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Rita Ribeiro de Carvalho

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## **Abstract**

Being alone, going solo, getting out of the house, and traveling have always been situations and activities not traditionally attributed to women. According to many cultures, women have a role to fulfil in society and that is to take care of the house, to have children and to fall into a social construed role of femininity. When women decide to travel solo there are usually three questions/statements that surface: 1- Are you are going alone?; 2- Aren't you afraid of going alone?; 3- You are so brave for doing it alone. Three main elements can be highlighted from these sentences: alone, afraid and brave. Why are these associated with women traveling? The fact is they are associated to almost every element of women's lives, but they are almost the main elements associated to female travel writing from the start. When reading accounts from a century ago, or even more, one wonders how they were able to travel, if even nowadays it continues to be difficult. This wondering also presents the inherent problematic: we think it is strange for women to be able to do certain things and that there is, or should be, a fear attached to such activity. We also acknowledge this fear is greater for women because it has more parts to it than if it were men travelling. This dissertation will analyse these three main elements, question them and try to find their roots and how they still apply nowadays, taking into consideration society and cultural views as well as female travel writing accounts and the present-day state of it. It will start from small (cities and places known to women), to media representation and cultural ideals (mainly of female imagery), and afterwards, with solo travel regarding who gets to tell the story and where are women's travel accounts in order to analyse women's freedom of movement from walking solo to travel narratives.

## **Keywords**

Travel Writing; Women; Freedom; Movement; Literature

## Resumo

Aquando da leitura da narrativa de viagens femininas deparamo-nos com três perguntas ou observações, afirmações dirigidas às mulheres, se vão sozinhas, se não têm medo e que são corajosas por o fazerem. Nem sempre estas mulheres possuem estes três elementos, mas estes fazem parte da sua vida. Estes três elementos permitem criar uma base teórica para explorar a liberdade de movimento das mulheres com base nestes testemunhos e análise dos mesmos a nível social e cultural. Procura-se também responder à questão do porquê de se colocar esta pressão sobre mulheres, o que leva a isto estar associado às mulheres e de como o medo é associado às mulheres como se fosse nato.

Em 1995, Cheryl Strayed percorreu 1770 quilómetros através do PCT (Pacific Crest Trail) nos Estados Unidos (e que tem 4285 quilómetros), sozinha. Desta viagem nasceu o livro de memórias de viagem *Livre: Uma História de Autodescoberta, Sobrevivência e Coragem* (2012), no qual a autora aborda abertamente vários temas e há um que se destaca mais: o medo. Ao longo da narrativa, a sua relação com o medo transforma-se, ela encontra formas de lidar com ele, tal como cantar e dizer para ela própria “Não tenho medo” (2012). Outras narrativas de viagem no feminino apresentam uma relação similar com vários temas que parecem ser diferentes da imagem externa, aquela que a sociedade e a cultura têm em relação às mulheres.

As narrativas de viagem de mulheres a solo apresentam uma oportunidade de entrarmos no seu mundo no qual parece não haver temas tabu a ser discutidos. No entanto, não só através das críticas e de análises, mas também dentro das narrativas e vivências, das outras pessoas que as viajantes encontram ao longo do caminho, é-nos apresentada uma versão diferente, ou uma paralela que coexiste. Tendo em conta a realidade atual relativamente às notícias de muitas mulheres que são mortas ao circular pelas ruas, sendo a razão da sua morte apenas serem mulheres, e o crescimento da culpabilização da vítima que continua a existir, esta dissertação nasce destes dois pontos de encontro da liberdade de movimento das mulheres enquanto viajam e do medo, tudo o que está relacionado com esta liberdade de movimento desde andar pelas ruas até a estarem em comunhão com a natureza e a viajarem para diferentes países, tendo em mente o ideal do que as mulheres devem ou não ser, tal como a ideia de que devem ficar em casa, serem invisíveis e outros; com este medo que é incutido nas mulheres desde que nascem e com a análise do porquê de isso acontecer, de onde vem e como influencia esta liberdade.

Assim, conclui-se com este trabalho que a liberdade de movimento das mulheres enquanto viajam está dependente da definição de liberdade que é concebida para elas, os perigos que enfrentam e a sua própria vontade de viajar e de se movimentarem apesar de tudo isto. As três questões/afirmações colocadas como base desta dissertação não só expõem o que as mulheres vivenciam, mas são também uma resposta em si mesmas, ao providenciarem os ideais e preconceitos que escondem das sociedades e das culturas. Ao se perguntar a uma mulher se esta não tem medo de viajar sozinha ou de estar sozinha, as pessoas estão a presumir que há algo de anormal no facto de as mulheres estarem sozinhas e dão a entender e admitem que pode haver perigo. Na verdade, a ideia é de que é perigoso para as mulheres estarem sozinhas, e esta é em si a resposta, não só porque mulheres e homens enfrentam os mesmos medos e perigos, mas as mulheres carregam consigo o medo sexualizado, o risco de violência sexual e de serem violadas. Reduzir o estar sozinha a isto desumaniza as mulheres e retira-lhes o poder das mãos, constrói uma imagem que é continuamente perpetuada, a de que as mulheres são seres indefesos que requerem proteção (de um homem) (DeRoche, 2017). Além disso, a culpabilização da vítima que daí advém é um conhecimento geral de que existe algo de perigoso para as mulheres que andam sozinhas, então, se algo acontecer, a culpa será delas. O peso do medo dirigido às mulheres também é visto como sinónimo do que é ser mulher. Se as mulheres não tiverem medo significa que há algo de errado com elas, e isto é, novamente, uma resposta à questão e também a aceitação de que alguém irá atacar as mulheres, portanto, elas têm razão para ter medo. E, se nada acontecer, foi porque tiveram sorte. A coragem é a resposta às mulheres que se aventuram e seguem a sua vontade e desejo de viajar, mesmo quando não carregam medo consigo ou se questionam quanto ao espaço que ocupam. De facto, uma das respostas na luta pelo seu lugar nas ruas está no viajar a solo e na publicação das suas narrativas de viagem está no ocupar espaço, tal como Lauren Elkin coloca, estabelecendo assim os seus próprios termos.

Na sociedade, as mulheres estarem e viajarem sozinhas é mal recebido ou percecionado devido a ideais preconceituosos que existem há milénios e que têm sido adaptados ao longo dos anos. Um deles é de como uma mulher andar sozinha é percecionado; nas ruas é vista como prostituta, daí o termo “mulher da rua”; na natureza é como outro animal que é caçado, faltando-lhe a proteção da figura feminina da Mãe Natureza. De acordo com Rebecca Solnit, o caminhar das mulheres é construído como uma atuação em vez de um meio de deslocação, e isto implica que elas caminham não para ver, mas para serem vista por

uma audiência masculina, ou seja, estando a pedir qualquer atenção que recebam (Solnit, 2017).

É possível afirmar que a marginalização das narrativas de viagem das mulheres através da comparação destas às dos homens e a ideia de que a escrita de viagens é um género literário masculino deve-se à percepção e à receção dos seus trabalhos porque uma mulher não pode controlar como o seu trabalho é lido pelo público com noções essencialistas de género (Bird, 2015) que se devem ao determinismo binário e social (speaking, 2017). Tal como Carrie speaking denota, o problema da escrita de viagens das mulheres não está na forma como escrevem, mas no sexismo sistémico. Sara Mills afirma que a grande diferença é a forma como são julgadas e processadas (2006).

A escrita das mulheres é considerada diferente devido à falta de liberdade imposta pelo género e isso leva ao surgimento de outras formas de liberdade dentro da falta desta (Bassnett, 2002). Quando à marginalização, Strayed observa que as histórias dos homens são vistas como universais e as das mulheres específicas e que o que as mulheres enfrentam é uma batalha para não serem marginalizadas (Friedman, 2018).

Quanto às mulheres na Natureza e a verem as suas histórias publicadas ou retratadas em filmes, uma das conclusões alcançadas é que as mulheres não são gostadas e que as mulheres que viajam violam as nossas expectativas de como uma mulher se deve comportar na natureza (Friedman, 2018). Ao se afastarem destas expectativas e da agradabilidade, as mulheres são castigadas com a indiferença e depreciação. E se, em cima disto, os homens não leem a escrita feminina e as mulheres são incutidas com crenças patriarcais, a tendência é a de pôr de parte o trabalho das mulheres logo à partida e de ter em conta suposições.

A restrição das mulheres e o serem julgadas pela agradabilidade também advém de como não é possível controlá-las da mesma forma quando estas viajam e de como, quando elas escrevem sobre o que sentem, estão a ter controlo sobre as suas vidas, o que leva ao medo em relação às mulheres porque elas mostram não ser o que se espera delas (Braverman, 2017). Uma mulher sem medo não é controlável nos moldes atuais, uma mulher que não é possível prever torna-se perigosa aos olhos dos demais. O que também ficamos a saber é que as mulheres não são gostadas quando são independentes. Ao fazerem o que é considerado masculino tornam-se transgressoras. Uma das formas de combater a discriminação dentro da escrita de viagens seria abrir a definição desta à diversidade de razões por que as pessoas viajam e não à ideia do que é a forma correta de viajar.

Concluindo, é possível afirmar que a liberdade está relacionada com a falta de constrações, com o poder fazer o que se quer ou deseja sem a interferência de outros, por conseguinte, de acordo com estes conceitos e com as imposições das sociedades, as mulheres não têm liberdade de movimento. Ao mesmo tempo, as mulheres têm liberdade de movimento porque continuam a avançar e a viajar, não obstante, tal como o fizeram durante séculos.

### **Palavras-chave**

Escrita de Viagem; Mulheres; Liberdade; Movimento; Literatura

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## Introduction

In 1995, Cheryl Strayed undertook a hike of 1,100 miles across the PCT (Pacific Crest Trail) in the United States (which has 2,663 miles) on her own. After four years of feeling lost due to the death of her mother, she spotted a guidebook for the PCT in a hardware store and decided to do it. From this journey, several years later, came a travel memoir, *Wild: a Journey From Lost to Found* (2012), in which the author addresses many themes openly and there is one that stands out the most: fear. Throughout the narrative, her relationship with fear transforms; she finds ways to deal with it, such as singing and chanting to herself “I am not afraid” (2012). Other female travel narratives present a similar relationship with several themes that seem to differ from the outside view, the one society and culture have towards women. Female solo travel narratives present an opportunity to enter their world in which there seem to be no taboo subjects to be discussed. However, not only through criticism and reviews, but, from within the narratives, through other people that the travellers encounter along the way, we are presented with a different version, or a parallel one, that runs along. Taking into consideration the present day reality regarding the news of many women being killed walking in the streets, being the reason just for being women, and the growth of victim blaming that continues to exist, this dissertation is born from these two meeting points of women's freedom of movement while traveling and of fear, all that is involved in this freedom of movement from walking in the streets to communing with nature and traveling to different countries having in mind the ideal of what women should be and or do, such as staying at home, being invisible and others; with this fear that is instilled into women since they are born and the analysis of why that happens, where it comes from and how it influences this freedom.

From these, there are usually three main questions or assertions that arise: 1- Are you going alone?; 2- Aren't you afraid of going alone?; 3- You are so brave for doing it alone. Three main elements can be highlighted from these sentences: alone, afraid and brave. These will be the three main focuses of the dissertation regarding women's freedom of movement within solo travel writing. The analysis of these will help us understand why these questions and assertions are being made, why being alone is badly perceived towards women, the role of fear in women's lives, and how it affects them, how it is a female-associated characteristic, how it constricts freedom and whom it affects, not only who gets to tell the story but also how these stories are being left out of the mainstream.

The first chapter will analyse these three themes, being alone, fear, and bravery, taking examples from female travel narratives and through definitions as well as cultural and social analysis of these three concepts carried towards women that make them so present in women's stories and lives. Regarding being alone, Olivia Laing points out that the dictionary demarks the word lonely as something negative (2016). That correlated with society's tendency to pair people and to define loners as people who cannot find someone to love them (Gray, 2018), leading to prejudice and the feeling of being a misfit, even when there is a rise in the numbers of people who want to be alone (Rosenbloom, 2019). In this chapter, we will observe how this fear is considered normal and widely accepted. The APA Dictionary of Psychology from the American Psychological Association defines fear as a basic, intense emotion aroused by the detection of imminent threat; therefore, when questioning women if they are afraid of traveling alone what is being assumed, in a way, is that there is an imminent threat for them. Fear is also seen as a female characteristic which seems to be passed down from generations and opens the door for victim blaming, which is also analysed by Leslie Kern (2019). We will also observe how fear serves to control. Henceforth, the concept of bravery regarding being alone or and being afraid is towards breaking the norm, and this norm is that if women leave their houses something will happen to them, namely being raped, and afterwards there will be victim blaming because they transgressed what was known that could happen to them. Despite the fight for independence and successful careers in the past decade, the outcome comes short due to the control of the public space by men in the evening, since "the fear of male violence deters the majority of women from being independent" (Valentine, 1989, p. 389).

In view of the fact that the first step outside is usually the streets, the second chapter will analyse the notion of freedom with the movement on the streets, walking, what that implies historically, namely how women have been perceived as an outsider, and how that influences notions and historical prejudices, such as women walking unaccompanied meaning they were prostitutes and that they are someone's property otherwise. We will follow the concept of *flâneuse* and women being observers by Lauren Elkin (2017). We will also observe the insecurity women experience on the streets in present days and in recent decades such as catcalling, groping and rape, even murder (Solnit, 2016; Brownmiller, 1975; Criado Perez, 2020; Jackson Katz, 2012), and how violence is a weapon to infer fear and to impose limits. Definitions of freedom will also be deconstructed in order to understand if women are free to move outside.

Considering women's writing is compared to men's writing, in the third chapter we will enumerate the main differences between them, female and male, such as veracity, confessional, interiority, the dichotomy of women being home and men going away, having in especial consideration the angle of criticism and a historical and cultural deconstruction, mainly because these differences derive from these. For example, the exclusion of women from what Sónia Serrano would call “the curse of Odysseus”, that mythical hero who, against all odds, was able to keep his wife waiting for twenty years. [...] Penelope waits, and it is that waiting that consecrates her as a virtuous woman. [...] Her attitude would influence the understanding of the role of women throughout history regarding the impulse to departure. Women do not depart. Women stay. Await. Or not (Serrano, 2014, pp. 25-26). The conclusions reached in this chapter, namely the marginalization of women’s stories, the power that reception has and why it is important, will enlighten the following chapters and provide more answers regarding women's freedom of movement and the possibility of travelling and publishing travel accounts by women. It is more related to what one gender is allowed to do than the other. The answers found here will help understand better and tie up with the answers found in the sixth chapter (on why it is important who gets to tell the story and why there is the idea that the quantity of works in travel writing by women is scarce and how it is untrue).

The fourth chapter leads to an image that exists or is created of women by the media. This may seem an out-of-step theme, but it makes sense in order to comprehend such an image that is tied up to women’s bodies, and the control of their bodies, by them and by others. If the streets are dangerous for women and it can start only with the power of looking, in the digital and online world such power takes other meanings and uses of power. Using the study case of Instagram’s policies regarding its rules of the female body, we will be able to observe how social constraints and beliefs permeate through digital platforms that are private. The example used is focused on the censorship of the female nipple which inspired movements such as Free the Nipple which aims to show how women are stigmatised and punished by their bodies. Using Marilyn Yalom’s work *A History of the Breast* (1997) as the theoretical basis and others, we will also have a better understanding of the history that the breast, and therefore the nipple, carry in society and influence the way women are treated, first as a body and then as a person, “For most of us, and specially for men, breasts are sexual ornaments – the crown jewels of femininity” (Yalom, 1997, p.3). Also, the lack of freedom in some parts of the digital world, mainly the ones that perpetuate such images, can influence the movement on the outside and real world by comparing the real and the digital, the physical

and visual liberty. It affects them while walking in the street, while traveling. It affects how they interact with others and how they are or may be approached. The power of looking is also addressed from digital platforms to art, to the streets being women the object of looking.

The fifth chapter approaches traveling and freedom in the environment, an intermediate space between the streets and traveling globally, nature. Meaning not only walking around, travelling internationally to other cities, but the commune with nature. The importance of this chapter is tied mainly with the notion of nature as female, Mother Nature, but which is not given to the real woman. This real and mythical, the binary view of women is addressed throughout the dissertation. Here, once again the power of symbolism attached to women, the breast and now giving life under the control of god (who is male) and such normative ideas in which people grow up in; “We have been taught to address nature as the ‘Mother Earth’” (Tiwari, 2020). Tiwari explains that this symbol “is allegorised as a powerful maternal force, the womb of all human production that ‘takes care’ of our needs and necessities from time and again.” Although a comforting idea it is a “gendered and sexist language that is reinforced in the lives of women” and they are then expected to “possess the 'same nature' as the nature of Mother earth” (2020).

The sixth chapter puts together the freedom of movement with publishing by questioning who gets to tell the story and its importance. Also, why it is more difficult for women and how the paradigm needs to change. “We tell each other stories in order to live” (Didion, 1979). But who tells the stories? Or who gets to tell a story? And if a great part of the world population cannot tell their story, which perspectives are we living by? According to Laura Bates,

Throughout history, everything that we do – everything that we believe about ourselves and other people, everything we plan for and work towards – has been shaped by stories.” (...) That women, in those stories we hear, are still portrayed as so incredibly limited, pigeonholed and stereotyped. And that so very few of those stories are told in a woman’s voice. (Bates, 2014, pp.185-186)

If women cannot tell their stories we will only have one part of what is out there and in travel history this is extremely important, especially regarding fear, danger and what is out there. If women need to see the world for themselves, they also need to be able to report what they see and for other people to read such accounts. In this chapter, it will be addressed also the need that women felt of wanting to know where women are in travel writing, how women are perceived in this genre and some solutions in the publishing world in order to address this

matter. The separation of the genders is also addressed in not only the way women get to have a voice, but that their voice tends to be marginalized since, for example, men do not read women.

The seventh, and final, chapter analyses and demonstrates women travelling, through their own words, and how there are two realities taking place regarding women traveling, women's freedom of movement, how its perception exists in the real world with what these female writers experience and what is said about it, as seen through the dissertation. Here, we have examples of authors such as Cheryl Strayed, Robyn Davidson, Elspeth, who travelled solo and in harsh conditions along the way. They also represent the change that women go through with travel and the way they connect with the world with it. This chapter ties in a way, all the others and deepens the reason why being able to tell the story is so important.

Fear is a fact of life for women, and I always feel my skin prickle when I travel. (...) When we travel, we're acutely aware that our antennae might be slightly off-kilter. We're constantly processing a range of facts about our surroundings, scanning for threats, and when our environment changes, and behavioural norms shift, it throws us. (Hart, 2018, pp. 67-69)

This small example of what is like for women to travel exemplifies how different an experience it is, but how women do it nonetheless and the importance of seeing their side.

All these chapters will showcase the two realities that seem to coexist, the one where women are told not to go out and to stay at home and to be afraid, and the other where women travel and go out and carry their lives "normally", even though they carry this fear (whether feeling it or not); resorting to the travel narrative and first-person narrative as well as the cultural and social analyses regarding the genre and activity. Through travel narratives we will also understand that women's stories are being kept in the margins and the danger that exists from this, which in a way is common in the history of women, and the importance of who gets to tell the story, which also is important for the preservation of freedom and the handling of such freedom.

## **1. Alone, Afraid and Brave**

The three main topics or questions approached or asked to women when they travel alone are the following: “Are you going alone?”, “Aren’t you afraid?”, “You’re so brave!”. Some are even asked what their parents or families think of it, implying a sort of attachment that women carry in the role that society still carves for them. In almost all travelogues by women traveling alone, these three points come up. And this is not new nor something from the past. From the 70s till nowadays, there are several accounts that show this. From *Lone Rider* by Elspeth Beard in 1982, to *Wild* by Cheryl Strayed in 1995, to *Miss-Adventures* by Amy Baker in 2016, for example, there is always a version of the three or the three altogether.

Although the works most used throughout this dissertation will be of English-speaking authors from Ireland, USA, UK, Australia, this discussion will follow a transnational frame, focusing on stories from women travelling alone in their home country and abroad. Women’s freedom of movement is constricted in the streets of their own country and such chain of thought follows them internationally. It is, however, important to stress that women’s freedom of movement and its constrictions are not the same across the globe and would not be fair to say so. Therefore, although perhaps following a Western point of view through the narratives and analysis of culture and societies, it will be shown how it can happen anywhere.

And to approach women’s freedom of movement, it is important to analyse these three questions and remarks. Firstly, why there is the shock of going alone and what lies behind “alone” in societies. Secondly, why should women be afraid, what lies behind this assumption and why it is somehow considered a normality. Thirdly, this notion of bravery that comes from facing the two above and what does this mean.

### **1.1 Women Being Alone**

‘You are travelling alone?’ asked the Israeli border guard, eyeing up my suspiciously small carry-on luggage and dishevelled appearance. (...) I hesitated, even though it’s a question I’ve been asked countless times. I was sola in Mexico City, unico in Rome and mongwe in Botswana. I’d worn a fake wedding ring in India (supposedly to deter unwanted male advances. It didn’t work). (Wills, 2021, p.1)

What is the true “fear” of going alone that people transpire to the ones who do it alone? Does it really stand for them going alone, for being alone? This question can also

happen when two women, for example, travel together. Or even if they are not traveling but walking on a street. Hence, is it being alone or the eternal question not of women being alone but, in reality, of women being without men. The role of the chaperone, for instance, has been attached to women's realities centuries ago, and travelling was no exception. As it will be approached regarding loneliness or being alone, there are several perceptions of it, the most common and shared one is of not having a partner or of living alone. Therefore, a great majority of people is pressured by the bad reputation of the word "alone" and end up making choices they do not want to make, having that fear in consideration rather than doing what they really desire. Although it should not be problematic not liking to be alone, the problem lies in being pressured to be accompanied and to be with people in order to avoid being alone, which will be discussed further on regarding being alone while traveling.

The first equation of women traveling solo is exactly that of being alone, of going solo. It is said humans are social beings and that they thrive as a group, that people desire to be coupled up. Loners are negatively perceived and sometimes even seen as a threat, especially if we look into crime films and tv series. To go alone doing anything "normal" or from the day-to-day life is highly charged with anxiety from within and from the outside world and generally perceived as weird. Having the capability to do something on one's own rises a threat in a world that rules on pairs, groups and dependency. Of course, doing things accompanied not always implies dependency and the same goes for doing it alone not always meaning one just lives that way (Laing, 2014; Gray, 2018).

Also, if, for instance while traveling, women break patterns, find themselves, become more independent and find their freedom, this leads to them making different choices and knowing what they want, leads them to not feel the need to be what society forces them to be. Having in consideration the meaning of the word lonely, Olivia Laing points out that

The dictionary, that chilly arbiter, defines the word lonely as a negative feeling invoked by isolation, the emotional component being what differentiates it from lone, alone or solo. Dejected because of want of company or society; sad at the thought that one is alone; having a feeling of solitariness. But loneliness doesn't necessarily correlate with an external or objective lack of company; what psychologists term social isolation or social privation. (Laing, 2016, p. 23)

Indeed, negative connotations such as these are one of the main reasons people tend to avoid being alone or to which to be alone is considered something to avoid. Especially when in nature, in social human life or just the act of walking home, to be alone is viewed as a

weakness because it can lead to the idea of being hunted. Culturally speaking, being alone is usually considered a failure and if people are alone by choice, such behaviour is viewed with even more suspicion. Because humans are considered social beings, society is usually reluctant to accept that being alone is not a synonymous of being lonely. In fact, loneliness can be experienced in a vary of social environments. That is to say that not “all people who live their lives in the absence of company are lonely, while it is possible to experience acute loneliness while in a relationship or among a group of friends” (Laing, 2016, p. 23). There is also the weight of how single people are viewed which leads to pity and that there is something lacking for “We live in a culture that tends to celebrate and exalt couples, but pigeonholes singles as outliers, misfits, oddballs who can’t find someone to love them” (Gray, 2018, p. 8).

The idea of being single, of being alone or of doing things alone is perceived in a negative light for all genders, but it is worse for women than for men (Gray, 2018). The idea of not having children, for instance, is one of the most brought up topics regarding loneliness. It gets worse for women because they are perceived as beings that have to be accompanied, whether for protection or socialization or motherhood, and so, in traveling, comes this same idea, “Why don’t you wait until someone can go with you?” “Don’t you have a friend that can go with you?” Most of the time, people cannot even grasp the idea of one simply wanting, desiring to do things by oneself. As Olivia Laing puts it,

Like depression, like melancholy or restlessness, it is subject too to pathologisation, to being considered a disease. It has been said emphatically that loneliness serves no purpose, that it is, as Robert Weiss puts it in his seminal work on the subject, ‘a chronic disease without redeeming features’. Statements like this have a more than casual link with the belief that our whole purpose is as coupled creatures, or that happiness can or should be a permanent possession. But not everyone shares that fate. Perhaps I’m wrong, but I don’t think any experience so much a part of our common shared lives can be entirely devoid of meaning, without a richness and a value of some kind. (Laing, 2016, p. 4)

Being alone and therefore, traveling alone, can make people get to know themselves at a deeper level (as we will analyse in chapter seven), to know things they otherwise would not, especially in situations, mainly regarding women in this case, which fear was instilled into. Taking the example of Elspeth Beard, the first British woman to motorcycle around the world, which she did in the 80s and in a time in which women bikers were not accepted and were diminished, she notes,



As a young woman on a big motorbike I encountered even more strange looks and double takes than I had done before. Riding several hundred miles every day, I learnt a lot, like how much oil the BMW needed and that I was comfortable in my own company. Travelling on my own, I felt a great sense of freedom. I could go where I wanted, stop when it suited me. (Beard, 2017, p. 21)

And as Robyn Davidson found out,

Although I talked constantly to myself, or Diggity or the country around me, I was not lonely – on the contrary, had I suddenly stumbled across another human being, I would have either hidden, or treated it as if it were just another bush or rock or lizard. (Davidson, 1995; 2014, p. 199)

Although being single is still perceived negatively, there is now a greater possibility for it than before. “But, more importantly than all of that, we’re single because we can be. That pathway of choice has only recently been blasted wide open, particularly for women” (Gray, 2018, p. 65). Although it is still difficult to live on your own regarding the financial spectrum that is lived worldwide with young generations being criticized for staying in their parents’ house almost to their forties, nowadays, one can make a living while being single despite not having to face some predicaments faced before, especially women,

A hundred years ago, single women stared down the barrel of persecution, unflattering slurs, a sexless existence, and the fact they could possibly die of starvation. [...] Only rich women had the luxury of marriage being optional. Women were treated like baby-making machines and expected to have as many as eight children. If you reached the age of 23 and weren’t married, you were dubbed a ‘spinster’. (Gray, 2018, p. 65)

But the so called “weirdness” of it remains and women continue to be asked why they go or are alone, why they are constantly being told that being alone is bad. The “crazy cat lady” term is an excellent example of the social perception that remains regarding women being alone. It is as if it is never a woman’s choice to be alone, they are either crazy or they cannot find anyone or they have a problem. This happens mainly because such ideals continue to exist even if in reality, they are not taking place, which is also a parallel of what happens regarding women traveling alone.

Regardless, being alone for women, being brave and to try to not be afraid, continues to be a task of great complexity in a world where women are killed just for the sake of being women, in which walking in the street, even in broad day light, can lead to death, where

saying no to a man's advances can lead to threats, name calling or worse such as rape and death.

But there are very interesting statistics presented by the authors Gray and Rosenbloom regarding people being alone. Gray states, "The single revolution is not just on British soil. Globally, there are more single people than ever before. (...) the amount of people living alone has rocketed by 80 per cent since the 1990s. In America, 45 per cent of all American adults are now single" (Gray, 2018, p. 60). Accordingly, Stephanie Rosenbloom notes that,

Some 85 percent of adults—both men and women, across all age groups—told the Pew Research Center that it's important for them to be completely alone sometimes. A survey by Euromonitor International found that people want more time not only with their families, but also by themselves. And yet many of us, even those who cherish alone time, are often reluctant to do certain things on our own—which may lead us to miss out on entertaining, enriching, even life-changing experiences and new relationships. (Rosenbloom, 2019, pp.7-8)

Henceforth, it is very interesting to see that what happens in reality is very far from what is being transmitted across cultures and societies, after all, people tend to like to be alone, it is not only something that happens to them, and also in people's notions when they ask why women are going alone or if they are not afraid to do something alone. However, "A series of studies published in the Journal of Consumer Research found that men and women were likely to avoid enjoyable public activities like going to a movie or restaurant if they had no one to accompany them" (Rosenbloom, 2019, p.8). Consequently, due to the negativity attached to being alone, as Rosenbloom puts it, "Any potential pleasure and inspiration that might come from seeing a great film or an art show was outweighed by their belief that going alone wouldn't be as much fun, not to mention their concerns about how they might be perceived by others" (Rosenbloom, 2019, p.8).

As much as alone time is becoming more important to people on their day-to-day life, there are still social constraints in solo public activities. People still value their public persona as one being social and outgoing in a group of two or more people. With that in mind, it is interesting to see that the projections for solo travelling in the future keep rising and becoming more popular. "More [people] are travelling alone – a lot more. From vacation rental companies to luxury tour operators, industry groups have been reporting double-digit upticks in solo travel. Airbnb is seeing more solo travelers than ever. Intrepid Travel reports that half of its guests (...) are now travelling by themselves, leading the company to create its very solos only tours. (Rosenbloom, 2019, p.7) It is also important to note that not only single

people are interested in solo travelling. Amongst married couples with kids the market is also increasing with “Nearly 10 percent of American travelers (...) taking solo vacations during the year, according to one of the world’s largest travel marketing organizations, MMGY Global” (Rosenbloom, 2019, p.7). Thus, we can conclude that travelling solo is not restricted to a specific age or social group and is, in fact, an activity for everyone who wishes to travel.

The increase in the market of solo travelling can be seen, at first, as a contradiction to the idea of fear even existing in the mind of those who want to travel. However, this showcases that this fear may be more due to social pressure and judgement than fear of doing it per se. It also helps to analyse that in most travel literature, when women are questioned regarding being alone, it is usually about a husband or if their mother allowed them or was not afraid of them doing it so, as Amy Baker, Rosita Boland and Cheryl Strayed are examples of them doing it so. Below are presented personal examples of what Amy Baker, Cheryl Strayed and Rosita Boland have experienced when travelling alone:

I found myself travelling alongside a middle-aged Chilean lady with big, dyed red hair who was accompanying her two elderly parents into Peru (...). The daughter was astounded that I was travelling alone; *‘muy fuerte’* (very strong), *‘muy valiente’* (very brave), she repeated to me over and over again, while stroking my hair and enquiring sympathetically as to whether I missed my mother. (Baker, 2017, p.141)

The women were four or five years younger than me, their hair and faces shiny and clean. (...) “So we were talking. It’s pretty intense you’re hiking alone,” said one of them after we’d finished with the bags. “What do your parents think of you doing it?” asked the other. “They don’t. I mean—I don’t have parents. My mom’s dead and I don’t have a father—or I do, technically, but he’s not in my life.” I climbed into the van and tucked *The Novel into Monster* so I wouldn’t have to see the discomfort sweep across their sunny faces. “Wow,” said one of them. “Yeah,” said the other. “The upside is that I’m free. I get to do whatever I want to do.” “Yeah,” said the one who’d said wow. “Wow,” said the one who’d said yeah. (Strayed, 2012, p.151)

[the drivers of the bus] were Gilgit men, thin under the folds of their shalwar kameez, curious, as everyone in Asia was, as to why I was travelling alone. ‘Why you travel alone?’ Zahoor enquired. ‘Where your husband?’ ‘My husband is dead,’ I said, matter-of-factly. My erstwhile husband had died many different deaths by then; fanciful deaths I enjoyed inventing. ‘He drowned while deep-sea fishing in Sri Lanka,’ I said on this occasion. In the past few months, he had, variously, been accidentally shot in a jungle in Borneo, died in a plane crash in the Sahara desert, been bitten by a snake in Cambodia, fallen from a cliff in Venezuela, and

succumbed to altitude sickness in Nepal. My husband was not always dead. Sometimes I resurrected him. If someone – always a male someone – was too pushy, too smarmy, or too keen to be tactile, on those occasions, my husband lived and breathed, and was eagerly awaiting me back at the guesthouse, or in the next town, or at that tea-house just over there. I had a ring purchased from a Kathmandu bazaar, which I wore on my wedding finger. The truth was just too confounding a cultural chasm for the people I met along the way: that I was in fact a woman travelling alone at the age of twenty-nine out of choice. (Boland, 2020, p.54)

Although Strayed's and Boland's situations happened in 1995, Baker's happened in the 2000s. By not asking regarding a friend, they are attaching women to property, belonging and home, husband and mother. It is hard to imagine this type of question being asked to a male traveller. In fact, this is not posed regarding criticism and reception. Baker was asked about her mother and how she was very strong for going alone; Strayed was asked about her parents' permission, although she was twenty-six years old at the time; Boland was asked about her husband and she explained how pretending to have a husband was a form of protection.

The fear of going alone stands mainly for negative things that can happen which overshadows the positive ones that might. Indeed, nowadays traveling alone, mainly for women, does not require having to wait for "freedom", meaning waiting for parents to die or for children to grow up or even for retirement. And, as we have seen before, people do value being alone. Despite all of the above, women vouch to travel alone as the best way to do it, even the ones that in their lives prefer to not be alone.<sup>1 2</sup>

## 1.2 Fear

The APA Dictionary of Psychology from the American Psychological Association defines fear as:

a basic, intense emotion aroused by the detection of imminent threat, involving an immediate alarm reaction that mobilizes the organism by triggering a set of physiological changes. These include rapid heartbeat, redirection of blood flow away from the periphery toward the gut, tensing of the muscles, and a general mobilization of the organism to take action (see fear response; fight-or-flight response). Fear differs from anxiety in that the former is considered

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.bemytravelmuse.com/benefits-solo-female-travel/> (Why I Prefer Solo Travel (And Probably Always Will))

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.fearfuladventurer.com/the-importance-of-travelling-alone/>

an appropriate short-term response to a present, clearly identifiable threat, whereas the latter is a future-oriented, long-term response focused on a diffuse threat. Some theorists characterize this distinction more particularly, proposing that fear is experienced when avoiding or escaping an aversive stimuli and that anxiety is experienced when entering a potentially dangerous situation (e.g., an animal foraging in a field where there might be a predator). Whatever their precise differences in meaning, however, the terms are often used interchangeably in common parlance. (APA Dictionary of Psychology, n.d.)

This definition is rather interesting within the scope of this dissertation because it differentiates fear from anxiety and mentions the words “animal” and “predator”. Focusing on the first two words, fear and anxiety, it is a little easier to understand why Dervla Murphy and Rosita Boland, for instance, say they are not afraid when travelling alone. In an interview “Dervla Murphy Tales and Travels on Two Wheels” from the 2011 BMFF Program, Murphy is posed the question: “You said you aren’t afraid when you travel, you’re not afraid of physical danger. What do you fear?” To which Murphy replied: “I don’t think I fear anything. Until the danger is there then I’m very frightened. I don’t fear things that might happen, I fear things when they happen” (2011). This connects the subject of fear as part of the experience of being a woman, taught into women, meaning, an idea imposed on them to prevent them from doing something because of what might happen and what is supposed to happen - as if it is expected to happen. This freedom from the burden of fear is perhaps what helps Murphy to be so adventurous and to just go ahead. This also puts her in the sphere of “being weird” in the eyes of those who find it strange for her not to be afraid. Perhaps, we should pose the question differently and not question why she has no fear but why do we think she should be afraid, which we will be debating throughout this work.

Fear is also seen as a female characteristic which seems to be passed down generations. From a very young age, fear is taught and serves to prevent women from doing things because something might happen to them. This also starts the lineage of victim blame, “you were warned, hence, if something happens to you, it is your fault”. As posed by Leslie Kern, “The socialization is so powerful and so deep that ‘female fear’ itself has been assumed to be an innate trait of girls and women” (2019).

If this fear is taught, then where is its source? In order to understand the experience of what it is to be a woman, we must adapt a wider scope of analysis that doesn’t forget the impact of gendered power relations. (Kern, 2019) Fear isn’t a typical feminine trait that makes them irrational in the eyes of others. Crime statistics against women show this fear has reason

and foundation to be real but not only in the outside world and “The crime women most fear is rape. The crime men most fear is robbery. Robbery is a bad thing to have happen to you. Rape is worse” (Kern, 2019, pp. 145-146).

The ideology that women should not go alone due to the fact that they can be raped or killed or beaten up fails a point by not taking into consideration that domestic violence and violence near home (walking down the street, using public transportation, etc.) has high rates throughout the world, meaning it can be even more dangerous at home. “According to the World Health Organization, 38 per cent of all women murdered are killed by their partners” (Bater, 2014, p. 344). Violence against women all over the world stems from the belief of their second-class citizenship, which subjects them to marry, stoning and traffic, female genital mutilation and childhood pregnancies, rape, slavery and lives of servitude (Bates, 2014).

Women are, therefore, more likely to be assaulted or even killed by someone they know than by a stranger, as Kern puts it,

Taken together, these portrayals imply that stranger violence and sexual assault are always just around the corner. Comedian Tig Notaro has a bit that captures the effects of this perfectly. Every time a man makes her feel uneasy in public, she wonders, “Is this my rape?” We laugh uneasily because it rings true. We do sort of believe that “our rape” is already out there, an inevitability waiting in the shadows. (Kern, 2017, p. 147)

Although the threat is real, although it can happen, it is the fear with which women have to live that somehow constructs the view they have of the world and what they can or cannot do. And it restricts them. By treating domestic violence as private, these crimes are less talked of, which inevitably leads women to direct their fear outwards, to the world away from home. However, “this stigmatizes violence experienced within the “safe” space of the home and drives it further out of sight” (Kern, 2017, p. 147).

These warnings have the purpose to put blame on women, such as “you were warned, if you go ahead, anything that happens to you is your fault” as mentioned before. The example in the book *I am I am I am* by Maggie O’Farrell is an excellent one, in which the author puts the blame on a woman for not being able to survive an attack made by a man. In this particular chapter, O’Farrell recounts an event of her life in which she had a brush with death. While walking on a hill, going for a walk, she encountered a man that ended up approaching her and tried to harm her, but she was able to escape from him. Afterwards,

another young woman was found dead in the same place, and it was that same man that killed her. “I don’t know why he spared me but not her. Did she panic? Did she try to run? Did she scream? Did she make the mistake of alerting him to the monster he was?” (O’Farrell, 2017, p.20) Whether it was made unconscious or not, this shows that this way of thinking is embedded socially, culturally, and even in the people who are the most victims of it. The girl that died made a mistake. It is also worth mentioning that she was a tourist. These warnings also lead women to fear going outwards and going away from home or even to do the day-to-day routes, home and work. It perpetuates the idea of traditional values that they should only get out to go to work or to do chores, if they fail to do more than that they are on “borrowed time”, hence the victim blaming.

Instead of trying to locate some internal cause or explanation for women’s fear, feminists are more interested in situating it within broader structures, systems, and institutions. And this leads to the question, “why is women’s fear so deeply embedded, socially and culturally?” The only explanation is that it serves some kind of social function. (Kern, 2017, pp. 147)

Fear as a social function is what lies behind the fear associated to women, used as a way of control, it became so embedded in society that it entered normalisation and expected characteristic. Fear also functions to control women and such fear will restrict their lives, choices and opportunities and keeps the *status quo* alive,

It’s very Women’s Studies 101, but it bears repeating: the social function of women’s fear is the control of women. Fear restricts women’s lives. It limits our use of public spaces, shapes our choices about work and other economic opportunities, and keeps us, in what is perhaps an actual paradox, dependent on men as protectors. This all works to prop up a heteropatriarchal capitalist system in which women are tied to the private space of the home and responsible for domestic labour within the institution of the nuclear family. It’s a system that benefits men as a group and upholds the status quo very effectively. (Kern, 2017, pp. 147-148)

Instead of these problems being fought, women and others are taught that those problems exist and should be avoided, as if these events are something normal, and turns blame and responsibility around. As Laura Bates argues, the world around sends messages to women and conditions them. It leads violence to be expected and accepted:

The world around us sends us messages about ourselves as women – about our guilt, and our difference, our accountability and our flaws. It gives us endless reminders of the vulnerability and victimization of women. It lets us know that it is normal and common for women to experience assault and harassment and rape. And it tells us that we deserve it. And all the

while we are conditioned to be passive and pleasant, not to make a fuss – to be ladylike and compliant and socially acceptable. Before we ever experience violence we are conditioned to expect it – and to accept it. (Bates, 2014, p.343)

The three questions posed in this chapter also lead to women having to explain themselves. It is not that the reason for traveling is not interesting, it is the position in which women are put in when they are asked - and almost regarding anything they do if we have in consideration what was discussed before. Why they are not afraid, why they went alone, and the conclusion of them being brave puts them in the position of having to explain reasons, puts them against what is the perception of what they should be doing instead and can also lead to the decrease of their self-assurance and increase of insecurities. It is also a search for what is wrong, what makes them different from the so-called *status quo*.

Carla King travelled around the USA in 1995 alone in a motorcycle and the question often asked was “Aren’t you scared?”, but facing her fear led her to fulfil dreams:

Because a woman traveling alone is an oddity, and doubly so if she is traveling by motorcycle, people often ask, "Aren't you scared?" Back then the answer was yes, but today I can honestly answer no. On that first trip, I learned to face my fears, and not let them get in the way of my dreams. (...) All the way back to Santa Cruz, people engaged me in conversation, curious about the bike and about my experience as a woman riding alone. And the same concern was almost always voiced: "Aren't you scared?" I tried to explain that my desire to travel was greater than my fear of traveling alone. Some understood, but most shook their heads and said, "You're braver than I am." (Carla King, 2007, n.d.)

Interestingly, King started travelling alone because her then husband decided not to go with her on their planned motorcycle trip around Europe.

Elizabeth Gilbert, the famous author of *Eat, Pray, Love*, a book which also opened the door for a platform for female travel narratives, in a way perhaps never seen before, talked about fear in a masterclass about being creative.

Fear is one of the ingredients of being a human being. (...) one of the misconceptions that I think we have about fear is that we resent it (...) and we're mad at it because we feel like it's ruining our life (...). And the one thing that we're missing often is a baseline of gratitude toward it. (...) we are here alive at this moment because there was some point in our lives where our fear saved our lives. (...) Maybe there were many moments. Get out of the ocean. The waves are too big. (...) That's a moment where fear is trying to save your life. (...) There's this essential gratitude that I think you have to begin with whenever you're dealing



with your fear. (...) It's just trying to keep me alive. That's it. That's a really amazing gift. (Elizabeth Gilbert on Why Courage is Better than Fearlessness)<sup>3</sup>

In a way, Gilbert pinpoints the importance of fear: it is what makes us stay alive. When we ask, “are you not afraid?”, it can be either way. Either way, being or not being afraid, are both equally important and one should not be considered better than the other. If a woman says she is afraid but goes anyway that is important because she is facing her fears and doing something she wants regardless of being afraid. If she chooses not to do something due to being afraid, what is important to analyse is if she made a choice, if she thought about it, if she weighed all the pros and cons in front of her and decided not to do something, or if she was constricted into that fear. Meaning, the instilled fear that prevented her from even trying.

More importantly, what is paramount to retain is if it was a choice rather than an imposition or constriction, because there is no problem if people are guided by fear. Because we have the power over that fear, we are the ones who define its place. Fear is part “of the many selves” that we are and “it gets to be in the room” but not to make any decisions (Gilbert).

As Gilbert also says “you absolutely do need your fear, in order to protect you from actual dangers”<sup>4</sup>, fear serves to guide our lives, the same way we can say that experience informs us. For this dissertation what is important regarding fear is if it is instilled and imposed as something normal from society. What does that question carry? What answers can come from it? The decisions need to be informed by what women feel it is better and not what was told to them to be better. And that also happens when people define what women are brave for.

Although fear can and exists naturally in everyone, all people are instilled with fear at some point of their life, but each group with different fears. For women, going alone, going outside, getting harassed or raped are some of them and being questioned about it is a reality. Also, the prejudice attached with certain activities can make it difficult to get support or to be understood. All of these affects women's freedom of movement. Especially when people try to demote them from doing it and when they are deemed responsible if something happens.

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<sup>3</sup> [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IPVjDqMN5SY&ab\\_channel=AcumenAcademy](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IPVjDqMN5SY&ab_channel=AcumenAcademy)

<sup>4</sup> <https://thecreativemind.net/1999/creativelife-elizabeth-gilbert-on-fear-and-expressing-our-creative-ideas/>

### 1.3 Bravery

Bravery, regarding women and women walking, just the act of leaving their home can be considered an act of bravery having in consideration the topics already discussed above. But this bravery is not one that is conscious, and it is usually not accepted by women. Because to accept it would be to acknowledge what makes them brave, and those reasons are to do with constrictions and restrictions rather than accomplishments set by themselves. This next part will approach aspects that answer better this bravery side, but the next example provides a clear idea of what women face and the social link from the 80's still present nowadays:

Everard, a 33-year-old marketing executive, disappeared on 3 March and her body was recovered from woodland near Ashford in Kent, about 20 miles west of Couzens's home, seven days later. It was hidden and wrapped in a builder's bag Couzens had bought days earlier. She was identified via her dental records. (Dodd, 2021)

In March 2021, in the UK, Sarah Everard was walking home, at night, after leaving a friend's house and to which she lived nearby. She was talking on the phone with her boyfriend (a technique used by many women, talking with someone on the phone while walking in order to be and feel safer), when she was kidnaped and raped and later murdered by a police officer.

In the *The Geography of Women's Fear* paper (1989), geographer Gill Valentine started this way, "In March 1988 Deborah Linsley was stabbed to death in an empty train compartment on the Orpington to Victoria line." Thirty-three years separate these two events, and the journal article was written in 1989. Nothing seems to have changed because as the author puts it,

Concern surrounding Deborah Linsley's death raised as many issues about her use of space as about male violence. Deborah was in an isolated public space away from the protection of others, thus allowing a man the opportunity to kill her. In subsequent comments on the murder both the police and the media implied that Deborah was to a certain degree responsible for her own fate by putting herself in such a situation, and warned other women to avoid putting themselves in similar situations of vulnerability. (Valentine, 1989, p. 885)

The same accusations towards women continue to be made, victim blaming continues to take place. Women continue to be scared to walk in public places. Public places, as many other places, continue to be male and designed to be so (Perez, 2020; Kern, 2020; Solnit,

2014). Regarding the death of Sarah, online comments continue to share the same beliefs as of those in 1988, that women should not be alone at night, that they should not go alone in the streets, that what they wear influences if they get attacked or not. Justification for assault, rape and murder continue to exist towards women while these same justifications are not applied to men when for example they are robbed. With her work with *Invisible Women*, Caroline Criado Perez was able to collect a great amount of data, with “Exposing Data Bias in a World Designated for Men”, for example, but also on exposing realities that continue to be perpetuated and by comparing them. Regarding the fear of public places and walking in the street, Criado Perez presents many statistics and points out that this fear “impacts women’s mobility and their basic right to access the city” (Criado Perez, 2020, p.55).

Valentine also gives insight regarding women’s personal space which also influences their freedom,

Unlike men women find that when in public space their personal space is frequently invaded by whistles, comments or actual physical assault from strange men. This inability of women to choose with whom they interact and communicate profoundly affects their sense of security in public (Hanmer and Saunders 1984). (Valentine, 1988, p.386)

This insecurity is also related with women’s bodies being considered private property and seen as belonging to others. As it has been discussed before, fear is taught as much as it is learned from experience. Women know “it is inappropriate and potentially unsafe to be alone in male dominated space, especially at night” (Valentine, 1989, p. 389). This means that despite the fight for independence and successful careers in the past decade, the outcome comes short due to the control of the public space by men in the evening, since “the fear of male violence deters the majority of women from being independent” (Valentine, 1989, p. 389). Being unable to fully enjoy their independence and the constraints to their freedom that prevent them from moving safely in public spaces leads many women to seek protection from one man, starting with having a relationship. Being dependent on one man not only limits women in general stages of her life, for example career opportunities, as it also allows and reinforces their safety within the home, away from public spaces. As a result, “this cycle of fear becomes one subsystem by which male dominance, patriarchy, is maintained and perpetuated. Women’s inhibited use and occupation of public space is therefore a spatial expression of patriarchy” (Valentine, 1989, p. 389). Since the public space is seen as male or a spatial expression of patriarchy, traveling will not make one get away from that. What can happen is the emergence of new forms that may be foreign if one does not study the culture

and traditions of such place. Still, there may be customs that are harder to know from a foreign point of view, and, since travel writing is tendentially a male form, to get to know these customs may be harder for women, namely if they are presented normally with only the negative aspects towards women, or, at the same time, only a male perspective that does not have in consideration gender and culture nuances of how women are treated in such places. How can bravery while traveling be so different for women from the bravery of just going outside, walking in the streets of the cities in which they live? Regarding bravery associated with traveling, Kate Wills writes, that “while travelling solo, the most common response is, ‘You’re brave’,” but she never felt brave while travelling on her own. She argues that “Bravery is when you’re scared of something but you do it anyway” and that travelling is not scary for her. It is going through life alone that was “truly terrifying” (Wills, 2021, p. 3).

The following reality presented by Wills shows a different one than the questions regarding going alone, being afraid or being brave present. One might think they go hand in hand, but perhaps they are just walking in parallel as two parallel worlds in which one is depicted and one is the reality. And the reality is far more complex and plural than the one that is depicted in the media and in society.

‘Yes, it’s just me,’ I told the Israeli border guard, wondering why I always add the ‘just’. Because having no plus-one is a great way to see the world. I’d been extolling the virtues of having solo adventures for years and had written many articles on the rise of this travelling trend. I knew that 27 per cent of people now take solo breaks, compared to just 10 per cent a decade ago, and 55 per cent of solo travel searches in the UK are made by women. I’d spoken to trend forecasters who told me that going on holiday by yourself was no longer perceived as the preserve of sad loners paying a single supplement but a sign of female wealth, independence and freedom. (Wills, 2021, p. 6)

Regarding the concept of bravery, Julie A. Hotz defines it in the book *She Explores*:

Doing things that scare us—whether physical or mental—is the very definition of bravery. Growing up, I thought bravery was about being bold and fearless, but as I’ve explored the backcountry, I’ve discovered bravery can be messy. It makes us come face-to-face with our most vulnerable selves, it asks us to sit in discomfort, and it asks us to try, fail, get back up, and stretch ourselves. Embracing fear has greatly affected and enhanced my every experience in the outdoors, and it has urged me to share these experiences and thoughts with others. (Hotz, 2019, para. 2)

Once again, bravery is not the lack of fear but is not a linear concept either. And if women are kept from doing so many activities that are present in traveling alone, there is a part of all of these concepts, experiences and knowledge of themselves, of them as humans, that will not be awakened.

Lastly, and tying up these three points, Torre DeRoche, a travel writer that has a blog named *The Fearful Adventurer*, and whose accounts and books carry the main theme of fearfulness and fighting it, wrote about safety and women walking alone as well as the idea of traveling with these ideals. In an essay named “A woman who walks alone”, DeRoche narrates how she is an avid walker and prefers to walk and how, when while traveling in Italy, she met a woman who also liked to walk and hike and decided to do it together,

We were two women alone in the big bad woods, improvising a place to sleep each night, to eat. On one occasion we were homeless at 10pm, walking from one fully booked hotel to another in the dark before we finally found a place to stay. We never felt we were in danger, never met a bad person. We trusted in our intellects and instincts. We explored Italy by the power of our own two feet, and we were happy and fit and free. From there we travelled to India and walked 390 kilometres in the footsteps of Gandhi, carrying only a tiny can of pepper spray each in our pockets for protection. “You might get raped,” we were warned again and again, and while part of me questioned if this was a reckless idea, the larger, louder, more intuitive part of me repeated a mantra of Gandhi’s: “The enemy is fear. We think it is hate but it is fear.” (DeRoche, 2015)

Everything went well and they were even welcomed by the locals and given gifts. The importance of telling these types of stories is not to say that there is no danger and that things cannot happen, it is to say that although they might happen, not only it is not women’s fault, nor should they stop doing what they wish because of the fear and the narratives of fear instilled in them through warnings such as the one in this citation and also the fact that they carried pepper spray with them for safety. DeRoche also touches the main point, the enemy is fear. When talking about a young girl who had been murdered while walking alone in a park, DeRoche tells that the homicide squad detective warned people, especially females, not to be alone in parks. These words were reiterated by the former premier of Australia Jeff Kennet which raised a reaction from a lot of women who counterargued the problem is men. However, as long as it is true that men are the perpetrators, “pointing accusing fingers at all men is hateful and fearful and does nothing whatsoever to empower anyone” (2015). Moreover, “‘men’ are no dangerous. Highly infrequent rogue psychopathic murderers are

dangerous” (2015). DeRoche chain of thought leads the way into what is possible to see, and will be addressed further on, that the problem is the system that normalises these situations and asks women not to be alone, without incurring in any measures to change this reality.

DeRoche mentions the patriarchal values as being dangerous, and, as we have seen before, that is the root to the main problems for women’s freedom of movement. Another important topic is that “assumptions that all women are weak and vulnerable, and all men just can’t help themselves from mauling women” is a way to “disempower women and enable aggressors” (2015). This allows us to understand not only what lies beneath the three questions/affirmations made to women when they are alone or travel alone but also the belief system that continues to exist due to these behaviours. As DeRoche points out, these beliefs are not perpetuated only by men, “they’re often spoken by women themselves when they warn one another, ‘It’s not safe to walk alone,’ or, ‘You might get raped,’ as they pass on myths of danger” (2015) And when mentioning that awful things happen, we can think of how society thinks of preventiveness. There are countless ads and campaigns to warn drivers on what to do and on what to be careful about but they are never told not to drive or to stop driving. The same goes for drinking alcohol. But when the problem is women being attacked, instead of there being campaigns against such acts, what happens is as DeRoche mentioned, a warning to women not to go out alone (2015).

It is possible to see the extent to which this fear is a form of terrorism and how it is performed on women. To change it would take a deep transformation which organisms and governments and institutions are not willing to take because it would demand great structural restructuration that would change life as we know it. That is not desirable as we will be able to see in the next chapters in which although change has been happening throughout the years, traditional ways of thinking and social and cultural traditions still take place. And the greatest difference between this type of terrorism and the one we see on the news is that the latter is not only “easier” to deal with as well as it works at a political level. What is also interesting is what is said usually after terrorist attacks take place: people should not let terrorism win by stopping doing their normal lives, stopping going outside. Yet, when women are attacked on the streets, outside, what is said to them is to not go out and to protect themselves.

Regarding the right to walk alone and women’s sense of freedom, DeRoche concludes, that the warnings given to them are limiting and diminishing, they limits women’s possibilities of trying and deteriorates their quality of life,

The statements made by authorities and others like it are a blow to every woman's sense of freedom. They're potent bundles of psychologically damaging paranoia wrapped up in the packaging of a thoughtful gift. Every time you tell a woman "It's not safe for you," and "Be careful, you're a woman," you're undermining her. Telling her that she's fragile. Stupid. Weak. Incapable. Rape-able. This fear limits her growth and deteriorates her quality of life. Fear is her greatest enemy. These warnings rob a woman of her right to be bold by accusing her of being stupid or careless should she venture outside of the white picket fence. They shrink the space in which she can feel safe to thrive within, trapping her, limiting her. They weaken her ability to hear her own intuition, to make her own intelligent judgment. Should women walk alone? Should they walk alone through Italy and India and with headphones on and in a park and in the dark and any other place they choose to use their own smart brains to decide to walk within? Yes, yes, and fuck yes. Because they deserve to be able to disappear and experience the void. (DeRoche, 2015)

Women "deserve to be able to disappear and experience the void". According to Professor of Geriatric Medicine Sue Kurrle "lack of confidence can really limit what we do. It really shrinks our world" (Cuell, 2021). And the world is always shrunk for women.

In the next chapter, we will explore how freedom of movement starts in the streets and how very old, millennial even, ideals and meaning regarding women continue to take place and influence their right to the outside space.

## 2. Women's Freedom of Movement

The concept or concepts of freedom have long been addressed throughout time within culture and society, but for women such concept has not been the same for millennia. Housebound, constricted freedom to get out, being owned by men. Although much has changed in the 21st century, there continues to be characteristics present from the past. Violence towards women, inside and outside the house and sexism present in all sectors of life show how there is still so much to be worked on. This chapter will analyse how women's freedom of movement and their wanderlust might be affected by these and how that affects women being *flâneuses*.

In an essay published in the *New Yorker* titled *City of Women*, Rebecca Solnit begins with asserting that the streets are not for women and what is expected of them while there, obedience, attention, pleasantry ("smile"):

"It's a Man's Man's Man's World" is a song James Brown recorded in a New York City studio in 1966, and, whether you like it or not, you can make the case that he's right. Walking down the city streets, young women get harassed in ways that tell them that this is not their world, their city, their street; that their freedom of movement and association is liable to be undermined at any time; and that a lot of strangers expect obedience and attention from them. "Smile," a man orders you, and that's a concise way to say that he owns you; he's the boss; you do as you're told; your face is there to serve his life, not express your own. He's someone; you're no one. (Solnit, 2016)

How can women be free to be *flâneuses* and why do they still face constrictions to be so nowadays? First, we will observe some concepts of freedom by Isaiah Berlin and by Simone de Beauvoir. Afterwards, the meaning of *flâneuse* with author Lauren Elkin, and how it is affected by today's reality and where it all began with authors such as Rebecca Solnit, Caroline Criado Perez, Susan Brownmiller and Jackson Katz. In the end we will try to understand why even though women are and have been *flâneuses*, they still face so many constrictions. This chapter will take a general approach to the streets because violence against women takes place everywhere, whether it is in the countryside or in the middle of a busy city.

According to the Cambridge Dictionary, freedom is "the condition or right of being able or allowed to do, say, think, etc., whatever you want to, without being controlled or limited; a right to act in the way you think you should; the state of not being in prison or in



the condition of slavery (= condition of being legally owned by someone else)” (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.) Freedom is one of the concepts that involves the most elements and discussion because it depends on several conditions and affects everyone. Isaiah Berlin presented freedom as positive and negative. Negative is freedom from, “the freedom to act without outside interference”. Positive is freedom to, “derives from the wish on the part of the individual to be his own master, and the freedom which consists in not being prevented from choosing as I do by other men” (1997, p. 203). It is possible to assert that freedom is related to the lack of constrictions, of being able to do what one wants or desires without the interference of others, therefore, according to these concepts and to societies’ impositions, women do not have freedom of movement.

In *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, Simone de Beauvoir discusses freedom and personal freedom and others. One of the most interesting assertions that de Beauvoir makes is about the type of freedom at the beginning of our lives. This is present when de Beauvoir states:

The child’s situation is characterized by his finding himself cast into a universe which he has not helped to establish, which has been fashioned without him, and which appears to him as an absolute to which he can only submit. In his eyes, human inventions, words, customs, and values are given facts (...). (Beauvoir, 1947, p. 37)

This freedom can be considered conditional, the child then lives in a “serious world, since the characteristic of the spirit of seriousness is to consider values as ready-made things” (1947, p. 38). The world they are in is already construed and they have to live according to those rules. “The real world is that of adults where he is allowed only to respect and obey,” (1947, p. 38) and de Beauvoir argues that this state is very rare to maintain through adolescence. It is then that the adolescent discovers the real world. And there is a moment in which they are called to choose and decide, “the individual must at last assume his subjectivity” (1947, p. 38). However, regarding the idea of the infantile world, when the author separates enslaved people and women from all the others, she is establishing that this freedom and this ambiguity addressed throughout is of men, white men. In her words:

There are beings whose life slips by in an infantile world because, having been kept in a state of servitude and ignorance, they have no means of breaking the ceiling which is stretched over their heads. Like the child, they can exercise their freedom, but only within this universe which has been set up before them, without them. (de Beauvoir, 1947, p. 39)

This shows how not only do we have different freedoms and different realities according to gender, ethnicity and culture, but also, that for many years we learn, we are structured, and we live in a world or reality that is imposed and may or may not change. This is a freedom conceptualized by men that does not involve everyone and it is here where women's freedom appears to reside, "within this universe which has been set up before them, without them" (de Beauvoir, 1947).

Having established meanings of freedom and how they may work and are present in real life, how can the idea of *flâneur/flâneuse* come to life? How does freedom affect freedom to walk, to wander, to wonder?

According to Lauren Elkin, author of the book *Flâneuse: Women Walk the City in Paris, New York, Tokyo, Venice and London* (2017), *flâneur* means 'one who wanders aimlessly'" and "was born in the first half of the nineteenth century" (p.8). She provides a further definition: "A figure of masculine privilege and leisure, with time and money and no immediate responsibilities to claim his attention, the *flâneur* understands the city as few of its inhabitants do, for he has memorised it with his feet" (2017, p. 8). Men were able to do so because they had the money, social power and the free time to do it because women took care of the home and of the children.

What is very interesting is the fact that, even though the Academia continues to not want to accept the counterpart, *flâneuse*, as Elkin also explains in the book, she exists, nevertheless. The author herself is an example and the book presents as its proof. It is important to understand why this thinking exists and is tied to the privileges of the man of means:

'The urban observer [...] has been regarded as an exclusively male figure,' noted Deborah Parsons. 'The opportunities and activities of flânerie were predominantly the privileges of the man of means, and it was hence implicit that the "artist of modern life" was necessarily the bourgeois male.' (Elkin, 2017, p. 8)

Nowadays, and bearing in mind a western world or culture setting, women can walk freely, meaning, there is no law that prevents them from doing so. But we have to look at social history and to culture. In Portugal, for example, up until 1974, women needed their husbands' or fathers' or brothers' permission to leave the house and even for other activities.<sup>5</sup> Women have been dealt as objects and as private property not for centuries but for millennia

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.delas.pt/1974-revolucao-mudou-vida-das-mulheres/atualidade/116056/>

and in 1920 passports were issued to the man for both if the woman was married.<sup>6</sup> But not having laws against walking or to get out into the street without a reason or without permission does not mean that there are no constrictions.

In the book *Wanderlust, a History of Walking*, in the chapter “Walking After Midnight: Women, Sex, and the Public Space”, Rebecca Solnit points out the reason why “women have remained relatively housebound, not only by law in some countries even now, but by custom and fear in others” is to control women’s sexuality and to ensure paternity, especially “in cultures where patrilineal descent is important for inheritance and identity” (Solnit, 2014, p. 236). Therefore: “Women’s sexuality is controlled via the regulation of public and private space. In order to keep women “private,” or sexually accessible to one man and inaccessible to all others, her whole life would be consigned to the private space of the home that served as a sort of masonry veil” (Solnit, 2014, p. 236).

The way women’s walking is perceived does not help to their freedom either. According to Solnit, “women’s walking is often construed as performance rather than transport, with the implication that women walk not to see but to be seen, not for their own experience but for that of a male audience, which means that they are asking for whatever attention they receive” (2014, p. 236). Therefore, women walking in the street, as seen above, is associated with sex, hence with prostitution. There is the term women or woman of the streets and the same does not apply to men. Thus, more than a hundred years of women fighting shows not to be enough to change social norms. Society and law may adapt, technology may evolve at a very fast pace, but people’s ideologies might remain as residues for much longer.

Women walk, they walk just for the sake of walking, of enjoying the outside world. But it can be more dangerous for women to do so just for being women. There are fears that belong to everyone, but then there are others that happen with a greater degree to women: street harassment, sexual harassment, catcalling, rape. All these are means to an end: tell women owe something to men, that they are objects, and their place is somewhere else. The tactic of fear is one that is used as a main one and has been for a long time. In most cultures, the teaching begins at a very young age. “The Red Riding Hood” parable, for example, and as Susan Brownmiller puts it in her book *Against Our Will*, is one of rape. This story serves to tell girls what not to do, “Red Riding Hood is a parable of rape. There are frightening male

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/travel/article/women-equality-day-history-politics-passport>

figures abroad in the woods—we call them wolves, among other names—and females are helpless before them. Better stick close to the path, better not be adventurous” (Brownmiller, 1975, p. 310). And one should not forget who saves little Red Riding Hood and her grandmother when they seem to be defenceless: the huntsman (p. 309).

We are all aware that the street has dangers, but we still go out. People face those dangers but there are elements that differ, “both men and women may be assaulted for economic reasons, and both have been incited by crime stories in the news to fear cities, strangers, the young, the poor, and uncontrolled spaces” (Solnit, 2014, p. 240). But when it comes to sexualized violence women are the primary targets, “which they encounter in suburban and rural as well as urban spaces, from men of all ages and income levels”. Women know this because “such violence is implicit in the more insulting and aggressive propositions, comments, leers, and intimidations that are part of ordinary life for women in public places” (2014, p. 240). With the fear of rape women are intimidated back to the indoors, are put “in their place”, once again dependent on protectors “rather than their own will to safeguard their sexuality” (2014, p. 240), and one may say, to safeguard their right to simply be outside.

Fear forces people to create strategies. One chart that went viral online was made in 2018 by Jackson Katz, who is a social scientist and an activist on issues of gender, race and violence. During his lectures he created this chart by asking people what they did each day to prevent being sexually assaulted.

## **Figure 1**

*How to Avoid Being Sexual Assaulted, Jackson Katz*

♂	♀
"Nothing. I don't think about it."	"Hold my keys as a potential weapon"
	"Check the backseat before getting in the car"
	"Always carry a cell phone"
	"Don't go jogging at night"
	"Lock the windows when I sleep even on hot nights"
	"Be careful not to drink too much"
	"Never put my drink down & come back to it"
	"Make sure I see my drink being poured"
	"Own a big dog"
	"Carry mace/pepper spray"
	"Have an unlisted number"
	"Have a male voice on my answering machine"
	"Park in well-lit areas"
	"Never use parking garages"
	"Don't get on elevators with a lone man/group of men"
	"Vary my route home from work"
	"Watch what I wear"
	"Don't use highway rest areas"
	"Have & use a home alarm system"
	"Don't wear headphones when jogging"
	"Avoid wooded areas, even in the daytime"
	"Never rent first floor apartments"
	"Only go out in groups"
	"Own a firearm"
	"Always meet men for first dates in public places"
	"Make sure to have cab fare"
	"Never make eye contact with men on the street"
	"Make assertive eye contact with men on the street"
	"Make sure my family knows my itinerary"
	"Have extra locks on my doors & windows"
	"Make sure my garage door is closed all the way before I drive away"
	"Make sure my garage door is closed all the way before I get out of my car"
	"Leave outside lights on all night"
	"Lock my car doors as soon as I get in the car"

In this chart it is possible to see how there are two different mindsets towards walking outside and how much fear exists for women, what they can or cannot do because of it. Visual examples such as this provide a sort of tangible way of proof of something that happens in the everyday life but is considerable invisible.

In her book, *Invisible Women*, Caroline Criado Perez sets to show through data (and the lack of it) the reality experienced by women in society regarding many issues. The author starts by addressing the male default which is the world we live in, "Seeing men as the human default is fundamental to the structure of human society. It's an old habit and it runs deep – as deep as theories of human evolution itself" (2020, p.1). All chapters of the book deconstruct the areas in which it happens and affects everything and all spheres of women's lives. From

medicine, politics, urban planning, objects, technology and so on, women are regarded as the other, as abnormal, and therefore stay out of the equation in most of the situations.

Regarding public places, Criado Perez states that “Women are often scared in public spaces. In fact, they are around twice as likely to be scared as men” (2020, p.52). An UK Department for Transport study also highlighted the stark difference between male and female perceptions of danger: “that 62% of women are scared walking in multistorey car parks, 60% are scared waiting on train platforms, 49% are scared waiting at the bus stop, and 59% are scared walking home from a bus stop or station. The figures for men are 31%, 25%, 20% and 25%, respectively” (2020, p.53). Criado Perez concludes that “This fear impacts on women’s mobility and their basic right of access to the city. Studies (...) show that women adjust their behaviour and their travel patterns to accommodate this fear” (2020, p. 53). And the reason why most of these problems are not addressed is because they do not happen to those who have the power to change it. As Criado Perez puts it “If the majority of people in power are men – and they are – the majority of people in power just don’t see it” (2020, p. 270).

With the example of technology, objects, clothes and day to day life elements, in the chapter “One Size Fits All”, the author shows how women are supposed to adjust to what exists or is conceived having the male bias as the base. And this ideology goes to the behaviour in the streets. Harassment and rape are viewed as something that is there and that women should learn to live with it and to protect and avoid against it instead of getting to the root of the problem. Hence, it gets connected to victim blaming, as presented in the first chapter, and to pushing women away from the streets. It has gotten to the point in which society was able to convince people, and women in particular, that catcalling, for example, is a compliment.

Hence, how can women observe when they are the observed ones? How can they walk freely without a care when their body is constantly being an object of lust? Regarding the design of the suburbs, Lauren Elkin states that she became suspicious of an entirely vehicle-based culture because “a culture that does not walk is bad for women. It makes a kind of authoritarian sense; a woman who doesn’t wonder – what it all adds up to, what her needs are, if they’re being met – won’t wander off from the family” (2017, p.36-37). This leads back to the ready-made world: we are born into a set of rules, and if we are not allowed to think about it, we will not question it. By not providing solutions to the problems of half of the population, we are taking away their freedom and equality is not achieved.

Women are *flâneuses*, in spite of all and they have always been, the difference is that they are object to more constrictions and carry with them the outdated, but persistent, constructed ideas of millennia of imprisonment.

One of the solutions is presented by Katz in 2012 in the Ted Talk *Violence Against Women, it's a men's issue*, which is to treat harassment and rape as a man's issue and to bring them into the conversation. Another, by Caroline Criado Perez, is to have women involved in decision making, this way they are not forgotten.

“From Teheran to New York, from Melbourne to Mumbai, a woman still can't walk in the city the way a man can” (Elkin, 2017, p. 286). Cultures may be different but behaviour towards women tends to be the same or similar. Author Raquel Ochoa, which is also a travel writer, notes that regarding being a woman she never leaves the house thinking about the female condition, but it is funny how the world, in one way or another, takes care of reminding her of it (Ochoa, 2020, p.10). And this is very important regarding women's freedom of movement, how much is constricted by the outside world and not from within.

As for what means being a woman and especially while on the public eye, Ochoa states that being a woman is to be attentive, to live in a constant alert, to anticipate problems, to be relaxed, but always, in a state of alert (Ochoa, 2020, p. 88).

With all of the above, women will persist even facing the fear, the sexual violence of which they are a target of and hopefully, one day, millennia of social constructed ideals of sexism will be torn down and *flâneuserie* without fear of being female will be a reality. As Elkin (2017) puts it, “It is only in becoming aware of the invisible boundaries of the city that we can challenge them” (p. 287) And by being flâneuses, women change the way they move through space and intervene in the organisation of space itself (Elkin, 2017) and also by claiming the right to disturb the peace, “to observe (or not observe), to occupy (or not occupy) and to organise (or disorganise) space on our own terms” (Elkin, 2017, p. 287).

### **3. The Main Differences Between Female and Male Travel Writing Regarding its Criticism**

Humans began as nomads where they would move from place to place from time to time. Humans began as travellers. For many years, this role as traveller was solely attributed to men, even though women, of course, continued to travel.

*Odyssey* is the work of art most mentioned by the authors that study women's travel accounts and its criticism due to being the greatest example, and perhaps what created the canon, of the binary, and divided spheres of gender roles, men and women, outside and inside, traveller and stay at home, freedom and imprisonment.

Nowadays, even with all the social constraints and dangers that exist, women go out on their own to work, to shop, to take walks and so on. They do everything men do which, for so many years, was denied to them (and still are in some countries). Travelling is one of those activities that women have always done, yet, in the present time, continues to be faced with shock and fear to others whenever it is made solo. Women who travel solo are considered an exception, looked at with pity because they do not have someone to go with them, because the chain of thought that such women are lonely and being alone is bad is still embedded. And women that do this are considered to be brave. Author Gaía Passarelli book title from 2016, *Mas Você Vai Sozinha?* (But You're going alone?) not only reflects the reality of disbelief, but must also be the sentence that women hear the most when they decide to travel solo. In some countries, women have to use a wedding ring when traveling alone in order to avoid problems, questions or commentaries, the latter always almost impossible to avoid (Boland, 2020).

It is with the concept of bravery that this essay starts to take shape because men are not considered to be brave when they travel, at least not this bravery attributed to women, as Rosita Boland states,

People I had met on this journey, and others, were always telling me how brave I was to be travelling alone. I have never felt brave. Local people, of course, as in Pakistan, just thought I was crazy, not brave. The fact is, I wasn't brave at all. You are only brave when you do something you are afraid of, and although lots of times I did not like it at all, as now, I wasn't afraid of travelling alone. There were things I was deeply afraid of along the way, such as the thought of travelling on the local bus back to Gilgit, but I would not allow myself to be afraid of travelling alone. What was the alternative? Deny myself all these experiences on the road, the marvellous as well as the difficult ones? Stay at home and never go anywhere? It's that thought, the one of involuntary stasis, that has always filled me with genuine fear. (Boland, 2020, p. 102)



Devrla Murphy points out the plurality of the solo travel woman in the Introduction of *A Woman's World* through her experience, "The notion that women travelling alone are more at risk than men is difficult to dislodge from our mass-consciousness. I, however, believe the reverse to be true, in places as yet uncorrupted by tourists." This is because, according to Murphy, the solo traveller woman "brings out the best in the male chauvinists who populate remote regions" (xxii, 1995). Meaning, "at home she is seen as a model of "liberation": independent, innovative, resourceful, self-assured" but in remote places "she is safe not because she is resourceful and self-assured but because she is seen as a member of the weaker sex, needing protection" (xxii, 1995). Murphy concludes that where a lone male might arouse suspicions regarding their motives for being there, the lone female is perceived as vulnerable, therefore will not be hurt (xxii, 1995).

Women travel and have always travelled, but if we pay close attention to the world of travel writing, it seems as if they have not. Or at least when we are able to find them, that they are less in number. Traveling is considered a male domain especially because they were the ones, historically, to travel to conquer, to expand, to penetrate the virgin lands, and therefore, travel writing and travel as a genre fill this notion and walk hand in hand with notions and views of colonialism and of imperialism. Also, the definition of travel writing or the rules it should comply with are highly associated with western views and ideals. Hence, when we reach for its criticism, even not having read any travel accounts by women, there is already an image, an idea of how it is, mainly because media is full of male travellers and their representation.

Due to the work of feminists, many female travel writings have been published, especially from the eighteenth and nineteenth century. Since there is such an array of work and research on this period, this chapter will use it to gather the main characteristics associated to male and female travel writers.

This chapter aims to identify the main differences between female and male travel writing regarding its criticism and then take it to the present day to analyse how those ideals prevail to this day and highly affect the reception of these accounts, as well as how women are viewed in the public eye. It also aims to show how travel writing and its criticism are highly gendered on purpose and will use the analysis of two critics to exemplify this. Lastly, and picking up the example of travel writer and journalist Jan Morris, we will be able to demonstrate how this way of thinking materialises.

### 3.1 Differences in Travel Writing

According to Alba Amoia and Bettina L. Knapp in their Introduction to *Great Women Travel Writers: From 1750 to the Present*,

Travel is sacred. Travel is a quest. Travel is a passion. Travel is escape. It is a learning process, a distraction, a novelty, a dream fulfilled. It may inspire joy, terror, longing, or bring on fatigue; it may serve to test one's linguistic skills, or to ward off boredom and even depression. There are as many reasons for travel as there are gourmet dishes. Paralleling the unending emotions canalized by travel is the insatiable appetite for discovery and exploration. (2006, p. 9)

With this definition, it is possible to identify several characteristics that are attributed to men which, for many years, were not allowed or attributed to women: “quest”, “learning”, “discovery and exploration”. And, although many social revolutions have occurred and many cultural changes have taken place, these continue to be a fight endured by women. It is highly present in travel writing and the criticism made of it is the clear representation of this biased perception and gendered marked ideal of what is travel writing.

These differences are clear nowadays and are present in visual culture and in media as well as in its representation. We can take as examples Gertrude Bell's and Lawrence of Arabia's films. *Lawrence of Arabia* from 1962, based on the life of T. E. Lawrence, was a huge success. But Gertrude Bell, his contemporary, was much more famous than him and did a vaster work (historian, archaeologist, writer, helped define the borders of Iraq, among many others). Yet, a film made about her life and travels and deeds was only made in 2015, *Queen of the Desert*, and was considered a flop and was highly criticised.<sup>78</sup>

These examples are mentioned beforehand since in the end it will be possible to assess that the main problem is perception and reception and all due to binary and social determinism.

As Caroline Criado Perez mentions in *Invisible Women: Data Bias in a World Designed for Men*, men do not read women and presents the perception of role model, which is usually male:

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0056172/>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt1837636/>

And in any case, he mused, do you have to be the same gender as someone to be a role model? ‘Can’t you be a role model as people?’ Not really, Colin, because as we’ve seen, ‘people’ tends to be read as male. And in any case, while there is evidence that women can to a certain extent accept men as role models, men won’t do the same for women. Women will buy books by and about men, but men won’t buy books by and about women (or at least not many). (Criado Perez, 2020, p. 14)

Consequently, this gendering in travel writing, this putting women stories and reports in a marginalized form, will push them further away, and it will also push women away from reading women when they are presented with binary ideals in which women who travel are transgressors given that, far away, they are even freer from social constraints of what they can or cannot do. Regarding the question of model roles, women cannot be a role model if they are travelling because it is away from home being that home is a synonym of womanhood, as history (or male history) has been pointing out for many centuries.

The main characteristic in common with female and male travel writing is that they are questioned, mainly in its veracity, but, as Sara Mills points out, women's texts are far more “accused of falsehood than men’s, although it must be recognised that these types of claims were made about travel writing in general from its very beginning” (Mills, 1991, p. 30). Mills gives the way female and male critics read a text, which is to prove if they tell the truth and are factual:

Finally, women critics of travel writing need to consider whether these texts are factual, whether they tell the ‘truth’ about the journeys which were undertaken. Many critics see a biographical approach as the only way to read these texts, and they devote themselves to proving or disproving allegations against the writers. Many of the contemporary male critics read the texts within this framework and accused the women’s accounts of falsehood or exaggeration. (Mills, 1991, p. 30)

Women as the Other is recurring in history and in society, and in travel writing it is not an exception. Almost all authors that write about gender and travel writing or women and travel writing mention the *Odyssey* as the greatest example of the separation made to be the canon between men and women regarding public space and travel. Sónia Serrano puts it as what she calls “the curse of Odysseus” using the example of Penelope that waits for her husband, the traveller, another example of men being the outside and women the inside, or home, because women stay and do not depart, the exclusion of women from travel comes from what Serrano calls ‘the curse of Odysseus’, that mythical hero that, against all odds, was

able to keep his wife waiting for twenty years. [...] Penelope waits, and it is that waiting that consecrates her as a virtuous woman. [...] Her attitude would influence the understanding of the role of women throughout history regarding the impulse to departure. Women do not depart. Women stay. Await. Or not (Serrano, 2014, pp. 25-26).

“The idea of travel writing as a purely male domain, where women were noteworthy exceptions, persists today,” points out Dúnlaith Bird and one of the main problems of the approach of criticism towards women travel writing is “this emphasis on exceptionality focusing instead on the numbers of women travelling and the colonial and religious networks they integrated (Bird, 2016, p. 36). This denotes that it is not normal for women to do it, when in fact they do it, it is an attempt to enter the role of the men, they are considered to be brave and heroic. But once they do it, there is no need to continue to give women attention, even, as it will be shown later on, if they continue to travel, and that men have the “permission” to repeat and continue to report their travels. Also, by writing, women were opening themselves to criticism regarding what they did outside of the private realm of the home, of the country, leading to attacks and claims of exaggeration and of sexual impropriety, since a woman’s reputation is usually the most valued:

The taboos regarding women’s writing were very great since, by writing about travelling, the women authors were bringing upon themselves criticism for both the writing and for the travels which they represented; they were laying themselves open to attack on charges of exaggeration and of sexual impropriety. (Mills, 1991, p. 41)

But Mills highlights that although appealing, there are “obvious problems” with this account because “although there are taboos on women writing, which have been reinforced by women’s relative lack of education and for negative judgements on individual women authors, women have nevertheless continued to write” (Mills, 1991, p. 41). Interestingly, although women had lack of education due to it being denied to them and had less possibilities of acquiring knowledge, they did write nevertheless and proved that given the chance they could reach the same as men did.

This lack of access to knowledge and to be writers the same way as men gave way to the type of travel writing women started to use and that remained to present day in a certain way; diaries, letters, more introspective and private. Susan Bassnett highlights that “it is important to note that not all the writings by women travellers were intended from the outset for publication” whereas male writers seemed to have publication in mind from the outset.

“This difference reflects the difference in social terms between men and women in the nineteenth century, with men occupying a far more public rôle and women only assuming a public rôle in particular circumstances” (Bassnett, 2002, p. 231).

Most travel writing criticism theory or studies focus mainly in the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth century. But it is important to analyse, using that same criticism, how it continues to apply to more recent travel writing accounts, especially focusing on women. Although ostracised, they face expectations, nonetheless, as how to be travellers through their otherness:

Despite these more nuanced critical readings, there is often still an expectation that women travel writers should display a sense of solidarity with other women they encounter. In *Travel Writing and the Female Imaginary* (2001), the authors claim that women travellers, already somehow Other or ex-centric in their own culture, therefore occupy a privileged position of ‘otherness’ within the host culture and so can identify with the equally marginalized native women beyond cultural and class boundaries (Fortunati and Ascari 2001: 5). (...) this assumes that all women, regardless of socio-economic or cultural background, share a common experience of gender and a common bond of sisterhood. (Bird, 2016, p. 37)

Women’s writing is considered to be different because within the lack of freedom imposed by gender, that same gender leads to providing other shapes of freedom within the lack of it, “Women, she argues[Robinson] , ‘have rarely been commissioned to travel’, hence in the absence of a patron or authority figure ‘women can afford to be more discursive, more impressionable, more ordinary’” (Bassnett, 2002, p. 226).

And one great characteristic that influences the criticism from then to nowadays is that men belong to the outside and women to the inside, as mentioned previously, and as Serrano observes this strangeness towards the woman that travels is a dominant idea in the several conduct books that were written about women throughout many centuries. [...] The world of men is the outside world, of the visible, whilst women are expected to “settle down, save money, to take care of the house, to speak with few people, to keep everything inside them”. The interior world, of the invisible, of the absence of discovery (Serrano, 2019, p. 28).

Another characteristic is the search of identity, “Travel for some women, it seems, may have offered a means of redefining themselves, assuming a different persona and becoming someone who did not exist at home” (Bassnett, 2002, p. 234).

### 3.2 Modern Criticism – Some examples

The first critique to be analysed is *How Not to Be Elizabeth Gilbert* by Jessa Crispin from 2015. The author received the advice of not being like Elizabeth Gilbert when she wrote about her travels. Meaning “being an obnoxious white lady in brown places”. She argues that Gilbert,

may travel to India, but she remains tucked away in an ashram, conversing almost exclusively with westerners, more interested in relaying the details of her recent breakup than noticing anything about her host country. [...] It gives a person the icks, and it unconsciously echoes so much literature written by missionaries [...] What she is doing is not strictly travel writing—it has more in common with memoir.

Crispin goes on to remark that,

Gilbert has inspired a whole niche of faux travel writing by women, from Cheryl Strayed’s bestselling *Wild* (2012) to more moderate offerings by Elisabeth Eaves and Kristin Newman. In this genre, the focus of attention is the self, and the beautiful locale becomes the backdrop of the real action, which is interior psychodrama. (Crispin, 2015)

Labelling women travel writing as faux travel is continuing to categorise women as the Other, as questioning its veracity, of trying to define what travel writing is or is not and that women travel writing will never be because it is not male. Also, the association of the focus on the self to be negative, having in consideration that historically and socially women are not afforded such activity, and categorising the real action as “interior psychodrama” is, once again, diminishing what women fought to gain, the right to express themselves and invalidates female travel writing.

The correlation to travel writing being male is present in Crispin’s mind and places women travel writers “against the iconic travel writer who is, of course, male.” She describes what a traveller is:

From Sir Richard Francis Burton to Bruce Chatwin to Paul Theroux, the traveller is an essentially masculine force, driven by the need to conquer, to experience life at its extremes, but most of all to explain. This travel writer not only goes off to see what he can see but also becomes a kind of expert witness who explains the natives to interested parties at home. That most of these writers, the polyglot Burton aside, did not speak the language, only spent a few weeks in their chosen locations, and came with a colonialist’s baggage stuffed full with

preconceived assumptions did not make their audiences any less credulous about their authority. (Crispin, 2015)

Here, Crispin exposes the prejudice that separates female and male travel writing: men escape criticism even when they are known to come with a baggage stuffed full of preconceived assumptions since their audiences will not be less credulous about their authority, yet, because women focus on the self and not on the outside or a preconceived vision of it, they will be questioned and excluded. Crispin goes on to argue that “Traditional travel writing surely needed to be infiltrated and broken apart, its masculine tropes challenged. But the popular female travel narrative has overcorrected in a serious way; these writers are experts only on their own selves” (2015). In other words, the masculine tropes need to be revised and challenged but what women do continues to be wrong because it is not masculine.

“In *Wild*, however, one rarely gets any description of the world around her. She includes next to nothing of the Pacific Crest Trail’s natural history or ecology.” Here, understanding what the author of the article perceives as travel writing or expects from a travel account becomes more complicated. Travel writing can be defined as writing that took place when one travelled, whatever happened. Or should it be a descriptive narrative of the place(s)? Would that not be considered a guide? This is one of the problems of criticism of this genre, but mostly regarding female writing, namely because Strayed includes several descriptions of the PCT in her traveling account.

“But these books are not so much transgressive as regressive. After all, they obey their gender codes: men go on adventures, women on journeys of self-discovery” (2015). Crispin seems to tangle several definitions which results in a void criticism. Meaning, Crispin knows some of the traditional tropes, criticises them but wants to continue to apply them even though she notes that they cannot continue to take place in this day and age. This is shown when she argues that she “knew I shouldn’t be Elizabeth Gilbert, but I worried I would have to be Bruce Chatwin” regarding the type of travel writer she wanted to be since “The myth of the male travel writer looms large, eclipsing what we know: that women have always been travel writers and not necessarily like Gilbert.” Crispin recognises women have always been travel writers, not like Gilbert but like Freya Stark, and she states that “women travel writers such as Stark copy the male template in both travel and writing style.” The choice, it seems, is either to be a “real” travel writer, which leads to copying male travel writers, or to be a “faux” travel writer as of nowadays, as of Gilbert. The reason as to why “the market has not sustained their work” argues Crispin, is to do with our expectations as readers that “still look to men to tell us

about what they do and to women to tell us how they feel” (Crispin, 2015). Crispin adds that “Any travel writer who deviates from gender-defined roles risks being overlooked,” but this gender bias is in fact straying from not being male, which as established is what travel writing stands for. Crispin also establishes what we need or not from travel writing, regarding gender,

(...) we do not need men to explain the world’s far-off reaches to us anymore. It turns out the inhabitants of the far-off reaches have voices of their own. Nor do we still need women to tell us it is fine to set up a life outside of marriage and family. What we do need are more writers willing to break free of travel writing’s colonialist tendencies, whether expressed as contempt for backward others or admiration for their “authenticity” and guidance. (Crispin, 2015)

Crispin arguments seem to tangle a great knowledge of what travel writing is, but what she argues becomes a contradiction because everything women do is wrong according to her, if they copy men or if they follow a different path and if they focus on the self. Yet, the author gives the clue that indicates that for her, and for society and for the genre, being a person is to be a man “And when women are still burdened—by publishers, by men, by each other—with doing things as women rather than as people, it can be difficult to find a new maneuver”.

*Travel Writing Doesn’t Need Any More Voices Like Paul Theroux’s*, by Gwyneth Kelly also starts with mentioning Gilbert “Five years ago, the confluence of globalization, the internet, and the popularity of Elizabeth Gilbert’s *Eat, Pray, Love* led to a spate of think pieces mourning the death of the great travel writing tradition”. We can assert that Gilbert opened the door back to the spotlight for women travel writers, but it seems that to critics it is the wrong door. Before, women were ignored, now, they are not but they are doing it incorrectly, seems to be the idea these criticisms transpire. Kelly pinpoints that what is replacing the traditional travel narratives is the personal writing and that writers (female) do not bring insights from the places visited,

What is taking the place of those traditional travel narratives like Gertrude Bell’s *The Desert and the Sown* and Bruce Chatwin’s *In Patagonia*, according to those who sounded the alarm, is a growing trend towards personal writing—the interior journey given as much import as the exterior in books like Cheryl Strayed’s *Wild*, Mary Morris’ *The River Queen*, and, of course, *Eat, Pray, Love*. Wood complained that in the modern day “the writer goes overseas but brings back news about a tedious inner crisis, leaving undisturbed any insights about the places visited.” Jessa Crispin has called this “faux travel writing,” where “the focus of attention is the self, and the beautiful locale becomes the backdrop of the real action, which is the interior psychodrama.” Though critics have pinned this style to women—who, it is suggested, are



more comfortable framing their travels as memoirs and are inherently more inward-looking—it can also be found in the lengthy first-person travel essays posted by travellers of both genders on websites like Roads and Kingdoms and Nowhere. (Kelly, 2015)

Rightly addressing some of the characteristics and criticisms mentioned before, Kelly knows, like Crispin, which she quotes, some of the traditional characteristics but what seems to transpire is the lack of understanding of the historical and social meaning behind it, the reason why it is this way. Interestingly, Kelly associates what is criticised to be the style attributed to women.

In a critique that tries to show that something needs to change, especially using a male author as its basis, one that is considered one of the main male travel writers of the twentieth and twenty-first century, Kelly critiques Theroux's writing but always excuses him, "But his books have never been so outwardly imperialist. What separates him from the haughty Victorians is that he reflects those criticisms equally towards those at home and abroad." And although he is unwilling to change his perspective, he retains his authority,

Although Theroux's opinions are more palatable to our modern liberal tastes, he shares with his Victorian predecessors a disinterest in changing those opinions. Theroux is never softened by his journeys. Visiting may alter his views on a place, but rarely does it change his perception of the world at large. His authoritative tone is part of what makes him a compelling writer: Here is a man who knows what he is talking about, his writing says, and so the reader trusts both the veracity of the events he describes and his overarching analyses. (Kelly, 2015)

Since he does not doubt his confidence, he creates trust, therefore he is more worthy of the genre. Once again, men can do what they want because it will be accepted. And doubting, as a human characteristic, is not only chastised as it is also attributed to women.

These two reviews or critiques bring to light this sort of tradition of criticising women for the sake of being women, of using tropes that are outdated as defining of a genre and also of the comparison of women against men, forcing binarism to continue to take place. In *Travel writing is genderized. Here's how it needs to change.*, author Carrie speaking provides answers and an analysis that feature these two previous criticisms from Crispin and Kelly. Carrie mentions Hailey Hirst that "remarked [in the article *20 of the most important travel books written by women*] how poorly represented women are in articles listing must-read travel books. Or, as she aptly puts it: 'Men seem to dominate travel literature... or at least the popular culture of it.'"

speaking mentions that there is a tendency growing in travel writing, that traditional publishing continues to focus on male authors, but online publishing gives voice to more female authors. speaking mentions that traditional publishers say they do not focus on gender but on quality, quality, however, “we live in a gendered world” and,

As an avid reader of the genre, I have noticed many times occurrences of gendered language, gendered cooptation, gendered reviews and critics, and the belief in a gendered genre. And, wait for it: women can be the harshest critics of their own gender. (speaking, 2017)

Because the world is male by default (Criado Perez, 2019) and travel writing is completely male dominated and male created, speaking mentions correctly, and as seen in the previous articles, that women are the harshest critics of their own gender. Especially here because they were not criticising the work per se but the appropriateness mainly associated with gender. speaking confirms that there is a tendency for women to write in a more introspective way, but,

Female travel writers who made it to the bookshelves of pop culture are scarce. It turns out many of these women (including Gilbert, Strayed, or Mary Morris) have in common that their personal lives are intimately connected with the motive of their journey. That very fact seems extremely “gendered” to Crispin, perhaps even dictated by a sexist society which expects male travel writers to analyze and describe, and female travel writers to feel — just like it expects men to be strong and women to be vulnerable, or men to be loud and women to be unassuming. I agree with Crispin that this is what society does. But I do not think it is right nor fair to blame female travel writers for writing what they felt they needed to write. (speaking, 2017)

And when female travel writers are blamed for writing what they felt they needed to write, especially about the interior self, deeming it to be incorrect and self-absorbing, this is also taking away the possibility for men to do the same, restricting them from expressing “feelings about which they won’t write, because society does not expect their male self to write about them” (speaking, 2017). speaking also asks “And isn’t it all because the rules of the genre have been so far defined by men, by the way of gendered cooptation and gendered use of style and language?”

Following the idea that women are the harshest critics of women, it is interesting to see how common people critique them online as well, more on the fact of being women, than on what they wrote, and towards their personality and life choices, as speaking denotes regarding the criticism found by women towards women,

Now books are published to be read. The editors of *Wild* and *Nothing to Declare* probably targeted them at a largely female audience. This is why I was all the more dumbfounded when I read the reviews that women readers had left about these books on Goodreads. Mary Morris in *Nothing To Declare* is described as “conceited”, as “a very poor role model for women” who is ensconced in “navel-gazing thoughts.” But the words used to describe Cheryl Strayed were much more personal and shocking to me as a woman, a travel writer and a feminist. While the husband she left prior to hiking the PCT is forcefully described by these women as “a decent guy,” “a total saint” (seriously?), “a really wonderful man,” Strayed is described as “a self-absorbed asshole,” “a half-ass femme-Nazi [whose] moral compass was also off-kilter” (“Good Lord!” I exclaimed at that point). (speaking, 2017)

These descriptions are not commonly found regarding men, but when they are it tends to be excused the same way Kelly excused Theroux and the following is an example retrieved from the website Goodreads regarding the book *The Old Patagonian Express: By Train Through the Americas*, “Yes, he is a curmudgeon - but I still love his books.” by Elizabeth Cárdenas<sup>9</sup>.

As speaking puts it, one of the reasons this happens is due to systemic sexism:

So on the one hand we have successful female travel writers who get criticized for “writing like women.” On the other hand, we have successful male travel writers whose use of language and style often hints at the tacit agreement that “proper” travel writing still is a male-dominated genre. Such agreement is most probably the result of systemic sexism rather than sexism individually expressed by male authors. In fact, I believe their writing also falls victim to the situation. (speaking, 2017)

### **3.3 Jan Morris – The Binary Wall**

Jan Morris stands as a very good example of how genderized travel writing is due to her life story and how, in what is taken to be a male genre, she was considered one of the best travel writers. This praise is on the account of not only having not been born physically a woman but also because, in a way, she broke the barriers of what is a genderized writing style. She is the proof against all the criticism made so far and of the contradictions of the genre.

As Serrano puts it, Morris would be “the ideal case to detect differences in the writing between men and women.” According to her, “there are none that are evident” because Morris

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<sup>9</sup> [https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/130515.The\\_Old\\_Patagonian\\_Express](https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/130515.The_Old_Patagonian_Express)

maintained the style that characterised James's writing, and this may be because neither James' writing was traditionally male neither Jan feminine in hers. It may be because gender fades out in literature. It may be because writing does not have sex (Serrano, 2019, p.306). Indeed, she was more a writer of places not having so much the journey in between, neither inside nor outside. But should we take this as gender characteristics, or is Morris the example that Crispin wanted as writing as a person? Or is it just the way Morris was?

Morris wrote in her book *Conundrum*, about her transition from man to woman, that,

The more I was treated as a woman, the more woman I became. I adapted willy-nilly. If I was assumed to be incompetent at reversing cars, or opening bottles, oddly incompetent I found myself becoming. If a case was thought too heavy for me, inexplicably I found it so myself. (Morris, 1987, p. 140)

Maybe, and bearing in mind when this took place (1972) and the time period in which Morris lived (she was born in 1926), she faced many difficulties on dealing with the outside world and her inside world. And this quote shows that she just accepted what society gave her as to what was being a woman because that was what she wanted. Serrano notes that not everyone agreed that Morris's writing did not change. Serrano mentions that in an article of the *New York Times* the writer argues that James's writing is manly, whether Jan's may be provocative, annoying and silly. Serrano also mentions Rebecca West that stated that he was a better writer than she (2019, p. 306).

What surfaces from Jan Morris example is that maybe the criticism that voices that Morris writing changed after the surgery comes simply from the knowledge that it happened. What it might entail is the binarism and all the characteristics attached to it that travel writing is known for and the boxes that were created within it, showed throughout this chapter. Hence, Bassnett notes,

It is in the work of Morris that assumptions about travel writing and gender are perhaps most seriously challenged, for Jan Morris began her writing career as James. [...] Reading the books written before and after 1972 it is impossible to distinguish markers of gender other than occasional references to clothing. What Morris does not do, however, is use the journey as a pretext for reinventing herself or for writing autobiography. (Bassnett, 2002, p. 238)

Bassnett's analysis shows that it is not possible to see differences in Morris's writing after the transition. She also mentions the one thing that Morris does not do, use the journey as a pretext for reinventing herself or for writing autobiographically which is considered a female

travel writing characteristic. Hence, if we had to attribute a gender to her writing, it would be male, but most importantly, her writing was hers regardless of her gender. Therefore, criticisms towards changes in Morris's writing are based on the knowledge of her transition. In an interview for *The Guardian*, Morris states "I should say I would never use the word change, as in 'sex-change', for what happened to me. I did not change sex; I really absorbed one into the other. I'm a bit of each now. I freely admit it... But that's all in that book I wrote, isn't it?"<sup>10</sup> To conclude, Bassnett puts this binarism to an end by stating that,

Morris's writing challenges the idea of binary oppositions – between home and other, present and past, masculine and feminine. She focuses on the spirit, the feel of a place as she puts it; in other words on the relationship between the travel writer as individual and the space in which she moves. Everything else is inessential. (Bassnett, 2002, p. 239)

As Carrie speaking noted, the problem regarding women's travel writing is not in the way they write but in systemic sexism. And along these lines Sara Mills also states that the main difference is in the way they are judged and processed,

Instead, it is necessary to recognise that women's writing practices can vary because of the differences in discursive pressures, but that they will also share many factors with men's writing. The most striking difference often lies not so much in the writing itself (although differences may be found there) but rather in the way that women's writing is judged and processed. (Mills, 1991, p.30)

Another reason is given by Bird, which is the reception of their work,

As Foster and Mills (2002) note, a traveller intending to break away from gender stereotypes cannot control how her work is read by an audience with essentialist notions of gender. Indeed it is arguably in the reception of their travelogues that the differences between men's and women's travel writing are most emphatically imposed. (Bird, 2015, p.41)

As seen in the presentation of the characteristics in this chapter, before one reads travel writing accounts there is already a formed idea of what they may be. Even if it does not correspond, it continues to enclose women to sets of rules put upon them, no matter how much time passes and no matter what they do to change it. In the book *Mis-Adventures – A Tale of Ignoring Life Advice While Backpacking Around South America* by Amy Baker, published in 2017, in one encounter with an older female family friend, Sally, we can see that the paradigm has still not changed. The friend says regarding Amy wanting to travel to South

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<sup>10</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2020/nov/22/jan-morris-travel-writer-death-adventure-life>

America “I see. Just getting it out of your system, is that it? Before you can settle down?” and later says “Being forced to go alone”. And when Amy says she is not being forced to do anything, “Sally looked genuinely perplexed”. It can be argued that although the journey was made in 2013, as well as such comments, and that the friend has her parents’ age, that this is due to being a product of Sally’s age. But this cannot continue to be used as an excuse because it continues to be an argument applied in today’s society, in today’s publishing, reinforcing old prejudice, not letting it go. And the cycle continues its viciousness. speaking provides a solution, which would be to open travel writing to the diversity of reasons why people travel and not the idea of a proper way of traveling,

More generally, I think we need to break this “journalistic story-telling” vs. “self-exploratory travel journal” distinction. We need to (re)open travel writing to the insane diversity of reasons why people travel, including the undertaking of an inner journey, which has been practiced by human beings since time immemorial. Published travel writing should not convey the idea that there is a proper way of traveling.

If travelling is one way to be free, the act of writing down such travels continues to not carry such freedom, especially for women. Although, as seen throughout this chapter, men and women face constrictions on the reproduction of their travel accounts, women suffer more, and they are not excused. Traditional tropes continue to be used, women continue to be compared to men, and male travel writing continues to be considered the norm, the travel writing gender *per se*, which speaking argues that should not be the case,

Yet tortured inner journeys shouldn’t be the sole province of women, nor sleek adventure-telling the sole province of men. Both genders should be expected to express in their writing these two necessary sides of travel. We travel, we write and read about travel because we want to evade codes and cross boundaries, including gender codes and boundaries. This is exactly what in the past has made travel writing transgressive for women. (speaking, 2015)

Most importantly, women have travelled and will continue to travel. Hopefully, they will continue to write about it and that the criticism will have its systemic sexism, its judgements and way it receives travel accounts broken in the future so that travel writing can have the freedom it deserves and that characterises the genre.

#### **4. Women in the Media**

Whether walking alone on the streets where they can be catcalled, groped and many other things, or at home, with family telling them how to behave and what to wear, to society creating rules based on morality, women's bodies have always been the subject of the male gaze and subsequently of other women's gaze. The way women are perceived constricts their movement in the exterior world and the way they are described and talked about in the media

plays a role in that as well. With the emergence of Internet, which would become a world in its own, hard to police, and a world that would in a way be freer due to its characteristics, it has increasingly become worse, than those rules applied by society in the three-dimensional world. Therefore, societies' restraints on women have become part of this digital world as well. This seems to happen especially on social media, where there is more communication and possibility of interaction. But Instagram is full of pictures. Instagram was a social platform created for the sharing of photographs. And it is famous for its guidelines and community rules that forbid the showcase of the female nipple and full buttocks.

It is Instagram's censorship of the female nipple that will start this chapter and the examination of the female body that is constricted and evaluated, used and disposed, having the nipple and the breast as the main focus. This chapter will also address some public events that were related with the perception of the female nipple; and body changes on female animated animals, in order to understand how the history of the breast and its visual culture affects women's everyday lives and their ownership of this part of their body. For that, Anglo-Saxon culture, especially in the USA, will be analysed regarding the policing of women's body.

#### **4.1 Instagram and the Censorship of the (Female) Nipple**

Instagram is a good choice of an example regarding women in the media due to the fact that it is a social platform that relies on pictures, and it started mainly with that form, and also due to its community rules. These rules apply to Facebook as well but have become more well-known through Instagram because of the use and boom of the platform in recent years. Another reason for Instagram being a good example is also the "free the nipple movement" that fights for equality for nipples and for women's body freedom due to the platform's censorship of the female nipple.

In their community rules regarding Instagram itself, their page notes, "We want Instagram to continue to be an authentic and safe place for inspiration and expression. Help us foster this community. Post only your own photos and videos and always follow the law. Respect everyone on Instagram, don't spam people or post nudity."<sup>11</sup> Therefore, for Instagram, inspiration and expression do not compass nudity. Certainly, nudity can be

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<sup>11</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/help/instagram/477434105621119>



positive and it can be negative, and it will be possible to see that Instagram only addresses the negative side and does not accept the positive one. It is also interesting that they mention that users must always follow the law, which is reasonable, but which law? American? European? It is not specified right away and that may be due to the global view Instagram sets to be and that will be analysed further on. Then, there is the specific approach to nudity labelled as “appropriate imagery”, “Appropriate Imagery - We don’t allow nudity on Instagram, with some exceptions, like photos of post-mastectomy scarring and women actively breastfeeding. Nudity in photos of paintings and sculptures is OK, too.”<sup>12</sup> There are many elements to unpack in this paragraph, starting with the subtitle, what is “appropriate”? *Cambridge Dictionary* defines it as “suitable or right for a particular situation or occasion”, *Merriam-Webster* as “especially suitable or compatible”, and *Oxford Dictionary* as “suitable, acceptable or correct for the particular circumstances”. “Suitable” and “acceptable” are the two words that come up the most and are related to the situation in which it happens or takes place. Therefore, the definition given by Instagram is very broad and open to interpretation. The exceptions they mentioned are “post-mastectomy scarring and women actively breastfeeding” and here we enter in a female world. These are specific situations and also show that women can show their breasts if it is related with motherhood or if they have been mutilated. Breasts are considered a form, even the epitome, of femininity, of what is to be a woman, “For most of us, and specially for men, breasts are sexual ornaments – the crown jewels of femininity” (Yalom, 1997, p. 3). Finally, they accept nudity in representations of such “paintings and sculptures”, which seems strange considering that this platform is for photographs. Seemingly, realistic nudity cannot be controlled as much as representations and the real is not one of Instagram’s goals. Another subtopic that could bring more enlightenment but continues to bring more doubt and confusion is as follows,

Post photos and videos that are appropriate for a diverse audience. We know that there are times when people might want to share nude images that are artistic or creative in nature, but for a variety of reasons, we don’t allow nudity on Instagram. This includes photos, videos, and some digitally-created content that show sexual intercourse, genitals, and close-ups of fully-nude buttocks. It also includes some photos of female nipples, but photos of post-mastectomy scarring and women actively breastfeeding are allowed. Nudity in photos of paintings and sculptures is OK, too.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> <https://about.instagram.com/blog/announcements/instagram-community-guidelines-faqs>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/help/instagram/477434105621119>

Here, it gets a little more specific, but the way they put it, it continues to be very broad, “for a variety of reasons”, which does not explain much. Who decides these reasons, what reasons are these? Some seem reasonable within their concept, especially to protect children as they defend in the guidelines. The biggest problem presents after when female nipples are referenced. This is a specific target; the word female leaves no room for interpretation. But why is the female nipple different and why some photos? In this paragraph there is a link to the word “nudity” in which slightly more information is given.

We restrict the display of nudity or sexual activity because some people in our community may be sensitive to this type of content. Additionally, we default to removing sexual imagery to prevent the sharing of non-consensual or underage content. Restrictions on the display of sexual activity also apply to digitally created content unless it is posted for educational, humorous, or satirical purposes.<sup>14</sup>

This sounds ideal and correct were not for the first sentence which continues to be inconclusive, “some people may be sensitive”? What is this addressing specifically?

Due to the specific mention of female nipples, it is important to analyse them and what they mean. Prohibiting or limiting the exposure of female bodies is saying what needs to be covered, what needs to be seen, what is allowed. Indubitably, Instagram is a private platform and is entitled to create its own rules. One of the problems is the contradiction in itself when it has more than one billion users and is globally used and wants to be respectful of all cultures. Therefore, this Instagram view is manifestly Western and Western centric, mainly based in American culture because, as Yalom notes, “This sexualized view of the breast is by no means universal” (1997). Yalom also notes that in several cultures where women have always gone about with their breasts uncovered, in Africa and the South Pacific, “the breast has not taken on the predominantly erotic meaning it has in the West” and that much of the fascination regarding this “sexually charged body part” is due to the full of partial concealment (1997, p. 3). Yalom, an historian, also states, “The assumptions we Westerners take for granted about the breast prove especially arbitrary when we adopt a historical perspective” (Yalom, 1997, p. 3). And this is what Instagram does when it creates rules aiming for globalization that are based in only one part of the world. Recently in history and in culture, we have been witnessing what George Steiner names as the “American Imperialism”, in which globally we start to adopt American elements as to be absolute truth even if they are not the reality most people live in.

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<sup>14</sup> [https://www.facebook.com/communitystandards/adult\\_nudity\\_sexual\\_activity](https://www.facebook.com/communitystandards/adult_nudity_sexual_activity)

This leads to the cult value, to society of exhibition and to the practice of looking. In the chapter *The Society of Exhibition*, Byung-Chul Han states that “according to Walter Benjamin, it is “more important” for cult objects to “be extant” than to “be seen” (Han, 2015, p. 9). Therefore, a possible definition for cult value is that it “depends on existence, not on exhibition. The practice of looking sacred items in an inaccessible room, and thereby withdrawing them from visibility, heightens their cult value” (Han, 2015, p. 9.) This is what happens to breasts and to female bodies in general, not being exhibited gives them their importance, their cult value. Therefore, for them to be displayed on social media and digital platforms in their realistic forms (photography) is to take away their role attributed by men, their cult value. They are no longer sacred. Or its aura, as Han continues, “The compulsion for display that hands everything over to visibility makes the aura – the “appearance of a distance” – vanish entirely” (Han, 2015, p. 9). This form of thinking has always been connected to women and the way they “use” their body. They “use” their body, being the term “use” a reflection of how the female body is perceived as an object. And it is important to think why female exhibition is such a focus point and highly discussed, and the reason is that it has changed hands for the first time. Social media has many negative elements to it, but also positive ones, and in this situation, women being able to have a say on how, and if, and when, their bodies are shown, exhibited, exposed, is a positive element.

“In the society of exhibition, every subject is also its own advertising object. Everything is measured by its exhibition value. The society of exhibition is a society of pornography. Everything has been turned outward, stripped, exposed, undressed, and put on show” (Han, 2015, p. 11). And what is society of exhibition? More specifically, to whom is it connected? To the female body and to any behaviour outside heterosexual behaviour. It is when there is the exposure of women, whatever it may be, that these concerns or complaints appear. Even if voices are raised concerning men being naked, it is usually residual. Who is exhibited? Who exhibits? Who allows? It is when this power changes hands that the most problems arise. And since there is the mentioning of pornography it is important to understand its usage. Pornography is linked to women, even though it is targeted and made for men, in its essence and majority, although it might have changed or might be changing. If pornography is connected to women, the use of that word to describe the society of exhibition and the loss of aura and cult value is implying women and blaming them for it.

According to Yalom, in the chapter *The Commercialized Breast*, regarding the definition of pornography,

Since its earliest beginnings, pornography has united sex to money, as implied by its linguistic origins in the Greek words *pornē* (prostitute) and *graphō* (write) – literally, the writing of prostitutes. In time, pornography came to refer to all literature concerning prostitutes and their clients, and, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, any “obscene writing or pictorial illustration.” (Yalom, 1997, pp. 199-200)

Yalom analyses the meaning of “obscenity” as we analysed “appropriate” since “the difficulty lies in determining exactly what is obscene. For most history, obscenity meant anything that offended acceptable sexual morality. But acceptable sexual behaviour has always varied deeply from one era to the next, from one individual to the next, from one life stage to the next (1997). Words can leave their original realm and even gain new meanings, but they will always carry their roots, and when associated to women, their attached imagery does not go away. To describe any phenomenon outside of pornography as pornography, especially related to society or to behaviours regarding what is sacred or not, will always carry its original meaning. Almost anyone that comes across the word pornography will have images of women appearing in their minds, much like traveller brings a man to mind. And whether we want to acknowledge or not, accept it or not, the culture we have lived in and its moral bases were built by men. Therefore, all these dissertations are done through masculine eyes and minds. Pornography and the usage of the word shows how “female” is an outward thing. To be or to exist on its own is to be looked but to never look inwards, only on the surface.

Regarding looking, women have been a target of such since the beginning and Instagram is a platform made for people to look more than to talk, although it has changed in recent years. Women, as an object of desire, when made to look at themselves it is only in a superficial way, and the concern with aging and weight and flaccidity are only some examples of that. Although men also have breasts with nipples, women can produce milk, therefore the female breast developed not only different functions but other meanings in society, in visual identity and many others. Therefore, it is important to try and grasp its history a little bit further, in order to understand its visuality and its place in society.

Marilyn Yalom’s *A History of the Breast* covers several fields in chapters such as The Sacred Breast, The Erotic Breast, The Domestic Breast, The Political Breast, The Psychological Breast, among others. In the *Introduction: Changing Meanings*, Yalom starts by saying “I intent to make you think about women’s breasts as you never have before” (1997, p. 3). Indeed, we live in a society that is quite obsessed with breasts, but we do not think properly about breasts. We may do it visually but not regarding its history, its meaning.

They somehow function as property for everybody but women. And Yalom makes a question that can make us think differently, even women, about the perception of breasts and that is highly important for this chapter in order to understand the censorship that walks hand in hand with them or just to the nipple,

Underlying this progression is a basic question: Who owns the breast? Does it belong to the suckling child, whose life is dependent on a mother's milk or an effective substitute? Does it belong to the man or woman who fondles it? Does it belong to the artist who represents the female form, or the fashion arbiter who chooses small or large breasts according to the market's continual demand for a new style? Does it belong to the clothing industry which promotes the "training bra" for pubescent girls, the "support bra" for older women, and the Wonderbra for women wanting more noticeable cleavage? Does it belong to religious and moral judges who insist that breasts be chastely covered? Does it belong to the law, which can order the arrest of "topless" women? [...] Or does it belong to the woman for whom breasts are parts of her own body? These questions suggest some of the various efforts men and institutions have made throughout history to appropriate women's breasts. (Yalom, 1997, pp. 3-4)

Indeed, who owns the breast? The answer seems to be obvious, to women, but it is not so obvious because it has not been the case, as seen with Instagram's study case above. Technically, they are, but socially and culturally, they are not. If we think about the term "topless", this word is associated with women. Men can go "topless", women cannot. Their body will always be perceived as sexual or maternal without having in consideration women's opinions on this matter for several centuries since, as the author mentions later on, only in the 20<sup>th</sup> century did women start writing prolifically about what they felt about their breasts.

On account of Instagram being a platform of photography and images, and because the power of choice is shifting hands, it is important to analyse the importance of looking and who can look, in order to better understand the power of the nipple, the meaning of the breast and the role it plays, and the study cases that will be presented further on. As Sturken & Cartwright analyse what looking involves, what can be and what it can be used for,

Like other practices, looking involves relationships of power. To wilfully look or not is to exercise choice and compliance and to influence whether and how others look. To be made to look, to try to get someone else to look at you or at something you want to be noticed, or to engage in an exchange of looks entails a play of power. Looking can be easy or difficult, pleasurable or unpleasant, harmless or dangerous. Conscious and unconscious aspects of looking intersect. We engage in practices of looking to communicate, to influence, and to be

influenced. Even when we choose not to look, or when we look away, these are activities that have meaning within the economy of looking. (Sturken & Cartwright, 2009, p. 9)

There is indeed the choice to look or not to look, and Instagram is a great example of that. The “scroll” is the tool for that. One scroll, one swipe and it all goes away, but the power of the media regarding women’s image is, as it will be possible to see with the next examples, long-lasting.

#### **4.2 Examples of Women in the Media and their Bodies**

Hereunder are some examples, or study cases, that illustrate the way women are treated in the media, namely regarding their bodies (by reason of being what is most talked about women when they are referenced in the media).

Firstly, we have Janet Jackson’s Super Bowl “nipple slip” that occurred in 2004. This is perhaps one of the greatest examples of connecting women’s bodies with punishment for something they did not do and with proper behaviour. In 2004, while performing on Super Bowl with Justin Timberlake, at the end of the performance, Timberlake pulled a part of the clothing covering the breast and exposed it. Jackson had a metallic star covering the nipple, but quickly covered herself. To this day, both artists say it was an accident, others say it was a wardrobe malfunction. Nevertheless, the problem of the incident does not rely on this specific situation but on the consequences it had for each artist. Nothing happened to Timberlake, but for Jackson, the tale is different. “Whatever the truth behind this allegation, there’s no doubting that it affected her career in a way that Timberlake, who was equally involved in the incident, largely managed to escape” (Levine, 2019). And after so many years, almost all articles written about her feature this episode and every year when it is time for Super Bowl, the incident is brought up once again and she was excluded from awards show for several years as well.

According to the documentary *Tiny Shoulders: Rethinking Barbie*, Barbie was inspired by a German doll, Bild Lilli, which was sold to men in tobacco shops. They were not intended for children. The co-inventor of Barbie, Ruth Handler said that the male executives “didn’t think a doll with breasts was exactly appropriate” and that “men felt women would not buy a doll with a female body, with breasts”. This is very interesting because it also answers to Yalom’s question, breasts are owned by men. It belongs to them so much they cannot think women will want them, even if it is a representation of their own bodies. Barbie is an example

of how something can come up as a solution or a way to help fight the system and afterwards become a part of the problem, and Barbie has been on both ends. But it remains important to show the beginnings of this doll that fought for little girls to be more than what society said they were, starting with her creator that was a businesswoman in a time when that was almost impossible, even if afterwards, Barbie played a role in dictating what women had to be or a single ideal.

Characters Lara Croft and Wonder Woman are an example of breasts as the definition. In both recent adaptations for cinema of these two characters, both actresses, Alicia Vikander and Gal Gadot, respectively, have been criticised for their types of body, mainly the smallness of their breasts, in order to play the role. Gadot responded “The true amazons had one boob so it won’t bother them in their archery. So it’s not going to be like real amazons. We always try to make everyone happy but we can’t” (Cinema Blend, 2015). Regarding Vikander’s Lara Croft one of the criticisms was “He [Kirk] describes the character’s look as a ‘sex doll with a grudge come to life’” (Kooser, 2018). Is it possible to imagine Superman, Batman or Ironman being described as a “sex doll with a grudge come to life”? No, because these evaluations do not happen to male characters in the media. Angelina Jolie, who portrayed the first cinema version of Lara Croft has also faced criticism regarding her body, but, in later years in which Jolie has carried more activist work, her presence has outreached the entertainment only although the coverage made by the media did not change. In a meeting with the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, about sexual violence, to which she advocates against, the focus in the media turned to the fact that she did not wear a bra and that her nipples were showing. The news cascaded all around the world with identical headlines in different languages focusing mainly about this, such as “Angelina Jolie slammed by angry fans after going BRALESS to meet Archbishop of Canterbury” (Ok Magazine)<sup>15</sup>.

The situation Carey Mulligan went through is a very curious one. In the film *Promising Young Woman*, from 2020, Mulligan played a woman that revenges her friend’s rape and suicide. A review from *Variety* by Denis Harvey became controversial after Carey Mulligan called out what Harvey wrote by noting,

“It’s important that we are looking at the right things when it comes to work, and we’re looking at the art and we’re looking at the performance,” she said. “And I don’t think that goes

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<sup>15</sup> <https://www.ok.co.uk/celebrity-news/angelina-jolie-angry-fans-braless-14549361>

to the appearance of the actor or your personal preference for what an actor does or doesn't look like – which it felt that that article did.” (Harper's Bazaar, 2021)

In the review, Harvey wrote, that the actress was an odd choice for a femme fatale,

Mulligan, a fine actress, seems a bit of an odd choice as this admittedly many-layered apparent femme fatale — Margot Robbie is a producer here, and one can (perhaps too easily) imagine the role might once have been intended for her. Whereas with this star, Cassie wears her pickup-bait gear like bad drag; even her long blonde hair seems a put-on. (Harvey, 2020)

Because his review was written in 2020 and the film only came out in 2021, it went unnoticed until 2021 and Harvey defended himself from the criticism with the argument that as a gay man he was appalled to be considered misogynist,

“I did not say or even mean to imply Mulligan is ‘not hot enough’ for the role,” Harvey said. “I’m a 60-year-old gay man. I don’t actually go around dwelling on the comparative hotnesses of young actresses, let alone writing about that.” Harvey added that he had been “appalled to be tarred as misogynist, which is something very alien to my personal beliefs or politics. This whole thing could not be more horrifying to me than if someone had claimed I was a gung-ho Trump supporter.” (Shoard, 2021)

Regardless of his sexual orientation not being towards women, this showed that Harvey had a formed opinion of what a femme fatal is. And to whom must we attribute the idea behind what is to be a femme fatal? Who constructed such image? Again, the good and bad breast, the good and bad woman, the sensual or not sensual woman. Once more, although he praised her performance, the focus was on her looks. This follows the pattern of certain words and mental images associated with women: pornography, prostitution, nipples, femme fatal and so on.

What is visible in this example is the *Objectification Theory* (1997) that applies to women but can be applied to anyone that does not fit in the centric hetero-white ideals performed by society and that is a target of such. Harvey was exposed to this idea of what sexy women should be and Carey Mulligan does not fit in such construction because films tell him so. Then, the author cannot see that just because he is not part of the group that created such ideals, it does not mean he will not apply them. Just because his personal beliefs are not these, prejudice can still be inside those who suffer from it just from the fact of having it embedded since birth from the society one is born and raised into.



According to the *Objectification Theory* regarding Internalizing an Observer's Perspective on the Physical Self,

At a psychological level, perhaps the most profound effect of objectifying treatment is that it coaxes girls and women to adopt a peculiar view of the self. Objectification theory posits that the cultural milieu of objectification functions to socialize girls and women to, at some level, treat themselves as objects to be looked at and evaluated. In other words, as numerous feminist theorists have argued, women often adopt an observer's perspective on their physical selves (Bartky, 1990; de Beauvoir, 1952; Berger, 1972; Young, 1990) (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997, p. 177)

This explains why women comply and then reinforce these ideals onto other women, as it happened with Angelina Jolie's nipples, for example, and here, with Harvey using what he absorbed as femme fatal, the perspective of the observer is internalized, girls and women are to be looked at and evaluated.

Lastly, we have Lola Bunny, from *The Looney Toons*, in which being strong and independent means Losing one's breasts, and that can be tied, in a way, with the safety of looking more masculine,

According to EW, *Space Jam 2* director Malcolm D. Lee was caught off guard by her "very sexualized" appearance and decided to change it to "reflect the authenticity of strong, capable female characters," especially since Lola is now apparently the Tune Squad's "best non-LeBron player." (Song, 2021)

The problem lies not in trying to make it more kid friendly or making her more independent. The problem is that by doing it they had to remove her breasts and change her clothes. What message does this send? They are saying that strong and independent do not walk hand in hand with having breasts or being sexy. The other problem we can see here is that it came from a man's mind, what he perceives as women being and that body and looks equal identity and personality. As commented in an article, what women or cartoons dress should not be important, it is the way we communicate seriousness and that association with clothes: "I don't care that Lola Bunny is dressed less sexy in *Space Jam 2*," as another person said, "But I am unbelievably exhausted by the idea that the way you communicate that a female character is to be taken seriously is by removing her boobs" (Song, 2021). It is important to highlight that Lola Bunny is never seen without clothes whereas Bugs Bunny is an animated cartoon that always used its "natural clothes" or "nakedness" on screen.

Lastly, we have Billie Eilish who became famous at a very young age (fourteen) and “explained that she prefers to cover up in baggy layers to keep part of herself a “mystery”, and prevent herself from being judged” (Bate, 2019) that saw her breasts being sexualized and criticised by the size of them when paparazzi caught her without baggy clothes (while she was seventeen) and later at eighteen years old was again criticised because now she decided to use more revealing clothes for a magazine photoshoot. *Daily Mail* published this article, ““Proof that money can make you change your values and sell out’: Bille Eilish shocks fans by swapping baggy clothes for lingerie in Vogue — despite years of vowing to 'hide her body’” (Shocket, 2021). Shocking, or not, as we have seen that women can be also perpetrators of these ideals as the *Objectification Theory* shows, this *Daily Mail* article was written by a woman.

But if we look on how American culture deals with female bodies in school, it somehow explains some of this obsession with them and the idea that they can control them. In the US there is a long history of punishment for girls regarding what they wear. As Laura Bates addresses, the latest events,

are just the most recent cases in an ever-growing list that has seen shoulders and knees become a battleground, leggings and yoga pants banned and girls in some cases reportedly told to flap their arms up and down while their attire was inspected, or asked to leave their proms because chaperones considered their dresses too ‘sexual’ or ‘provocative’. (Bates, 2015)

Bates remarks “that many schools respond to criticism of dress codes by citing the importance of maintaining a ‘distraction free’ learning environment, or of teaching young people about the importance of dressing appropriately for different occasions” (2015). These inspections, rules and punishments are rarely applied to boys. Some arguments for the school dress code go from “There are male teachers and male sixth formers [high school seniors]”; that teachers feel uncomfortable around bras and that this way boys will not target or intimidate girls (2015), “sends an incredibly powerful message. It teaches our children that girls’ bodies are dangerous” because it interconnects from a young age dressing and blaming for what happens to girls and the idea of being an object of desire and to be looked at and that they are a distraction. By Bates words, “It teaches our children that girls’ bodies are dangerous, powerful and sexualised, and that boys are biologically programmed to objectify and harass them” (2015). This also makes girls aware of their body at a very young age and to perceive it as a problem.

And to finalise with a direct example with the discussion of the nipple that started this chapter, the page @genderless\_nipples on Instagram is a ground-breaking proof of how prejudiced and flawed is the thinking of Instagram's rules when they argue they want to protect people by eliminating female nipples. By showing zoomed in pictures of nipples without context and without indications of their gender, Instagram no longer can remove such images because it cannot identify them as male or female. This also proves that the sexualization of the female nipple is from the outside, construed and impossible to differentiate without context, meaning, without the social construed female and with what that entails.

All of these examples, apart from the initial history of Barbie, happened in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, in the last 20 years, mostly in the last decade. Freeing the breast and the nipple from the construed female ideal that exists in societies will provide them complete freedom of movement. Presently, "The concept of a liberated breast will bring different images to different women's minds" (Yalom, 1997, p. 272) and we can argue that it will bring different ones for men. For some women "it will mean walking down the street on a summer's day in a thin, revealing dress – without the fear of being hassled. For others, it will mean breast-feeding in a public place without the possibility of legal punishment or the insult of being told "that's disgusting" (Yalom, 1997, p. 272).

Breasts and nipples walk hand in hand, they are a whole, but Instagram's rules separate them. This is not a creation of Instagram's, they are applying rules and ideals society already enforces. Nipples have been covered for years since magazines and posters and such exist, unless they are used for men's pleasure. The sexualization of the breast was made for and by men (1997, p. 183) and have been their property for a long time (1997, p. 87). All the study cases of this chapter showcase the role of the breast and the nipple in visual culture and women are excluded from it. Women have been made to be something to be looked at and to use to obtain pleasure, to fulfil a role, and, nowadays, social media that performs censorship is providing tools for women to look at themselves and, like a mirror, be able to break these patterns and regain control. Although this control seems to be in vain because Billie Eilish example shows how this control and use of women continues to exist, nonetheless, power is going to women's hands, even if only for the fact that Eilish gets to respond to this and change the narrative and have a voice. Regaining control of visual and digital image helps regain control of the exposed body in the streets, in movement and while traveling. Internet and social media now provide a place to look, to see outside one's own world, for people to

identify in all corners of the world and to provide knowledge. Internet and social media shook the power relationships and shifted the power back to the hands of those who are observed and exploited of their image. Something that was more isolated, such as body representations and anatomy and culture habits, can now not only be compared as well as it can be done much quicker.

This liberation of the breast should be altogether because the removal of the nipple is in itself a mutilation, of telling women that if they want to be naked they have to remove a part of their body solely for the reason of the meaning it was attributed to the nipple, in which she had no say, “As female flesh and blood, breast deserve nothing more or less than the respect civilized people are expected to show toward all parts of the human body” (Yalom, 1997, p. 273). Regarding the liberation of the breast, Yalom makes a very important comparison: the legs. Indeed women’s legs had to be liberated as well, “Although we tend to forget it, the emancipation of the female leg is a very recent phenomenon” (Yalom, 1997, p. 273).

The liberation of women’s bodies and how they are seen in the media, and how women are perceived and treated as a whole by the media, is important for their freedom of movement and on how to end its constrictions. If we take the example of nipples and breasts and if the idea that exists attached to this part of the female body is male and serves to appropriate and define what is to be a woman, what they should do, we are able to see that all this plays a role in women’s narratives. If they fall out of what is defined of them, they will not receive the same attention. What also happens with the treatment of the female body in such a way is the discredit of women through bodies, as if their sole existence depends on it. And, in fact, a body so correlated to what is supposed to be its nature has a very hard time to be in the Nature, as it will be possible to see in the next chapter.

Lastly, Catherine McCormack notes that “The anxiety about women looking at naked men in the studio and manipulating their bodies at will with their pen or brush is at the crux of everything” (2021, p. 11). This means that behind who gets permission to look and make art are more relations of power and control in looking than one would initially consider. Who gets to look is who gets to tell their version of the story and who gets to make the other the object. Moreover, it is “an admission that men and women’s bodies have historically always been seen differently” (2021, p. 11). As we have seen before, men have been responsible for the majority of the cultural images that have been created and “they’ve also been able to

control the archetypal constructions of womanhood that have influenced ideas of how women should appear and how they should behave, from the meek and patient Virgin Mother, to the always-available, sensuous Venus pin-up, or the vulnerable damsel in distress to the terrifying witch, (...) (McCormack, 2021, p. 11).

## **5. Women and Nature**

Jenny Tough edited an anthology about adventure stories, *Tough Women* (2020). This is a genre within female travel writing that is growing and, in the “Introduction”, the author provides a great explanation on her reason for wanting to make this book. This explanation encompasses, in a way, the reason of such growth in general of the genre, that the “wilderness is the greatest equalizer”. Tough explains that the mountains do not care about the gender we identify with, how old we are, how we speak and that we are free out there (2020). Yet, because she is a woman, on many occasions of her life, she has been warned “against going to

this sanctuary” (2020). Although the author always ignored such comments because she believed in her abilities and knew the strength of her years of experience, she wondered “about the women and girls who don't have that” and about “someone new to the outdoor”, leading to the question “Are we really sending a message that this is not an arena for women to venture into?” (Tough, 2020, p. 12).

It is the power of showing, of storytelling, of saying “I have done it, so can you,” that is also very present in female relationships, and which is so important in the travel world. Tough follows this path of showing, of saying “I’m here” and presenting a group of so many women that are here too. Adventure is also deeply attached to nature, and they can sometimes be considered interchangeable terms, but adventure is still highly interchangeable with male and masculine, hence the importance of such anthology and others alike. Besides, it is interesting to observe how an activity considered male takes place within a female world and female entity: Nature.

Women and nature have always carried an interchangeability that is being more and more questioned. This relationship affects the way women can move within nature, their relationship with it and their freedom of movement because, although nature is female, women are not welcomed in nature. As addressed by Aastha Tiwari, “we have been taught to address nature as the ‘Mother Earth’” (2020). Tiwari explains that this symbol “is allegorised as a powerful maternal force, the womb of all human production that ‘takes care’ of our needs and necessities from time and again.” Although a comforting idea it is a “gendered and sexist language that is reinforced in the lives of women” and they are then expected to “possess the ‘same nature’ as the nature of Mother earth” (2020). The “saviour complex that a man is supposed to protect a woman” is reflected here because “the ‘Mother’ needs protection” since she cannot defend herself, which leads to the present days representation of the “exploitation of the patriarchal society.” Tiwari adds that “both are expected to be “accepting”, “available”, and “accommodating” of the desires of capitalists and men” (2020). Hence, although both are female, they have become representations that do not seem to fit together in real life. But women travel, walk and are within nature every day and have to deal with these representations and are affected by them as it is possible to see from the examples presented in this chapter.

The contradictory meanings of women being one with but not allowed within nature are the result of social and culture constrains imposed on the fragile sense of freedom given to

women. To be free but subdued to these constraints will cause them to question their place in nature, for as much as they want to take part in it, they will still be afraid to start their journey in the wilderness alone.

In this chapter, we will analyse the root of why nature is regarded as female, how it affects the perception of women and the rules applied to them within society and culture, and how it affects their freedom to be and travel within nature alone, taking the works *Wild* and *Tracks* by Cheryl Strayed and Robyn Davidson, respectively, as examples.

## 5.1 Relationship with Nature

Women's relationship with nature starts interchangeably by nature being considered female and sharing traits attributed by men through philosophy, beliefs (pagans, religious), art, imagery, and literature. In *The Death of Nature*, in the chapter "Nature as Female", five main points are presented regarding this representation: nature as nurture: controlling imagery, literary images, philosophical frameworks, the geocosm: the earth as a nurturing mother and normative constraints against the mining of mother earth. According to Carolyn Merchant, the centre of the organic theory was the "identification of nature, especially the earth, with a nurturing mother: a kindly beneficent female who provided for the needs of mankind in an ordered, planned universe" (1989, p. 2). But there was another image of nature as female, opposing: "wild and uncontrollable nature that could render violence, storms, droughts, and general chaos" (1989, p. 2). As Merchant explains,

Both were identified with the female sex and were projections of human perceptions onto the external world. The metaphor of the earth as a nurturing mother was gradually to vanish as a dominant image as the Scientific Revolution proceeded to mechanize and to rationalize the world view. The second image, nature as disorder, called forth an important modern idea, that of power over nature. (Merchant, 1989, p. 2).

These images of nature as sacred, Merchant points out, changed when there was the need to use it for the industrialized world. This proves that cultural and social views might indeed change but for certain needs, "Because language contains a culture within itself, when language changes, a culture is also changing in important ways. By examining changes in descriptions of nature, we can then perceive something of the changes in cultural values" (Merchant, 1980, p. 4).

The description of nature also provides a normative that is then applied to women and to human life,

It is important to recognize the normative import of descriptive statements about nature. [...] Descriptive statements about the world can presuppose the normative; they are then ethic-laden. A statement's normative function lies in the use itself as description. The norms may be tacit assumptions hidden within the descriptions, in such a way as to act as invisible restraints or moral ought-nots. The writer or culture may not be conscious of the ethical import yet may act in accordance with its dictates. (Merchant, 1980, p. 4)

This means that one grows within these normative functions and descriptions and grows up to act in accordance to them. "These two competing images and their normative associations can be found in sixteenth-century literature, art, philosophy, and science." By permeating so many areas of knowledge that affect life, it is almost impossible to run away from them.

A very interesting element of nature is her power. And what is interesting is exactly how an element can be appointed and described as female, that is home and mother to humans and have so much power in a world where it is not acceptable for women to use such force. Analysing religion tied to nature, we might have the answer: nature is an instrument to transmit knowledge (male). Being God the creator of Nature, it becomes his instrument when he uses her voice. As Nature is "operated "without capacity or knowledge," solely on the basis of "her dexterity and skill," as the instrument of God's expression in the mundane world" (Merchant, 1980, p. 6). The same chain of thought is found in philosophy when in Platonic and Neoplatonic symbolism "both nature and matter were feminine, while the Ideas were masculine" (Merchant, 1980, p. 10). And, even though nature is more powerful than humans, it is still subordinated under God's will (1980).

This power is only a symbol and a representation and, if women should show the other side of nature, they would need to be tamed much like nature is. This idea is also explored by Sherry B. Ortner in the article *Is Female to Male as Nature Is to Culture?*, that women are associated to nature and men identified and symbolically with culture, the latter being considered superior: "Since it is always culture's project to subsume and transcend nature, if women were considered part of nature, then culture would find it "natural" to subordinate, not to say oppress, them. [...] women are seen 'merely' as being closer to nature than men. (B. Ortner, 1974, p. 73) And when trying to "explain the universal devaluation of women" the author comes to a thesis, women are identified and transformed as a symbol and since cultures



devalue symbols and want to transcend such symbols and natural existence, they bend it and control it in their interest:

(...) woman is being identified with – or, if you will, seems to be a symbol of – something that every culture devalues, something that every culture defines as being of a lower order of existence than itself. Now it seems that there is only one thing that would fit that description, and that is “nature” in the most generalized sense. Every culture, or, generically, “culture,” is engaged in the process of generating and sustaining systems of meaningful forms (symbols, artifacts, etc.) by means of which humanity transcends the givens of natural existence, bends them to its purposes, controls them in its interest. (B. Ortner, 1974, p. 72)

It is the “nature” that subordinates her and nature should be inherent, a biological determinism. And if culture is male because it is superior to nature then and subjugates it.

On why woman is seen as closer to Nature, B. Ortner states that “it all begins with the body and the natural procreative functions specific to women alone” and summarises it in three points:

(1) woman’s body and its functions, more involved more of the time with “species life,” seem to place her closer to nature, in contrast to man’s physiology, which frees him more completely to take up the projects of culture; (2) woman’s body and its functions place her in social roles that in turn are considered to be at a lower order of the cultural process than man’s; and (3) woman’s traditional social roles, imposed because of her body and its functions, in turn give her a different psychic structure, which, like her physiological nature and her social roles, is seen as being closer to nature. (B. Ortner, 1974, p. 73)

From the plan of theory and social and cultural examples, if we think about visual means and representations, we should think about the word and concept of outdoorswoman,

Who do you picture when you think of an outdoorswoman? What clothes does she wear? What vehicle does she drive? Does she live in it? Does she pull a tent out of the back, arranging it under the stars? MAYBE SHE’S A REALIST, MAYBE SHE’S A dreamer. Maybe she’s an artist and the varying landscapes she crosses inspire creativity within her. Or maybe the changing landscapes are overwhelming at times. She wants to slow down and stay awhile. Perhaps she has a family. She’s a mother, orienting her children to the world so they can figure out how to orient themselves on their own one day. Or her children are all grown up, their compasses set. Her time is suddenly all her own. She’s a biologist, a wilderness ranger, a computer programmer. She’s grieving: a loved one, a relationship, a piece of herself. Maybe she’s working tirelessly to share the stories of others. Or perhaps she’s articulating her

own. When you imagine this woman, do you see yourself in her? The outdoors is so special because it does not cultivate an archetype for the outdoorswoman. And while society is always tempted to shape us in its image, to create an “ideal” way to look and love and be, on our best days, when we’re out there alone in nature, we get the opportunity to define ourselves. Do you see all the possibilities for your own life? (Straub, 2019, paras. 1-7)

It is possible to say that the idea of the outdoorswoman is non-existent. Not that there are not outdoorswomen, but there is not a visual representation nor is she present in media representation, much like the flâneuse. As Nailah Blades states,

“Obviously the outdoors is for everyone,” she says, “but the way that the outdoor world has been marketed hasn’t been for everybody. It very much seems like this very exclusive club. I’m sure even when people think of ‘outdoorsy,’ they think of a white male and he’s probably wearing Patagonia.” (Davis, 2020, n.d.)

Therefore, when going to the wild, to explore nature and the outdoors, women seem to always be in disadvantage due to the idea that women are just a different and inferior male human version, and they face an atmosphere of being in a place where they are not welcomed and as being an anomaly. Even, when through so many works, we know that this is far from the reality. The contradiction presented is that although nature is female, women are not supposed to be in nature and to know how to deal with her and to survive in her. Hence, when women do decide to go, they unravel a part of themselves and become what they might have become much earlier only if given the chance, instead of being told and prevented from it through social rules and prejudices. Clarissa Pinkola-Éstes states that the original sense of the word “wild”, “which means to live a natural life, one in which the *criatura*, creature, has innate integrity and healthy boundaries,” helps women remember who they are and “create a metaphor to describe the force which funds all females. They personify a force that women cannot live without” (Éstes, 1995, p. 6). This is a different definition of the “modern pejorative sense” (1995) and connects women to their roots and to their nature. “Wild” is often associated with women negatively and keeps them away from the outside world. This process, this experience, is what happened to Strayed and to Davidson on their journeys across nature and in rougher conditions. And, they came out of it stronger and transformed also because, as Estes explains, they found their Wild Women archetype, and,

To find her, it is necessary for women to return to their instinctive lives, their deepest knowing. So, let us push on now, and remember ourselves back to the wild soul. Let us sing

her flesh back onto our bones. Shed any false coats we have been given. Don the true coat of powerful instinct and knowing. (Éstes, 1995, p. 22)

Women become only representations, ideas of something but physically they cannot be at a place freely from social conventions. When alone, they are free, but the fear stays and accompanies them. As Highland points out,

Being out in the wild reminds us of all the smallness and largeness of ourselves because this earth, this sea and sky and rock and tree and mountain, this is where we are from. Not a town with a name and a sign, but the ancient, persisting, elemental earth. We are not names and birthdates but hearts and souls reflecting the browns, the blues, the greens. (Highland, 2020, 11)

Once more, women being away from the wild pulls them away from a side they have or might have, therefore, they aren't able to fully feel complete as human beings.

## **5.2 Women Traveling Through Nature**

While traditionally men try to subjugate nature and women, it is very interesting that, when in nature, women are reborn, transformed, changed. Most of the times, in literature, for women, nature is a place of communal, of allowing oneself to be pushed to the limit without trying to change the surroundings. As it is presented in *Women Who Run With the Wolves* (1995), women need to be in nature to find themselves, to find the part that was taken from them in order to find the wolf within themselves. And it is possible to say that Davidson and Strayed did that.

Cheryl Strayed lost her mother at the age of twenty-two and after that she became lost in her life, her family drifted apart, her marriage crumbled, and her planned future fell apart. Four years later, while in a very bad moment of her life and with nothing to lose, she saw the book, *The Pacific Crest Trail, Volume I*, and decided to hike the PCT alone in the United States, which happened seven months later in the summer of 1995 and wrote about it in the book *Wild: From Lost to Found on the Pacific Crest Trail* in 2012. In 1975, Robyn Davidson crossed 1,700 miles of the Australian desert to the sea only with four camels and a dog. Strayed's journey lasted three months, Davidson's lasted nine months, having published the book, *Tracks*, about the trip in 1980.

While Strayed had a clearer idea of why she went on to endure this journey “when I’d made the arguably unreasonable decision to take a long walk alone on the PCT in order to save myself” (Strayed, 2012, p. 5), Davidson does not provide a specific reason and even fights the urge for people to find a reason to do so;

The question I’m most commonly asked is ‘Why?’ A more pertinent question might be, why is it that more people don’t attempt to escape the limitations imposed upon them? If *Tracks* has a message at all, it is that one can be awake to the demand for obedience that seems natural simply because it is familiar. Wherever there is pressure to conform (one person’s conformity is often in the interests of another person’s power), there is a requirement to resist. (Davidson, 2014, p. 264)

Davidson notes that this “obsession” of having to have a reason also happened because she is a woman, if it were a man doing what she had done, it would not have received so much attention and it would be considered normal,

And that term ‘camel LADY’. Had I been a man, I’d be lucky to get a mention in the *Wiluna Times*, let alone international press coverage. Neither could I imagine them coining the phrase ‘camel gentleman’. ‘Camel lady had that nice patronizing belittling ring to it. Labelling, pigeonholing — what a splendid trick it is. (Davidson, 2014, p. 243)

And as Davidson puts it regarding her travel a myth was created in which she would be considered exceptional. This happened “because society needed it to be so. Because if people started living out their fantasies, and refusing to accept the fruitless boredom that is offered them as normality, they would become hard to control” (2014, p. 243). By being perceived a stand-alone case it would be seen as abnormal and no one would follow her footsteps when what she wanted was to make it be a normal activity.

While becoming one with nature, Davidson often describes losing the ability to speak and to express herself correctly considering she would seem like a mad person for others. Strayed expressed similar feelings when spending great amounts of time by herself, even her voice sounding strange to her and the words she said, “When I spoke, my voice sounded funny to me, seemed to be higher and faster than I’d remembered, as if it were something I couldn’t quite catch and hold on to, as if every word were a small bird fluttering away” (2014, p. 72). To be able to be so alone with themselves and of thinking so much without external human interference gave these women the opportunity to escape social conventions and the traditional role of women that tends to be outwards, of taking care of others and putting others first.

Something that unites both *Wild* and *Tracks* is the descriptions and depictions of the hard times without being done in such a way of making women tough, perhaps because it was written by women, and in this case by the authors of such travels, that frequently happen in films – either the hyper feminised, damsel in distress or the over masculine tough action girl that has no feelings. In these two specific stories and films, these two women put themselves in such travels, face their fears, demons, weaknesses but find their strength, meanings, and transformations. The descriptions of their bodies, of what they go through is visceral and they do not hold back. There is no censorship on what they think or describe, its rawness shows that women are multiple and not binary as they have been described for so long, especially in literature and visual arts. That “getting dirty” can have a whole different meaning, especially when it involves being in nature. From bodies functions to desires, sex, deep thoughts, nature descriptions and experiences, there is no holding back, but there is not however gratuity. No description or inclusion is made to shock. It is the purest form of confessional they could express. They allow us to enter their minds and hence, we are allowed to travel with them instead of being mere spectators of it,

By now I was utterly deprogrammed. I walked along naked usually, clothes being not only putrid but unnecessary. (...) Did it matter, I would think to myself, if all the buttons had gone from my shirt and trousers? Would anybody notice or care? And what about menstrual blood? From my position, it didn't matter a damn whether it followed the natural laws of gravity and ran down my leg, the way it was meant to do, but would others feel the same way? (...) . I'm amazed at how quickly and absolutely this sense of the importance of social custom fell away from me. And the awareness of its absurdity has never really left me. I have slowly regained a sense of the niceties, but I think, I hope, that I will always see the obsession with social graces and female modesty for the perverted crippling insanity it really is. (Davidson, 2014, p. 214)

Jamie Bolker, in an essay called *Why We Don't Like Wild Women*, observes the difference between the way two female travel writers (Sarah Kemble Knight and Mary Rowlandson) are treated by academia and the differences between the interest on them. While Rowlandson “is a staple of college reading lists” who inspired readers with stories of “women who were under the power and threat of others”, Knight’s writing is a contrast of that “as an independent woman who relied on her own wits to survive”. This means that Rowlandson’s approach was “one based on virtue and faith” and Knight’s writing was “less religious in tone, rarely invoking God or scripture during the most difficult parts of her journey” (Bolker, 2017). To venture into the wild by choice, on their own and for whatever reason and independently, is what sets the difference between being liked or not. Bolker presents one of

the main reasons why female travel narratives are not as interesting for publishers, audiences, media, is the fact they do not fall in the common narrative of women as “victims and under the power and threat of others”. And, once again, traveling for no specific reason or to get to know themselves, to explore who they are and what they are capable of doing, can present itself as dangerous to the traditional life forms in which we live in, mainly for women. Bolker also mentions how being courageous can have more than one form, bring multitude rather than singularity to women’s stories as well as their lives, which in this genre are also of utmost importance.

The setting of the uncharted wilderness has allowed the woman-as-victim theme to live on through centuries of literature—and it’s alive and well today. Readers can find it in James Fenimore Cooper’s *The Last of the Mohicans*, the bestselling novel of the 1820s. Or in *Tarzan of the Apes*, hugely popular in many media since the early twentieth century. (Bolker, 2017)

Indeed, the trope of women needing rescue has been around for centuries and only recently started changing, namely in cinema. Still, it remains lingering around in terms of success. There continues to exist a route in which female authored works are sold or aimed to women only, making its circulation solely in the same circle, the mainstream following its path unchanged. Here, women not needing to be rescued in traditional ways and following independent paths leads them to be excluded, a practice that is not new.

According to Boker, *Wild*, the film, just like the book, follow’s Strayed’s solo travel in search of herself, based on her real-life experiences and “does not fall back on this familiar trope” (2019). Critics, following the same evaluation as previous generations did for the works and experiences of Knight and Rowlandson, stated Cheryl, the character played by Reese Witherspoon, unlikeable. Dana Stevens of Slate states that she is “a piece of work: disorganized, sailor-mouthed, given to self-destructive promiscuity and addictive behaviour, but also curious, sardonic, and scary smart” (2019). In the New York Times, A. O. Scott “warns that “We are not going to be charmed, teased, flattered or befriended” by Cheryl.” These negative critics could be said to stem from the not-so usual performance of Witherspoon that contrasts with her usually bubbly and charismatic appeal in her other works, however, just like we have said of Knight’s narrative, Strayed also does not play victim. Both Knight and Stayed, by choosing the path of writing about their experiences they are considered as women that “violate our expectations of how a woman should behave in the wilderness” (Bolker, 2017).

Here, Bolker presents perhaps the main reason of why women narratives are not viewed the same way as men's. Likeability. Bolker also notes what has been discussed throughout this dissertation regarding female travel narratives as well, "These women violate our expectations of how a woman should behave in the wilderness." By deviating from these expectations and also from likeability, women are punished with indifference and diminishment. In *Wild*'s narrative,

As a woman alone on the Pacific Crest Trail, Strayed constantly has to explain herself. Nearly everyone she meets inquires why she's on her own, without a male protector (or captor). She even feels compelled to lie that her husband (whom she had recently divorced) would meet her on the trail. Some of the people she encounters marvel at her independence. One woman tells her, "I think it's neat you do what you want. Not enough chicks do that, if you ask me." Another man tells her, "Women are the ones with the cojones"—suggesting that Strayed's courage is borrowed from men. Strayed rejects the idea that women can't survive on their own: "I chose to tell myself a different story from the one women are told. I decided I was safe. I was strong. I was brave. Nothing could vanquish me." (Bolker, 2017)

The need to explain herself, people marvelling at her independence and the courage borrowed from men, follow the logic behind the three questions addressed in the first chapter of this dissertation and which Strayed's book contains. This is a tendency in female travel narratives and if women do not think about this, someone will make them think about it.

In both film and life, Cheryl Strayed isn't a captive in need of rescue. She's traveling for her own benefit, even if she says and does things that we may not like. (...) It takes a certain kind of heroine to brave the elements of nature on her own, hence the duality of Strayed's title *Wild*—it can refer to the landscape or to Strayed's character. By embracing her wildness, Strayed unapologetically strays beyond the boundaries of traditional expectations of female behavior. Focusing on what makes female adventurers "likeable" relies upon worn out notions of female propriety. Instead, by seeing Strayed and other women for who they are and what they accomplish, we can instead begin to examine the fluid relationship between humans and their environments, which can in turn lead us to a better understanding of what make a person or place "wild" in the first place. (Bolker, 2017)

For women to enter and stay in the mainstream of genres, and mainly in travel writing, there is the need to see "women for who they are and what they accomplish" rather than what they should be and by not comparing them to men, for instance, to treat their work as its own. And in a world where wild attached to describe women can be quite dangerous, understating the

multitudes of the world and the word “wild” is the way to free the future of the genre, of what defines women and to free them from movement constrictions.

In the end, women can and have ideas of wanting to do something just because. The problem of doing so lies in preconditioned prejudices that live within and amongst us that can prevent them from accomplishing them, and it does not have to require thousands of miles and extreme conditions. But these women went, and they were not “experienced” and that is also important because in a global society, that to this day continues to blame women for the harm that is done to them or simply to going out wherever they might, to do it proves the connection to nature, the outside, to life as a human and not to a gender. This connection exists and is possible, even though we are constricted and programmed by societies and cultural values and definitions of cans and cant's, of possibles and impossibles, of what shoulds and shouldn'ts and so on. And, although Davidson does not have a reason, she has a goal “I am well aware of the hardship I will be facing and the first to admit I am remarkably unqualified for such a hazardous undertaking. But this is precisely the point of my journey. I'd like to think an ordinary person is capable of anything” (Curran, 2013, 23:00).

Both authors are questioned several times on why they were alone, how could they be alone, if they were not afraid and even what their families thought of that.

On the high rocky meadows I passed day hikers and short-term backpackers and a Boy Scout troop out for an overnight. I stopped to talk to some of them. Do you have a gun? Are you afraid? they asked in an echo of what I'd been hearing all summer. No, no, I said, laughing a little. (Strayed, 2012, p. 281)

These questions, posed by either women or men, are in itself the answers. They know that there is a preconceived idea that women alone are somehow wrong and seeing them in this position brings these questions to mind.

It would seem that the combination of elements — woman, desert, camels, aloneness — hit some soft spot in this era's passionless, heartless, aching psyche. (...) The reaction was totally unexpected and it was very, very weird. I was now public property. I was now a feminist symbol. I was now an object of ridicule for small-minded sexists, and I was a crazy, irresponsible adventurer (though not as crazy as I would have been had I failed). But worse than all that, I was now a mythical being who had done something courageous and outside the possibilities that ordinary people could hope for. And that was the antithesis of what I wanted to share. That anyone could do anything. If I could bumble my way across a desert, then anyone could do anything. (Davidson, 2014, p. 242)



As Davidson points out, her journey should prove that anyone can do anything they set their minds on, and that she should not feel restricted just because she is a woman or the way women are viewed, especially in this case, for when we are in nature.

Women cannot explore nature because they are nature, nature is female and the social and cultural idea of it is controlled by male conceptualization, therefore nature being controlled by men it is them who create the rules, much as it is and has been seen through history. Women represent a home much the same way nature represents a home. The difference lies in space and scale which is determined by male ideals, so, the outside world that should be female, is a forbidden place for women, where they face dangers when alone, thus always needing protection. Although we also know that even at home they face potential domestic violence, the relationship of women and nature forged by men explains it also: women are the force, the life, the matter, but are controlled by men. Female nature and women in nature ends up being a contradictory concept. But, as Clarissa Pinkola Éstes explains, women will never be free if they do not do it: “Go out in the woods, go out. If you don’t go out in the woods, nothing will ever happen and your life will never begin” (Estés, 1992, p. 502).

## **6. Who Gets To Tell The Story**

“We tell each other stories in order to live” (Didion, 1979). But who tells the stories? Or who gets to tell a story? And if a great part of the world population cannot tell their story, with which perspectives are we living by? Can we grasp the magic of the world by only getting to know stories and reports from one part of that population? If we think about History, that is how it was for centuries. According to Laura Bates,

Throughout history, everything that we do – everything that we believe about ourselves and other people, everything we plan for and work towards – has been shaped by stories. The stories we hear as children help us to imagine and dream what the future might hold. The stories we learn as we grow up help us to work out our place in the world. And the stories we tell when we are adults determine the legacy we leave behind. So it is impossible to underestimate the impact of the fact that still, in 2013, women’s stories are not being told.

That women, in those stories we hear, are still portrayed as so incredibly limited, pigeonholed and stereotyped. And that so very few of those stories are told in a woman's voice. (Bates, 2014, pp. 185-186)

Hence, because stories are important and are a legacy that is left behind, women started to do research in order to show, prove, bring to life, women that were set aside from the spotlight, as mere observers of life and events and in order to change the way women are portrayed. In travel literature that has been happening as well. This field of literature is considered male, and men have been reinforcing such claim, going to the extent of publishing travel anthologies or books about travelling without mentioning a woman.

In *No One Tells You This*, by Glynnis Macnicol, while traveling, the author comes to the realisation of who gets to tell the story and what remains from it:

Driving across the open land that was about to get even more open, I was struck yet again by who had actually built the country and who had received the credit and how both those things, including the fact that we used the word build in this context, were the direct result of who got to tell the stories and how they were told. (Macnicol, 2018, pp. 250-251)

Here, we are faced with the important question of who gets to tell the story. And in a genre, as mentioned before in chapter three, so intrinsically considered male, we need to think about who is telling the story. Namely because to travel is to see the world, and who is reporting such sights is narrating what they witness. Men got to define what was told and what was put into writing.

Many traveling women also started to think “where are women?”, “who came before me?”, “how did they travel in different times?”. The presence of “known” traveling women is so scarce that one assumes they simply do not travel. But, as it will be possible to see, that is not the truth and one of the main reasons for lack of representativity is in the numbers of published works and the dismissal of such reports, also analysed in the third chapter. Works such as what Mia Kankimaki, *The Women I Think About at Night, A Trip of One's Own* by Kate Willis, *Wind Swept* by Annabel Abbs, *Wanderers: A History of Women Walking* by Kerri Andrews, *Tough Women: Adventure Stories* by Janny Tough and many others, have done are ground-breaking because it is not made for women but it was made thinking of women, inspired by women, from women. Meaning, for example, Kankimaki's book opens with the author noting that she “gathered an invisible honor guard of historical women, guardian angels to lead the way” (2020, p. 1). These are women that did not follow traditional

paths and “have transgressed boundaries and expectations” (2020, p. 1). These guardian angels present a different way of thinking and of presenting protection for women, because traditionally one would think that for this purpose (protection) women would think about men. Because women already follow, sometimes, the footsteps of men, such as Thoreau, and others. In Abi Andrews novel, *The Word for Woman is Wilderness*, the main character although inspired by a man, set out to be different exactly because she was aware of the differences and perceptiveness towards women travelling alone and travelling to “difficult” places:

It came about like this: I was watching a film about a runaway called Chris McCandless, who ditched his ivy-league-trust-fund life and travelled all across America to get to Alaska and live the Jack London dream, where he ate some poisonous potatoes and died. This was 1992, the year before I was born. I cried and promised myself I would start a savings account to fund a trip to Alaska, where I too could live in the wilderness in total solitude. Then I went through the film step by step and analysed how it would have been different if the guy had been a girl. Really, it would have been a completely different film. Not just in the sense that there were situations in it that would likely have different outcomes for the different sexes (e.g. when he got beaten up by a conductor who finds him stowing away on his freight train) but more fundamentally because a girl wanting to shun modern society and go AWOL into the wilderness to live by killing and eating small animals and scavenged plants would just be considered unsettling. (Andrews, 2018, pp. 3-4)

Indeed, it would be a different film, if it were a woman. Hence, the more accounts of women travelling the better, in order to understand such reality, because we can see how they survive, how they can do it nonetheless and tell such story. Elspeth Beard could not get support before her trip around the world in a motorcycle but tried to tell the story after returning, since now she could show that she could do it, she had the story and not only the intention, maybe now there would be interest. But that was not what happened, as Beard shares that “The indifference and disinterest I encountered from my family and friends soon made me retreat into myself.

Over the next few weeks, I wrote letters to bike magazines, newspapers and book publishers, asking if they’d be interested in my story. A few replied, but only to brush me off with similarly worded explanations each time: ‘Your story not quite right for us.’ It seemed nobody wanted to know. (Beard, 2018, p. 290)

Her story remained untold for 30 years because at the time no one cared, even those around her. Like Beard explains, first no one believed she could do it, then after she did it no one cared. Indeed, in *A Trip of One's Own*, Beard tells Wills,

I told Elspeth about my own story and the too-often-forgotten female explorers I was researching and she seemed genuinely enthused. 'I'm staggered by how many women did these amazing trips in the 1920s and even before that,' she said. 'I think these stories have remained untold because women do these kinds of trips for themselves, whereas men do it to be like "Look what I've done!" When I think of the negativity I faced and everyone telling me I couldn't do it, and it must've been so much harder for these women before me. They must've been so focused and determined to ignore everyone else and do what they wanted.' (Wills, 2021, p. 128)

To travel following the footsteps of women is also transformative. Kankimäki states that these women are her plan B. Reading Frida Kahlo's biography changed her perception of womanhood. Books about and written by women are important in order to present a different perspective and are also a way out of the imposed chain of thought of patriarchal beliefs. If it is said women cannot do something but we are able to read it on several accounts that they actually did, it can create a change either of perception or of promoting its acceptance, driving others, especially women, to do the same.

The importance of who gets to tell the story is also present in the media, not only in written publications, such as books, which provide the most prestigious route. Reese Witherspoon was the star of *Wild*, the film based on Cheryl Strayed's book *Wild*. And this film came about in 2014 because Witherspoon was not finding roles for women and also discovered there was no interest in developing more. After having several meetings with studio executives in 2012, she got frustrated that there were almost no projects being developed for women, "I think it was literally one studio that had a project for a female lead over 30," the actress recalls. "And I thought to myself, 'I've got to get busy'" (Riley, 2014). Afterwards, Witherspoon created a production company aimed at producing with only women as protagonists, being *Wild* one of the first. It is not only in publishing that there is a problem regarding women's work, it is across all media outlets. Again, they have to fight for their voice to be heard and to have space, yet, they continue to be perceived as an exception to the rule.

Regarding structures of power, because being published is deeply related and rooted in structures of power, in her Manifesto *Women and Power*, Mary Beard poses the question "We

have to be more reflective about what power is, what it is for, and how it is measured. To put it another way, if women are not perceived to be fully within the structures of power, surely it is power that we need to redefine rather than women?" (Beard, 2017, p. 83). Indeed, in a culture and in many fields in which for women to be able to be part of they have to become more manly or to resign to female characteristics, Beard points out how the way of approach has to be different and taken from a different perspective. The same one regarding language towards women being attacked on the streets, the same one regarding traveling solo and being able to do things alone, regarding their strength and so on. Travel writing and publishing have to let go of outdated and ancient structures of what is or what is not travel writing, what is allowed or not, and, most importantly, to stop viewing travel writing as male. To stop looking at male as universal and to open it up to a universal spectrum, which in reality, is how travel (around the world or outside the personal routes) should be perceived.

Perpetually denying a space for telling stories in their own voice and account will continually reduce women's freedom of movement and to anyone who does not fit into the authorized representation. Because although women will continue to travel and to also doing it solo, if representation of such is not recognized, they will continue to be perceived as alien in such places, such as in the wild, in certain countries, on streets and so on, and the desire or impulse to remove them from there will continue to exist and to take place, whether consciously or not, "You cannot easily fit women into a structure that is already coded as male; you have to change the structure" (Beard, 2017, page 86-87).

Jenny Tough also shares that she hopes that her anthology of stories of female adventures "will show the many faces of toughness, and encourage everyone – men and women, boys and girls – to reassess our culture's perceptions about who does or doesn't belong in the outdoors (hint: everyone; no one). I also wanted to give a voice to some incredible role models who have great stories to tell" (Tough, 2020, p. 13). Tough also denotes that this way she can show a different view of the outdoor industry from the single mould that media presents, that it is full of women and that giving a platform to these stories will ignite such change since she "always believed in the power of storytelling – stories that leave an impact, stories that people will remember" (Tough, 2020, p. 13). "The voices who are igniting that change" (Tough, 2020) are the voices that press on against the reception that they continue to receive. And it is not something from the distant past: Kerri Andrews, author of *Wanderers*, a book about women walking, when trying to be published was told they "didn't think the topic had enough commercial potential",

I spent a long time writing to, and being rejected by, both agents and publishers, some of whom were complimentary and supportive but didn't think the topic had enough commercial potential. This eventually knocked my confidence, so I sent the manuscript to The Literary Consultancy for feedback and advice - and to see if I was wrong to keep believing that the book had value. (Woodhouse, 2020, n.d.)

It is important to mention that this was said to Andrews around 2015 and how the evaluation is about the commercial value. This gives some light to the issues women face to get published and how the market works. Noticeably, the publishing market focus immensely on the economic return, but we also know that gender plays a major role here if we pay close attention to the number of published works by men in the same areas and fields, which will be taken in consideration further on. Women's stories continue to be denied, but fortunately, these anthologies and these authors continue to push through. A recent fraction or tendency of the travel genre in the female sphere is to follow the footsteps of other women. This is as important as telling one's story, it follows the feminist tradition of doing its own archaeology and of bringing women's history and feats back and also, when given the chance, of having the spotlight, the importance of sharing that light with other women because, as Wills puts it, following the lines of what other authors also think and try to do, "Maybe this is the power of writing – that it can become a form of telepathy, as well as a way of travelling through time. I hope that I can do something similar with this book" (Wills, 2021, p. 35).

In the same interview, Andrews talks about a project, Women In the Hills, which "is a network aiming to bring together participants from across the spectrum of those interested in the hills - walkers, runners, landowners, clothing manufacturers, physios - to explore how we can make it easier for women to access upland landscapes." Andrews goes on to explain that

In particular, we are interested in exploring what happens when we return to the historical record the stories of women as walkers, mountaineers, wanderers. What does it do for girls and women to have role models? To read stories about people like them? There is so much written about men adventuring, enjoying, conquering, being inspired by, remote places, but what about girls who might be interested in being explorers? Who do they look to? My book came to consider this as it matured, and I now think it's one of the most important things it will hopefully do - and Kathleen Jamie's foreword making this point is so important. (Woodhouse, 2020, n.d.)

This is also an important part of women's freedom of movement, how they can do it, how they need these role models. And the point Andrews mentions that Kathleen Jamie makes in

the foreword is very important and it is one of the main focal points of this dissertation, why is it that women cannot “ramble around” without being accompanied and exploring the world without fear:

As humans, walking defines us. (...) So why is it so difficult for half of the human race simply to walk? Why can't a woman ramble around, unaccompanied and unburdened, exploring the world she was born into, while turning her own thoughts in her mind? Such a harmless occupation! It doesn't seem too much to ask, to be able to walk outdoors, even in daylight, without fear. Of course we know why not. But of course we walk anyway, despite fear and derision, and always have. (Andrews, 2020, p. 9)

Jamie also notes that the writers present on this book are also noticers “because to walk is to notice”. And Andrews writes: “The history of walking has always been women's history, though you would not know it from what has been published on the subject” (2020, p. 17). Indeed, she mentions the tradition that keeps women afar from being mentioned and registered in history, that “When these men write about their walking, they look back to earlier male walker-writers; even the most recent accounts of walking” (2020, p. 17-18).

As Andrews mentions, Solnit points out that “the ‘words on walking’ are male-authored more than 90 per cent of the time” and proves this with the example of “the popular anthology *While Wandering: Words on Walking* [2014]” in which “of around 270 entries, just 26 are written by women” (2020, pp. 17-18). Andrews gives one more example, “Also underling the validity of Solnit's claim is Frédéric Gros' *A Philosophy of Walking* (2014), which calls exclusively on examples of male walkers; the sole mention of a woman walker occurs, in passing, on the penultimate page” (2020, pp. 17-18).

Male authored works carry a certain authority always given to men, and if they leave women out then it is perceived that women are not part of it and women are an exception to the rule. Regarding travel writing, the works of Paul Theroux are an important example to take into consideration within this matter because he is viewed nowadays as the authority of contemporary travel writing. His book on travel theory, *The Tao of Travel* (2012) mentions only a few women (16 women among roughly more than 50 men and which are repeated) and often quotes his own work. There are numerous travel anthologies and academic travel textbooks that have been criticised because a great majority of them includes only a small number of women or fail to include them completely, “In Paul Fussell's study of travel writing, *Abroad: British Literary Traveling Between the Wars* (1980) women are non-existent” (Bassnet, 2002, p. 226), and this is considered an important textbook on travel

writing. There are several examples, among them: *The New Granta Book of Travel*, edited by Liz Jobey and from 2011, has only four women within 23 authors and most of the *The Best American Travel Writing* that started in 2000. Yet, when they are separated and have anthologies on their own, which also mandates and implies the separation of women with the addition of women to titles, they are in incredible high numbers. Anthologies such as *The Virago Women Travellers*, 1994, *Women Travel: A Rough Guide Special*, 1999, *Solo: On Her Own Adventure*, 1996, *A Woman Alone*, 2001, *Go Your Own Way*, 2007, *Go Girl! The Black Woman's Book of Travel & Adventure*, 1997, can have from 12 up to 40, or more, female writers in one book. The Lonely Planet Travel Anthology from 2016 is one of the few in which there is more female writers than men (eight male writers among 34 authors). This follows the tradition, but not only these authors are to blame, but the revisors, editors and publishers that look at these works and see nothing wrong in it, or maybe they are only looking at the “commercial value”.

There is a lot to say about commercial value regarding women. As approached in the chapter about how women are seen in the media, they present a great commercial value, but only in certain areas (mainly visually). And publishing in travel writing is not one of them. Whereas in publishing they are presented as a minority, when we look into the digital world, namely the blogosphere, they exist by the hundreds. In a blog owned by a man, João Leitão, it is shown how many women travel writers already exist. He lists 300 women solo travel bloggers in the entry *300 Best Solo Female Travel Blogs & Websites To Follow In 2022*.<sup>16</sup> A quick research with “travel writing women blogs” will provide endless results with female writers.

Media gives an idea that is not the main one. Media tends to pick up a reality among several and make it the main one. This also happens in film, “Rather than providing realistic representations in the media, men and women both tend to be depicted in a hyper-traditional manner, which maintains stereotypes of personality traits, capabilities, and aspirations (Bussey & Bandura, 1999)” (Murphy, 2015, p. 6). Regarding publishing, this is highly noticeable in lists of book suggestions, for example. In the Appendix there are more examples, but we are going to take into account these two images from the website of Book Depository, one of the most popular online book sellers. One image is from September 2021 and the other from June 2022. Each has 30 books and are from the travel writing page. The first image has four female writers (Elizabeth Gilbert, Cheryl Strayed, Raynor Winn, Helen

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<sup>16</sup> <https://www.joaoleitao.com/solo-female-travel-blogs/>



Russel) with Elizabeth Gilbert appearing three times with the same book – *Eat, Pray, Love*. Three male writers are also repeated, Bruce Chatwin, John Krakauer and George Orwell and the latter has three books on the list, two repeated and one solo. In the second image, we also have 30 suggestions. Among them there are four female writers (Elizabeth Gilbert, Cheryl Strayed, Raynor Winn and Meera Sodha). Gilbert has, again, the same book suggested three times. There are not many changes other than Chatwin only having one book and John Krakauer that now has two books. From only these first pages we get the idea that representation in travel writing is not equal. The first page is the most important since usually people do not go much further unless they are looking for something specific. Because even if we go through the second and third page, finding female travel writers would still be difficult due to this pattern of only a handful of them being suggested. This not only provides an unrealistic representation as it shows a meagre array of what is out there. As Jocelyn Nichole Murphy puts it “The ideal approach to female representation, is female representation.” Also, if the suggestions are always the same, the canon will not open itself nor the sales of books authored by women and open the view of what is travel writing.

## **Figure 2**

*Example of Travel Writing Section Page from Book Depository from September 2021*

Book Depository

Search for books by keyword / title / author / ISBN

Shop by category Bestsellers Coming Soon New Releases English € EUR 0,00 € 0

Back to Homepage

Travel & Holiday Guides

Travel Writing

Classic Travel Writing

Expeditions

Filter your search

Keyword

Price range

Availability

Language

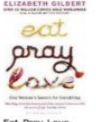




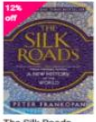


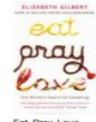







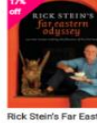









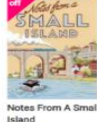
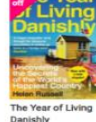


Format

Refine results

### All Travel Writing

Showing 1 to 30 of 65,746 results

Most popular 1 2 3 4 5

 <p><b>Eat, Pray, Love</b> Elizabeth Gilbert ★★★★★ 05 Mar 2007 Paperback 11,13 €</p> <p>Add to basket</p>	 <p><b>Born to Run</b> Christopher McDougall ★★★★★ 15 Apr 2010 Paperback 10,00 €</p> <p>Add to basket</p>	 <p><b>Into the Wild</b> Jon Krakauer ★★★★★ 01 Jul 2011 Paperback 12,59 €</p> <p>Add to basket</p>	 <p><b>The Salt Path</b> Raynor Winn ★★★★★ 31 Jan 2019 Paperback 11,12 €</p> <p>Add to basket</p>	 <p><b>Lion</b> Saroo Brierley ★★★★★ 23 Feb 2017 Paperback 11,09 €</p> <p>Add to basket</p>
 <p><b>The Silk Roads</b> Peter Frankopan ★★★★★ 07 Jun 2016 Paperback 16,54 €</p> <p>Add to basket</p>	 <p><b>Down and Out in Paris and London</b> George Orwell ★★★★★ 05 Sep 2013 Paperback 9,17 €</p> <p>Add to basket</p>	 <p><b>Rick Stein's India</b> Rick Stein ★★★★★ 06 Jun 2013 Hardback 29,19 €</p> <p>Add to basket</p>	 <p><b>Eat, Pray, Love</b> Elizabeth Gilbert ★★★★★ 22 Feb 2007 Paperback 9,45 €</p> <p>Add to basket</p>	 <p><b>East</b> Meera Sodha ★★★★★ 22 Aug 2019 Hardback 22,59 €</p> <p>Add to basket</p>
 <p><b>An Idiot Abroad</b> Karl Pilkington ★★★★★ 01 Mar 2012 Paperback 10,36 €</p> <p>Add to basket</p>	 <p><b>Homage to Catalonia</b> George Orwell ★★★★★ 16 Jun 2011 Paperback 10,32 €</p> <p>Add to basket</p>	 <p><b>Into the Wild</b> Jon Krakauer ★★★★★ 03 Jun 2008 Paperback 12,59 €</p> <p>Add to basket</p>	 <p><b>Down and Out in Paris and London</b> George Orwell ★★★★★ 01 Dec 2001 Paperback 10,43 €</p> <p>Add to basket</p>	 <p><b>The Art of Travel</b> Alain De Botton ★★★★★ 08 Apr 2014 Paperback 12,46 €</p> <p>Add to basket</p>
 <p><b>Vagabonding</b> Rolf Potts ★★★★★ 01 Jan 2003 Paperback 12,83 €</p> <p>Add to basket</p>	 <p><b>Rick Stein's Far Eastern Odyssey</b> Rick Stein ★★★★★ 09 Jul 2010 Hardback 27,19 €</p> <p>Add to basket</p>	 <p><b>Marching Powder</b> Rusty Young ★★★★★ 12 Aug 2016 Paperback 11,63 €</p> <p>Add to basket</p>	 <p><b>Zen And The Art Of Motorcycle</b> Robert Pirsig ★★★★★ 13 Jan 2017 Paperback 10,56 €</p> <p>Add to basket</p>	 <p><b>Destinations of a Lifetime</b> National Geographic ★★★★★ 15 Mar 2016 Hardback 30,51 €</p> <p>Add to basket</p>
 <p><b>In Patagonia</b> Bruce Chatwin ★★★★★ 27 Jun 2011 Paperback 6,26 €</p> <p>Add to basket</p>	 <p><b>The Old Ways</b> Robert Macfarlane ★★★★★ 30 May 2013 Paperback 11,94 €</p> <p>Add to basket</p>	 <p><b>Eat Pray Love</b> Elizabeth Gilbert ★★★★★ 23 May 2011 Paperback 9,33 €</p> <p>Add to basket</p>	 <p><b>Bradshaw's Continental Railway Guide (full)</b> ★★★★★ 20 Sep 2012 Hardback 30,43 €</p> <p>Add to basket</p>	 <p><b>Wild</b> Cheryl Strayed ★★★★★ 01 Jan 2015 Paperback 10,23 €</p> <p>Add to basket</p>
 <p><b>The Songlines</b> Bruce Chatwin ★★★★★ 01 Feb 2010 Paperback 12,00 €</p> <p>Add to basket</p>	 <p><b>Notes From A Small Island</b> Bill Bryson ★★★★★ 19 Dec 2015 Paperback 11,44 €</p> <p>Add to basket</p>	 <p><b>The Year of Living Danishly</b> Helen Russell ★★★★★ 12 Apr 2016 Paperback 11,17 €</p> <p>Add to basket</p>	 <p><b>A Time of Gifts</b> Patrick Leigh Fermor ★★★★★ 18 Jul 2013 Paperback 10,34 €</p> <p>Add to basket</p>	 <p><b>Underland</b> Robert Macfarlane ★★★★★ 27 Aug 2020 Paperback 12,96 €</p> <p>Add to basket</p>

1 2 3 4 5

Figure

Example of Travel Writing Section Page from Book Depository from June 2022

Book Depository

Shop by category Bestsellers Coming Soon New Releases English € EUR 0,00 € 0

**Back to Homepage**

- Travel & Holiday Guides
- Travel Writing**
- Classic Travel Writing
- Expeditions

**Filter your search**

Keyword

Price range   
 All

Availability   
 All

Language   
 All

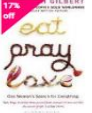









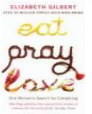



















Format   
 All

Refine results

## All Travel Writing

Showing 1 to 30 of 20,276 results

Most popular
1 2 3 4 5

 <p><b>Eat, Pray, Love</b></p> <p>Elizabeth Gilbert ★★★★★ 05 Mar 2007 Paperback</p> <p>10,73 € <del>10,73 €</del> 30-day low price: 10,73 €</p> <p style="text-align: center; background-color: #00a65a; color: white; padding: 2px 5px;">Add to basket</p>	 <p><b>Born to Run</b></p> <p>Christopher McDougall ★★★★★ 15 Apr 2010 Paperback</p> <p>10,28 € <del>10,28 €</del> 30-day low price: 10,28 €</p> <p style="text-align: center; background-color: #00a65a; color: white; padding: 2px 5px;">Add to basket</p>	 <p><b>Into the Wild</b></p> <p>Jon Krakauer ★★★★★ 01 Jul 2011 Paperback</p> <p>9,38 € <del>9,38 €</del> 30-day low price: 9,38 €</p> <p style="text-align: center; background-color: #00a65a; color: white; padding: 2px 5px;">Add to basket</p>	 <p><b>Lion</b></p> <p>Saroo Brierley ★★★★★ 23 Feb 2017 Paperback</p> <p>11,16 €</p> <p style="text-align: center; background-color: #00a65a; color: white; padding: 2px 5px;">Add to basket</p>	 <p><b>The Salt Path</b></p> <p>Raynor Winn ★★★★★ 31 Jan 2019 Paperback</p> <p>11,48 € <del>11,48 €</del> 30-day low price: 11,48 €</p> <p style="text-align: center; background-color: #00a65a; color: white; padding: 2px 5px;">Add to basket</p>
 <p><b>Into Thin Air</b></p> <p>Jon Krakauer ★★★★★ 01 Jul 2011 Paperback</p> <p>9,95 € <del>9,95 €</del> 30-day low price: 9,95 €</p> <p style="text-align: center; background-color: #00a65a; color: white; padding: 2px 5px;">Add to basket</p>	 <p><b>Wild</b></p> <p>Cheryl Strayed ★★★★★ 23 Feb 2015 Paperback</p> <p>9,82 € <del>9,82 €</del> 30-day low price: 9,24 €</p> <p style="text-align: center; background-color: #00a65a; color: white; padding: 2px 5px;">Add to basket</p>	 <p><b>The Silk Roads</b></p> <p>Peter Frankopan ★★★★★ 07 Jun 2016 Paperback</p> <p>17,20 € <del>17,20 €</del> 30-day low price: 17,20 €</p> <p style="text-align: center; background-color: #00a65a; color: white; padding: 2px 5px;">Add to basket</p>	 <p><b>Down and Out in Paris and London</b></p> <p>George Orwell ★★★★★ 05 Sep 2013 Paperback</p> <p>6,10 € <del>6,10 €</del> 30-day low price: 6,10 €</p> <p style="text-align: center; background-color: #00a65a; color: white; padding: 2px 5px;">Add to basket</p>	 <p><b>Rick Stein's India</b></p> <p>Rick Stein ★★★★★ 06 Jun 2013 Hardback</p> <p>29,93 € <del>29,93 €</del> 30-day low price: 29,93 €</p> <p style="text-align: center; background-color: #00a65a; color: white; padding: 2px 5px;">Add to basket</p>
 <p><b>Eat, Pray, Love</b></p> <p>Elizabeth Gilbert ★★★★★ 22 Feb 2007 Paperback</p> <p>9,53 €</p> <p style="text-align: center; background-color: #00a65a; color: white; padding: 2px 5px;">Add to basket</p>	 <p><b>An Idiot Abroad</b></p> <p>Karl Pilkington ★★★★★ 01 Mar 2012 Paperback</p> <p>10,72 € <del>10,72 €</del> 30-day low price: 10,72 €</p> <p style="text-align: center; background-color: #00a65a; color: white; padding: 2px 5px;">Add to basket</p>	 <p><b>East</b></p> <p>Meera Sodha ★★★★★ 22 Aug 2019 Hardback</p> <p>23,25 € <del>23,25 €</del> 30-day low price: 23,25 €</p> <p style="text-align: center; background-color: #00a65a; color: white; padding: 2px 5px;">Add to basket</p>	 <p><b>Homage to Catalonia</b></p> <p>George Orwell ★★★★★ 16 Jun 2011 Paperback</p> <p>10,66 € <del>10,66 €</del> 30-day low price: 10,66 €</p> <p style="text-align: center; background-color: #00a65a; color: white; padding: 2px 5px;">Add to basket</p>	 <p><b>Into the Wild</b></p> <p>Jon Krakauer ★★★★★ 03 Jun 2008 Paperback</p> <p>8,92 € <del>8,92 €</del> 30-day low price: 8,92 €</p> <p style="text-align: center; background-color: #00a65a; color: white; padding: 2px 5px;">Add to basket</p>
 <p><b>The Art of Travel</b></p> <p>Alain De Botton ★★★★★ 08 Apr 2014 Paperback</p> <p>12,87 € <del>12,87 €</del> 30-day low price: 12,87 €</p> <p style="text-align: center; background-color: #00a65a; color: white; padding: 2px 5px;">Add to basket</p>	 <p><b>Vagabonding</b></p> <p>Rolf Potts ★★★★★ 01 Jan 2003 Paperback</p> <p>12,37 € <del>12,37 €</del> 30-day low price: 12,37 €</p> <p style="text-align: center; background-color: #00a65a; color: white; padding: 2px 5px;">Add to basket</p>	 <p><b>Down and Out in Paris and London</b></p> <p>George Orwell ★★★★★ 01 Dec 2001 Paperback</p> <p>11,41 € <del>11,41 €</del> 30-day low price: 11,41 €</p> <p style="text-align: center; background-color: #00a65a; color: white; padding: 2px 5px;">Add to basket</p>	 <p><b>Endurance: Shackleton's Incredible Journey</b></p> <p>Alfred Lansing ★★★★★ 03 Jul 2003 Paperback</p> <p>10,65 € <del>10,65 €</del> 30-day low price: 10,65 €</p> <p style="text-align: center; background-color: #00a65a; color: white; padding: 2px 5px;">Add to basket</p>	 <p><b>Rick Stein's Far Eastern Odyssey</b></p> <p>Rick Stein ★★★★★ 09 Jul 2010 Hardback</p> <p>27,90 € <del>27,90 €</del> 30-day low price: 27,90 €</p> <p style="text-align: center; background-color: #00a65a; color: white; padding: 2px 5px;">Add to basket</p>
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 <p><b>Eat, Pray, Love</b></p> <p>Elizabeth Gilbert ★★★★★ 23 May 2011 Paperback</p> <p>9,38 € <del>9,38 €</del> 30-day low price: 8,25 €</p> <p style="text-align: center; background-color: #00a65a; color: white; padding: 2px 5px;">Add to basket</p>	 <p><b>The Old Ways</b></p> <p>Robert MacFarlane ★★★★★ 30 May 2013 Paperback</p> <p>12,63 € <del>12,63 €</del> 30-day low price: 12,63 €</p> <p style="text-align: center; background-color: #00a65a; color: white; padding: 2px 5px;">Add to basket</p>	 <p><b>In Patagonia</b></p> <p>Bruce Chatwin ★★★★★ 27 Jun 2011 Paperback</p> <p>8,87 € <del>8,87 €</del> 30-day low price: 8,87 €</p> <p style="text-align: center; background-color: #00a65a; color: white; padding: 2px 5px;">Add to basket</p>	 <p><b>Bradshaw's Continental Railway Guide (full)</b></p> <p>★★★★★ 20 Sep 2012 Hardback</p> <p>27,39 € <del>27,39 €</del> 30-day low price: 27,39 €</p> <p style="text-align: center; background-color: #00a65a; color: white; padding: 2px 5px;">Add to basket</p>	 <p><b>Wild</b></p> <p>Cheryl Strayed ★★★★★ 01 Jan 2015 Paperback</p> <p>10,59 € <del>10,59 €</del> 30-day low price: 10,05 €</p> <p style="text-align: center; background-color: #00a65a; color: white; padding: 2px 5px;">Add to basket</p>

1 2 3 4 5

A common element regarding women travelling is not only their capability being questioned but also being outwardly called incapable, mainly by men. Nellie Bly went through it in 1887 and we could consider it a product of its time, but Elspeth Beard went through it in 1982.

Nellie, then 25, came up with the idea for her globe-trotting scoop on a Sunday afternoon where she wished she could be 'at the other end of the earth'. Although her editor liked it, the paper's business manager didn't agree. As Nellie recounts in her article: "It is impossible for you to do it," was the terrible verdict. "In the first place you are a woman and would need a protector, and even if it were possible for you to travel alone you would need to carry so much baggage that it would detain you in making rapid changes. Besides you speak nothing but English, so there is no use talking about it; no one but a man can do this." "Very well," I said angrily, "Start the man, and I'll start the same day for some other newspaper and beat him." (Wills, 2021, p.71)

And Bly did it. Yet, she is far from famous as she should be and as a man would. Although, at the same time, men can be forgotten for these things precisely because it is so common for them, accepted even, as Davidson puts it (2014, p.243). Beard was also rejected and although centuries apart from Bly, almost for the same reasons:

Within days of being dumped by Alex, I started a letter-writing campaign to seek sponsorship and advice for my trip. I wrote to anyone – accessory manufacturers, bike magazines, BMW in Germany – who I thought might be vaguely interested in helping a young, inexperienced female biker to do something that few people had achieved. To all the letters written, I received only two replies.

One of the letters, a very polite rejection, came from BMW Germany. The other was sent by the editor of Bike magazine, who made it very obvious that he and the rest of his chauvinist colleagues found the whole idea extremely amusing.

'Dear Elspeth,' the editor replied on a typewriter with wonky letters and uneven spacing.

Brecon said he'd write this letter but he can't 'cos his tongues [sic] jammed his typewriter.

Julian asks if you've got an eight feet tall husband who's also a karate expert?

Mike Clements has already formed the Elspeth Beard Appreciation Society and wants to know where in the world you're going to be so he can get there first.

Me? I'd like to offer you sponsorship 'around the world' but I think that'd be a waste and a shame for London.

Best wishes,

Dave Calderwood (Beard, 2018, p.27)

The importance of telling one's story makes us see that across the world their stories are not so different, not only regarding the hardships they must come through or/and are imposed on them, but also about the sense of freedom they obtain and the positive outcomes they experience. "I also learned the importance of telling your own story. Only you have the ability to speak to it genuinely. I figured if I was going to be in the news, the information might as well come directly from the source" (Attar, 2018, para. 4). Women have been telling their own stories for a long time, but they keep being pushed to the periphery. Somehow, especially in travel writing, it seems to always be a reason to do so, and, as discussed before, it always falls in the route of comparison, even if it is not outright explicit. Meaning, the comparison will always be between the binary of male and female and the sex differences that are socially attached to them. Herein, if the confessional, the intimate, the exposure of feelings are feminine, and travel writing is said not to have that, then whatever is written in this form that carries such approach will not be accepted. If society deems incorrect for women to walk freely, to be independent and childfree, for example, then, if women travel and are these things, they will not be regarded fit for travel writing even though this seems to be the base for male travel writers, even when they are not. Taking the case of Theroux, in *The Old Patagonian Express*, from the first pages and the description of the beginning of the travel no one can take from it that the author is actually married with children. On the day he began his journey:

I had woken in my old bedroom, in the house where I had spent the best part of my life. The snow lay deep around the house, and there were frozen footprints across the yard to the garbage can. (...) Slapping my pockets to make sure my ballpoint and passport were safe, I went downstairs, past my mother's hiccupping cuckoo clock, and then to Wellington Circle to catch the train. (Theroux, 2008, p.13)

The same happens with Bruce Chatwin, for example, from his travel writings one cannot assert as well that he was married. If travel writing is judged and critiqued by the pursuit of the truth, then they fail in doing so. Some can argue that this truth is the observational and outwards, about the place and the people, but if the source of this information is not explicit and implies a different base, then the outcome will certainly be different as well. If the one telling a story carries always a perspective from the start, not being clear about it means also a distortion of such truth of travel. This affects the possibility for women to tell their own story because as it has been demonstrated, there is no right way of doing it in this genre unless it is

separated by the words “woman” or female” and we know that those words separate them from male readers.

According to Women’s Prize only 19% of male readers read women.<sup>17</sup> And then we also have to face the criticism within women as we can take the example of Elizabeth Gilbert and her book *Eat, Pray, Love* from 2006, and its subsequent film from 2010. This work is highly criticised by women and usually the complaint is regarding the current theme of women finding themselves (as presented in the third chapter). In the article *Why Are So Many People Threatened by ‘Eat Pray Love’?* that is the conclusion that is reached. Julie Kroll, the author, found that many women were “quite upset or confused as to why so many thought this book was so interesting” and she found out that most of the women asking this question were married with children. Because this was a “one woman's self-discovery” it became uncomfortable. Kroll provides the reasons behind this threatening feeling which are that these women cannot relate and also the fear of discovering themselves: “So, it makes me wonder, why are people so threatened by the idea of this movie? Perhaps it is the idea that people are afraid to discover: Themselves. Scary isn't it?” In another article, *Remembering a time when we didn't totally hate Eat, Pray, Love*, Martha Bayne “is not uncritical—'It's also, by definition, a selfish project. Is there anything more boring than hearing about someone else's spiritual quest?’” This, as we have been demonstrating, is one of the main criticisms towards women’s writing or attached to female characteristics, and in the travel writing genre it is seen as the differentiator factor between male and female, the binary of right and wrong. It is not that people do not want to hear about someone’s spiritual quest, it is the female spiritual quest that is cast aside. In the article *Exploring Women’s Love-Hate Relationship With “Eat, Pray, Love”*, we see the perspective of what is expected of women, “It’s clear that Gilbert hit a nerve – inspiring some women and offending others with her brand of travel and introspection.” Once again, the binary view that there is a right and a wrong or that there are two paths to choose from and the choice of not staying offends the other one. This type of choice, however, does not arise the same sort of criticism towards men. And the article’s author, Shiwani Srivastava, mentions another reason, also already presented throughout this dissertation, that this happens when “what society expects of women with what a woman wants for herself” confronts itself,

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<sup>17</sup> <https://readinggroups.org/news/women-s-prize-for-fiction-announces-2022-shortlist>

Regardless of how you feel about Gilbert, she's grappling with an emotional hot-button issue – that is, struggling to reconcile feminism with hopeless romanticism; and what society expects of women with what a woman wants for herself. She's certainly not the first person to tap into this – it harkens back to controversial female protagonists in Erica Jong's "Fear of Flying" and Michael Cunningham's "The Hours".

These are just a few examples of the divisiveness that this book presents to which is important to understand its reasons, and a quick research such as "why people hate *Eat, Pray, Love*" will show a plethora of articles, usually written by and for women, that develop this subject.

This also affects women's freedom because the continuous spread of the world with male views continues to shrink such world and what women may try to do. This perpetuates what has been done so far. It perpetuates the idea of two worlds of possibilities and invalidates other worlds outside of male views, which is more than half of the population. The denial of the internal world also continues to attach outdated ideals of femininity, in which women are considered too much, too sensible, too vocal and disruptive. When Robyn Davidson was reduced to being the "Camel Lady" after traveling through half of Australia, for example. We also seem to not accept women as full humans and full of contradictions such as almost female travel writers present, especially in travel accounts that take so much of them in strength, from within and outside, when they are trying to figure out what they are or want to do. When they express sexual desires, they continue to be chastised because this falls in the victim blaming spectrum, if they desire it is their fault if something happens. Sex for women walks side by side with danger as much as travel for instance and the reception of this account demonstrates this.

When women wonder where are the women that travel and write, the result is, as we have seen, not immediate. As Wills recounts of her experience, she started to wonder where were the female counterparts of the most known male names of the genre, such as Marco Polo, Captain Cook, Bruce Chatwin, Jack Kerouac and Paul Theroux. While wondering why solo male traveller's experiences are romanticised and women's experiences are usually seen as tragic or transgressive, she realized she could not name a single female travel writer. As she points out she only knew "There was the American pilot Amelia Earhart. I vaguely knew of Gertrude Bell, some 19th-century lady who did something important in the Middle East. But that was about it. So, I went back to the beginning" (Wills, 2022, p. 17). Hence, in order to find the female voices of travel writing, there must be a profuse work of research. It seems

that not much has changed for women in some ways, but travel will always remain a form of attaining freedom,

I started to realise that for many of these women – crossing the deserts of the Middle East at a time when a woman couldn't even cross London unaccompanied – travel was a way of breaking free of society's constraints. It's telling that the first female travel writer was a nun. Perhaps it was only by opting out entirely of a traditional familial role that women could escape domestic pressures and devote themselves to other pursuits. By crossing borders they broke away from the narrow expectations laid out before them – wife, mother, spinster. Maybe things haven't changed all that much for women and travel still does that. At least, it feels that way for me. (Wills, 2021, p. 18)

Although women may face constrictions while traveling, to travel is a form of breaking free from the day-to-day constraints, from their own realities. They can look more inside of themselves and even to get to know what they can or cannot do, to learn about themselves without anyone limiting them. And, as Karlo mentions, writing allows to create a personal history and storytelling is a form of sharing struggles,

Our lives don't follow a predefined arc, but we can create our own personal history through writing. Doing so taught me not to deliberately conceal certain feelings, such as fear of failure, and that choosing vulnerability is an act of courage vital to storytelling. Writing creates a space for others to feel safe enough to share their stories, and it is an indescribably powerful feeling to discover that other people relate to your struggle. (Karlo, 2018, paras. 4-5)

As Karlo argues, the power of people relating to the story is something to uphold. And it is usually what lacks within history in general, as well as among women, because the social atmosphere and culture is usually told by the male narrative. Hence, sharing the story creates the capability of relating to experiences and to the plurality of lives instead of the binary view put towards women and other marginalised groups.

The reasons why they travel might also be different as it is possible to see in their books. What also happens is that anyone who is not the “norm” will face problems that are dependent on prejudice and ideals that are centuries old, such as that black women do not travel. This is tied up still with the idea of slavery and that if women in general are viewed as domestic, black women, in particular, carry this even more. And the notion of being property is still much more attached to them. They continue to be seen as servants, hence the oddness of seeing them travel for pleasure or wanderlust. If women are left outside the genre as whole, when they do enter, black women continue to be left out in western publish and mentions. In



the television programme about discrimination, “MTV News Presents: With One Voice Fighting Hatred Together”, while talking with Tova Friedman about themes such as the Holocaust and being Jew and or Black, interviewer Emmanuel says regarding white people being his audience,

There's a limited knowledge and understanding of Black people primarily from a lot of my White friends. You can navigate most areas of America without Black interaction. You can navigate going to the grocery store and going to the mall and going to the restaurants without interacting with Black people but as a Black person, you can't navigate America without interacting with White people. So black people are more predisposed to understand White people and White culture than White people are predisposed to understanding Black people and Black culture.

Hence, there is a knowledge that one group has what the other does not, and especially an awareness, social and spatial. In this case, it is regarding black people, but it is also for black women, and women as a whole in comparison to men as a whole. The lack of the presence of these narratives and plural perspectives, and also because only the ones more aware of such problematics tend to read about it, it does not leave its circle and does not reach the ones that need to know more about this. Dawn Comer Jefferson's account in the essay “The Truth About Italian Men” is an example of this and also of how people also absorb these ideas,

My friends thought I was crazy. An African-American woman going to Italy alone, to spend Carnival in Venice. “Oh, the Italian men are horrible. They'll chase you down the street and pinch your butt,” warned one friend. “They kidnap women traveling alone and sell them into prostitution rings. Black women are considered exotic, so be careful,” another cautioned. Taking their warnings with a grain of salt, I packed my bags and boarded a plane for Italy. (Jefferson, 2001, p. 23)

Not only is there a shared set of ideas of what might happen, these views also carry preconceived ideas from the past of how black women are perceived. Jefferson went through a situation that scared her, yet, in the end, it was completely harmless,

Yes, the world *can* be dangerous. We all read the papers, live in the neighbourhoods. We see and hear about tragedy every day. But for me, the tragedy would be in not going out and exploring the world. Traveling to Italy alone reinforced my belief in my own ability to make my way through life. And if I hadn't been alone, I never would have been ambushed by Carnival revelers in search of a picture with a black broad abroad. (Jefferson, 2001, p. 26)

In a National Geographic's article, about travelling diversity, one of the main themes is the invisibility and lack of representation,

In 2011, my family of four set out on an around the world trip. Over the course of one year, we visited more than two dozen countries. We weren't the first family to set out on such an adventure, but as we flipped through magazines and scanned the internet for examples, we never found a traveling family that looked like ours. Was it that people of color weren't traveling or that they weren't being included in travel coverage? Turns out it's a bit of both. (Davis, 2020, n.d.)

And for Shivya Nath, author of the travel memoir, *The Shooting Star*, visual representations is important in order to broaden the idea of what a traveler looks like because, as Nath points out "As a brown traveler, I don't fit into the mold of someone exploring the world," and adds that "A white person can be an explorer, a vegan, a solo female traveler, an outdoor enthusiast, a culture seeker. But a person of color is a person of color first" (Davis, 2020, n.d.). In this article, another powerful tool is mentioned that helps fight and understand why this happens, "As one of only a few African Americans to host a travel show, Ernest White II says 'visibility is empowerment.'" And indeed, if we look at the anthologies about women travellers, mainly from the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, they are mostly white women. It is anthologies such as *Go Girl* that show some of the reasons why black women travel, where to and how, such as to Africa to get to know their roots, to the diaspora and all over the world. In the Introduction, editor Elaine Lee tells how surprisingly, for her, traveling is a way to be treated as a human being,

Perhaps the biggest surprise about traveling internationally was to discover that in many parts of the world it is an asset to be a black woman, unlike in North America, where it is often a liability. When I am abroad, I am usually afforded a level of respect and appreciation that I do not get in my own country. It's when I travel that I'm told I'm attractive, courageous, and smart. (...) For a couple of days, weeks, or months a year, I kinda like the idea of being consistently treated like a human being. I like going into stores and not being followed or going into a restaurant and not being immediately shuttled to the back table by the kitchen. (Lee, 1997, p. 13)

Lee also explains that she wanted to put this book together because she knew that travelling "was more accessible and less threatening that they perceived it to be. So I wanted them to experience travel as I did, as a form of empowerment, survival, and renewal, and as

an avenue to the economic opportunities available outside our national borders” (Lee, 1997, p. 14).

In the article *Why Women’s Travel Memoirs Get Sold Short*, by Rachel Friedman, Lee’s book is addressed and how even after being a ground-breaking publication it gets marginalized even so,

Female travel writers of color have another layer of marginalization to contend with. Adiele, for one, wishes her work had been taken more seriously as a travelogue. Instead, it’s marketed as “African-American studies,” which she finds frustrating. “I’m an anthropological artifact, and I’m not even African-American,” she says. Elaine Lee, who published 1997’s *Go Girl!: The Black Woman’s Book of Travel and Adventure*, the first travel book by and for African-American women, sees a dearth of opportunities in general. “Where is a Black person going to get their stories published? There are very few outlets.” (Friedman, 2018)

This sharing of different lives shows how not so different these lives are and how similar fears, braveries and constrictions present themselves. Without visibility, prejudices will continue to live on and exclusion will linger on. Without representation these lives will continue on the margin, not permeating the main route.

Regarding differences in writing, as we have mentioned before, there is also the observation of how the way men and women travel affect the way they write about it and the mentality behind it. Therefore, being different will always be a result of the elements presented to them while traveling, such as constrictions, prejudices, and so on. As Friedman points out,

Spalding has observed that “a lot of travel writing by men is focused on what I saw, did, ate, where I went, what goal I accomplished. Whereas with women, it’s who I met, what I learned, how I felt, [how I] changed.” If men and women travel for different reasons, if they travel differently, full stop, are these nuances revealed in their work? And do those differences impact the reception of that work? (Friedman, 2018)

To bridge these differences and turn their writing more appealing, women have to position themselves in order to achieve a place as travel writers. The author of the comic travelogue *No Touch Monkey! And Other Travel Lessons Learned Too Late* (2003), “believes that for a female writer to achieve a bestseller, she has to position herself as having had some sort of transformative epiphany, often of a romantic/spiritual nature” (Friedman, 2018). This also implies that women end up being “judged more harshly for” telling their personal

experiences, constantly facing expectations of what their narrative should be like. In the line of positioning themselves, it is also mentioned the importance of the marketing of the book. It is not only who gets to tell the story but also how that story gets to reach people, and in this case men:

It's in the marketing of books that the gendered angle comes most sharply into play. Strayed, for instance, notes that male readers really like *Wild*; it resonates with them. "But so many male radio interviewers say how much they love it before the interview and then they go on to say in the interview: 'Well, this is an inspiring book for women!'" For Strayed, the response speaks to a larger issue. "Men's stories are seen as universal, women's as particular. What women are up against is the battle to not be marginalized." (Friedman, 2018)

This last sentence gives a great insight of how women's stories are perceived, especially in the genre of travel literature, the universal versus the particular and the marginalization. This is something that continues to be present nowadays as it is possible to see from the many examples with book placements online and mentions in lists whether for great travellers or best travel books.<sup>18</sup> <sup>19</sup>Unless there is, once again, the gender separation, women are far less mentioned or suggested.

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<sup>18</sup> <https://www.forbes.com/sites/jonisweet/2018/08/28/15-travel-books-that-will-change-the-way-you-see-the-world/?sh=42df017e3db7>

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.nomadicmatt.com/travel-blogs/thirteen-travel-books/>

## 7. Women's Freedom of Movement While Traveling

Throughout this dissertation it was demonstrated that while women travel solo, they are faced with the main three questions of being alone, of being afraid and of being brave. It was also established that there are some themes that are more prominent in female travel narratives which is finding themselves and to see what they are capable of. Although they are heavily criticised and chastised about it, we will demonstrate in this final chapter why it is such a necessity and what travel did for these women. So far, we have seen that constrictions on women's movement of freedom are mainly born from social conventions and ideals that cross all cultures in different ways and that the questions that arise from women traveling solo are usually the same across the globe.

Therefore, we shall start by demonstrating what travel might look and feel like for women. In this long excerpt from *Departures*, by well-seasoned traveller and writer Anna Hart, from Northern Ireland, sums up fear, solo travel and women's experience throughout it and the heaviness of so much that goes on in her mind,

Fear is a fact of life for women, and I always feel my skin prickle when I travel. We might be dressed up in expensive leather footwear and robot-woven garments, and Wi-Fi-ed to the nines, but we're still all cavewomen trying to survive, and there's nothing like solo travel to put us right back in the cave. When we travel, we're acutely aware that our antennae might be slightly off-kilter. We're constantly processing a range of facts about our surroundings, scanning for threats, and when our environment changes, and behavioural norms shift, it throws us. In unfamiliar surroundings, visual clues lose their meaning and our safety gauges fail. (...) I love traveling solo, but let's face it: even the most spirited, gung-ho adventure traveller has moments when she fears she's about to be raped and murdered.

Every so often I idly wonder what it would be like to be a male traveller. I know that male travellers are not clad in some sort of invincibility cloak, and I know it could be argued that male travellers are more likely to be unfairly caught up in a drunken brawl or mugged. But it must be nice to be spared the rape-and-murdered thought in all its tiresome regularity. It must be nice to go for a run in the backstreets of a new city at 6 a.m. without worrying about imminent violent death, because such thoughts really taint the endorphin rush of a morning joy.

Oh, and, men, you should know that these moments of fear are not rarities, or the occasional melodramatic indulgence of an isolated madwomen. (...) All women have these thoughts all the bloody time, countless times a day. Which is why doing anything at all that hints at a

sexual threat – from catcalls in the street to lecherous stares from your van or sexist jokes in the office – makes a man a douchebag of the hippest order. Because we aren't making this shit up: women *are* attacked by strangers on the street, bundled into vehicles, and forced to leave our jobs because of a pervy boss. How we wish we could see those catcalls, stares and jokes as 'compliments' and 'harmless fun', and if all men would just stop harassing, raping and killing women we'd love to join you in a big old laugh about it all. It's only the privileged who are able to deny their privilege, because privilege is invisible to those who have it. We all need to remember that. (Hart, 2018, pp. 67-69)

This quote represents well the amount of thinking that might go through a woman's mind while traveling alone, how heavy and tiresome it can be and also its normality. It is another element that women carry with them, which is usually present in the majority of female travel accounts. Being acutely aware, having antennae picking up signs, being on high alert. Trying to make decisions based on instincts, on common knowledge, on the knowledge passed on to them. Analysing the surroundings, the visual clues. And as Hart puts it, even the most spirited and adventurous might fear that she is going to be raped and murdered. Some, indeed, are able to not feel this fear so strongly or not at all, but those fears and those possible situations will be placed upon them simply for being women. Hart also notes that men also face fears but are in majority free from the rape and murdered thought and "its tiresome regularity", as well as having greater possibilities of doing things that for women pose threats. Hart concludes by saying that this happens not only traveling or alone, it happens at home, in the office and that it is a privilege "that is invisible to those who have it" (Hart, 2018) and can deny having it. Also, the use of the word "cavewoman" is very interesting. Not only does it put women in a place they are consistently forgotten, since it is always referred only as cavemen to humans in the Stone Age, but also because this image, of a cavewoman, much like outdoorswoman, for example, is not one that tends to populate people's minds unless in a prejudiced way to describe a woman's appearance, not her survival skills.

Cheryl Strayed's account is an example of the thinking involved on female solo travels, hers being in the outdoors environment mostly. How much she had to analyse, behaviours and situations she was in. Fear is a theme that is very present in *Wild* and is addressed by the author. Strayed acknowledges and accepts the fear, but deals with it, not allowing it to overtake her and only this way she was able to hike alone, as she explains next,

It was a deal I'd made with myself months before and the only thing that allowed me to hike alone. I knew that if I allowed fear to overtake me, my journey was doomed. Fear, to a great

extent, is born of a story we tell ourselves, and so I chose to tell myself a different story from the one women are told. I decided I was safe. I was strong. I was brave. Nothing could vanquish me. Insisting on this story was a form of mind control, but for the most part, it worked. Every time I heard a sound of unknown origin or felt something horrible cohering in my imagination, I pushed it away. I simply did not let myself become afraid. Fear begets fear. Power begets power. I willed myself to beget power. And it wasn't long before I actually wasn't afraid. I was working too hard to be afraid. (Strayed, 2012, p. 51)

By choosing in a way how to feel and to tell herself “a different story from the one women are told”, Strayed was able to control her travel even when fear was present, to the point that her hard work overtook the feeling that she was no longer afraid. Along the way, Strayed was helped by many of the other hikers and by other people, so much so that she was given the trail name of “Queen of the PCT”. When she asked why, she was told it was because “Because people always want to give you things and do things for you” (Strayed, 2012, p. 296). She adds:

All the time that I'd been fielding questions about whether I was afraid to be a woman alone—the assumption that a woman alone would be preyed upon—I'd been the recipient of one kindness after another. Aside from the creepy experience with the sandy-haired guy who'd jammed my water purifier and the couple who'd booted me from the campground in California, I had nothing but generosity to report. The world and its people had opened their arms to me at every turn. (Strayed, 2012, pp. 296-297)

This creepy experience is one that could have changed the trip for the worse and is one that exemplifies one of the main fears and dangers for women, but also reinforces the idea that is set on the behaviour that women will encounter. At the end of one day, moments after setting camp, two bow hunters appeared. They asked for water, Strayed helped them getting water from a pound with her water purifier but one of them clogged it and she started to feel uncomfortable (2012, p. 284). Afterwards, one of them started asking questions about her being alone and said that he would not let his girlfriend do that. After lingering around, she said she would hike further to see if they would go away. They did, but the hunter that asked the questions returned alone and pointed out that she had lied to them and started to verbally harass her, talking about her body. Strayed remained calm on the outside while thinking that after being lucky so far, that her hike could end like this,

“I don't know what you're talking about,” I said numbly, though I could hardly hear my own words for what felt like a great clanging in my head, which was the realization that my whole

hike on the PCT could come to this. That no matter how tough or strong or brave I'd been, how comfortable I'd come to be with being alone, I'd also been lucky, and that if my luck ran out now, it would be as if nothing before it had ever existed, that this one evening would annihilate all those brave days. (Strayed, 2012, pp. 286-287)

Strayed stood her ground, trying to keep the conversation peaceful, and said that he should go. The hunter went but only because the second one showed up. This example is not to exemplify that this is what happens, it is to demonstrate that although it is something that can happen and that has happened, it does not define the whole trip nor the experience, as Strayed remarked above, which was a good one. It is the duality in which women live in, the constant assessment and evaluations of situations and instincts that they are exposed to and have to endure in order to do something that is normal for men. Before this creepy experience, Strayed passed a Boy Scout troop that asked if she had a gun or if she was afraid, something she heard throughout all summer (2012), to which she answered negatively to both (2012, p. 281).

The Little Red Riding Hood example is one that is attached to women and their freedom of movement and the consequences of it. It is perhaps the model that best shows what happens to women if they go outside the norm, the best cautionary tale regarding what is expected of women. Although it works as a cautionary tale and is viewed as such, Alexandra Ganser presents another perspective given by an essay from the 1980s from French feminist critic Hélène Cixous, as “an early story of a feminine venturing into unknown spaces” in which “Even though the protagonist is eventually punished for her detour, Cixous applauds Little Red Riding Hood’s adventurousness and transgression, interpreting the story as a journey of sexual selfdiscovery” (Ganser, 2009, p. 13). Noting that even though that was not the original purpose, it was to go to another house, “from one mother to another”, she made her detour, “does what women should never do, travels through her own forest. She allows herself the forbidden ... and pays dearly for it (1981:43-4)” (Ganser, 2009, p. 13). The story of Little Red Riding Hood carries the four places explored in this dissertation regarding freedom of movement for women, the home, walking, nature and traveling and how they are all tied together because when stepping out danger lurks and they carry a normative behaviour and any detour will involve a punishment, meaning it is not their place to be,

As Cixous asserts, the girl’s final punishment suggests the fairy tale’s advocacy of a normative spatial behavior dictated by prevalent gender roles; this is reflected in a didacticism suggesting that girls need to safeguard themselves when they step out of the home. This fairy



tale exists in various pre-Grimmian versions, some of which had Little Red Riding Hood beat the wolf and thus emphasize female agency, intelligence, and action (cf. Zipes' introduction, 1993). In any case, the tale is an early example of a road narrative that familiarizes the protagonist not only with the effects of the patriarchal spatial and symbolic orders on the gendered individual as well as with the resulting limitations of agency, but also, if the tale is re-read from a feminist perspective like Cixous', with the potential pleasures of transgressive mobility. (Ganser, 2009, p. 13).

Thereby, women's movement outside is a transgressive mobility within the existing structures.

One common and interesting fact, and mentioned before with Strayed's example, is the surprise of most women when finding welcoming and niceness in people they encounter. We can see their fear and suspicion fade away while at the same time having to constantly analyse safety and signs of what could and can be wrong. Or analysing afterwards that maybe they were too trusting but in the end most of the time, everything went well, "Experiencing this sort of kindness seems to be the universal story of travel all over the world and I can certainly vouch for it here in the UK" (Downing, 2021, p. 312). How they can get out of difficult or dangerous situations brought to them mostly not by their fault and sometimes all they were trying to do was check into a hotel rather than a radical activity, as it happened for Elspeth Beard many times, from the USA to India, for example. For instance, Beard always had help from several travellers such as: "I don't know what I would have done without Tom and Ewan's help. They waited until I was discharged from Moura, then we rode back to Townsville where there was a BMW shop for spare parts" (2018, p. 97). Dervla Murphy, in 1963 in Yugoslavia, mentions something similar:

Even in the dim light my look of dismay must have been apparent, because she immediately added an invitation to come home with her for the night. As this was within my first hour of entering Slovenia I was astonished; but soon I learnt that such kindness is common form in that region. (Murphy, 1965, p. 3)

What is also very revealing is how the general outcome is positive. The good experiences outnumber the negative ones. Proving, once more, how the two existing realities are so far from each other.

Regarding safety, there are two elements important to mention. Firstly, how dressing as a man was used for women to be safe and to not draw attention. This way, they could get rid of harassment but also were able to do whatever they wished (Serrano, 2014, pp. 62-69).

This demonstrates how safety is male because they would be the ones causing the harm. This “trick”, resourcefulness or act could be in itself one of the main answers for all the questions asked in this dissertation. Beard while travelling on her motorbike by herself, paired with a man she met in India, who was also traveling solo, and continued the travel home together. While traveling with Beard, he gets a different perspective he would never get by traveling alone,

Relieved to be out of India, I was now feeling desperate to get home, particularly with worries about Iran playing constantly on my mind. I also had to readjust to Muslim culture as well as contend with Robert, who was becoming angry and quite upset by the constant unwanted attention I was receiving. ‘If it wasn’t for you, I would never have known what it’s like to travel as a woman,’ he said. (Beard, 2018, p. 250)

Later on, Robert, although starting to understand the differences, perspectives and dangers of traveling for women, still does not immediately understand them as it is possible to grasp from this next example when Beard did not take her helmet in order to hide that she was a woman:

‘Why don’t you take off your helmet?’ said Robert.

‘I can’t,’ I whispered. ‘They all think I’m a bloke and I think it’s best left that way.’

The truckers were friendly and helpful, standing back and not engaging, watching us rather than imposing themselves. A few of them smiled or gave us curious looks, which reassured me that they didn’t regard us as threats. But I didn’t want to find out if their attitudes changed when they realized I was a woman. They all carried rifles openly and I had no doubt that most of them also had several other weapons tucked under their belts. Not knowing if they were innocent truckers, refugees, bandits or mujahideen, I thought it safest not to take any chances. ‘We’ve got to get out of here quickly,’ I whispered to Robert, ‘before they realize I’m a woman.’ (Beard, 2018, p. 253)

If we do not get access to the different point a view, this knowledge not only fades away as the real experiences of women go unnoticed and nothing changes.

At the same time, being a woman is perceived as not dangerous as the following example demonstrates, Devrla Murphy was able to pass through a border with a gun because the woman in the office saw her as harmless because she was a woman,

But alarm was unnecessary. The formidable female took one quick look at my intricately laden bicycle, my knapsack with its protruding loaf of bread and my scruffy self. Then she

burst into good-humoured laughter – of which one would not have believed her capable – slapped me on the back and waved me towards the frontier. It was 6.15 p.m. when I passed under the railway bridge with ‘ Jugoslavija ’ painted across it in huge letters. (Murphy, 1965, p. 2)

This can also be seen as an advantage for women while travelling, they are able to enter other worlds, to have more help and to share more experiences as Friedman addresses,

Although there are specific risks inherent in traveling as a female-identified person, there are also distinct advantages. Eaves, Spalding, and Griest all noted that women have a unique access afforded by the very fact that they’re generally not considered a threat. Women are more often invited into homes of others, more likely to be looked after by protective strangers, often other women. This “makes up for the physical risks of constantly being on display or questioned,” says Faith Adiele, author of 2004’s *Meeting Faith: The Forest Journals of a Black Buddhist Nun*. (Friedman, 2018, n.d.)

Secondly, that for traveling solo women there are numerous websites, blogs and books to help them, especially with tips on safety and what to do on certain situations. And this material turns out to be extremely important because it shows how not universal guide travel books written by men are. If, for instance, a travel guide does not mention where to find hygienic female products, can it be considered universal for travellers? Or does it fall in a category where it is considered universal and what differs, or lacks, is outsourced by women because it is considered a niche? Or is it the fear of men touching such themes? Also, if when searching online the words “women solo travel”, the results are mainly regarding how to be safe and “solo travel” gives more results towards women than men or general travel, it shows the problems still exists regarding women travelling solo and the safety/danger paradigm attached that was addressed throughout this dissertation.

The most important aspect to retain from women’s reports of traveling is how good it was for them. There is no report of regretting or of doing them any wrong (Strayed, 2012; Davidson, 2014; Downing, 2021; Boland, 2020; Wills, 2021). Maybe it created a detachment from reality of going back home (Beard, 2018), but never a wish of not having done it. And the fear-imposed tropes try to keep women away from all the freedom finding and becoming more independent, more critical of their surroundings and treatment of women. Women who find such freedom and critical thinking, that see the world from their own eyes tend to find it difficult to accommodate to traditional ways of thinking and to be constricted again. And for a society that continues to insist in traditional roles, this is not desirable. Maybe it is a form of

light or dissimulated gaslighting, but it is being done nonetheless. As Serrano observes, women who travelled in the 19<sup>th</sup> and first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were transgressors for leaving and for wearing masculine clothes because it represented a threat to the social structure, since pants were seen as a symbol of power and of the male domination of society (2019, p. 67). That perception of women being transgressors remains, even with the changes in societies,

Most women, even the ones who do not like to be alone and spend alone time, prefer to travel alone. They swear by it, as Kristin Addis notes on her travel blog, *Be My Travel Muse*. Addis “hates to be alone” yet that is how she likes to travel because it gives her freedom “Traveling alone is the only way to truly roam free.”<sup>20</sup> As she further explains,

You always have to make concessions when you travel with others. Sometimes, you have to do things you don’t feel like doing. But me? I do what I want, when I want, wherever I want. I don’t plan a thing, and nobody is annoyed by my flighty and impulsive nature. If I want to spend all day walking around a temple snapping photos, nobody is bothered. If I feel like laying in bed reading blogs and downloading documentaries (nerd alert!) all day, nobody is bored with me. (Addis, 2013, n.d.)

Addis also notes that travelling alone does not mean to be alone, there are more possibilities of getting to know other people,

Solo travel is amazing. And really, unless I truly want and seek out solitude, I never am alone. I always have a group. I never feel left out. Sometimes, being alone forces you to reach out to people you might not otherwise have ever met. So don’t fear traveling alone. It’s the best high there is. (Addis, 2013, n.d.)

Interestingly, many women travel writers write that they were lucky that nothing bad or big ever happen to them. Meaning, they escaped what had great chances of happening (or were told so). Rosita Boland considers herself to be lucky for that,

In all that time, I have been very fortunate. I have never once, while elsewhere, been physically or sexually assaulted, robbed or seriously ill. Those are incredibly lucky odds for all the miles beneath my feet, and I feel charmed to have had this record. It’s not that nothing unpleasant or potentially serious ever happened along the way, though. (Boland, 2020, p. 113)

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<sup>20</sup> <https://www.bemytravelmuse.com/travel-alone/>  
<https://www.bemytravelmuse.com/benefits-solo-female-travel/>

Nonetheless, the night-time seems to be forbidden for women travelling solo. Wills was told not to walk at night, but did it anyway,

A few of the Israelis I met in Jerusalem expressed surprise that I was going into Palestine at all, let alone by myself and as a woman. ‘Just don’t do it at night,’ cautioned one waiter ominously. So obviously it was pitch black by the time I attempted the journey. (Wills, 2021, p. 31)

And Constança Porém, a nineteen-year-old solo traveller, that explains that one of the limitations of traveling alone is that she does not want to go out at night.<sup>21</sup> Not going out alone at night is a form of trying to be safe for solo travelling women which makes them maybe lose a great part of the places they visit.

Regarding being told what not to do, Taran N. Khan, author of the book *Shadow City: A Woman Walks Kabul*, is also a way of getting to know a place better and to trust her own instincts,

I have a complicated relationship with walking. This has a lot to do, I suspect, with having grown up in Aligarh, a city in northern India, where walking on the streets came with intense male scrutiny, and the sense of being in a proscribed space. As a woman stepping out into its thoroughfares, I needed a reason to place my body on the street. (...) Being told not to walk was another way in which Kabul felt familiar. To map the city, I drew on the same knowledge and intuition that had helped me navigate the streets of my home town. (Khan, 2019, n.a.)

If the author had not walked through the city, such book and perspective would not have been known.

If we had not have had access to Beard's story, would we know that in India there are peepholes in the bedrooms? (2018, p. 205) This is something that is heard of, but not a commonality because it is something heard off and usually only by women, therefore it is relegated. It happens again, this time accompanied by Robert who tells her she is paranoid, but her instinct informs her, and we find out she was right. And this instinct is not a difference of who is better than the other, nor who has more or less experience than the other, it is simply an experience he could not have due to his gender and the perception and behaviours displayed towards it.

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<sup>21</sup> <https://www.nit.pt/fora-de-casa/viagens/constanca-porem-portuguesa-que-visitou-8-paises-num-mes-de-mochila-costas>

Regarding expectations of how women should feel regarding fear and such experiences, especially while travelling, regarding the way she neutralizes threats, Blair Braverman was told she was “unemotional” as a form of criticism, “Readers were confused because they didn’t know what I was feeling, what they were supposed to be feeling.”<sup>22</sup> It seems people do not know how to respond to women that do not show that they are afraid or that respond differently to it, “What did people want me to do, write, “I felt scared”? “I felt happy”? I honestly had no idea how to address that complaint. There’s power in showing feelings, but I also think, in social situations, there’s power in not showing them.” This power is also a form of controlling the storytelling and, therefore, how to deal with the situations Braverman was exposed to. As the interviewer, Ariel Lewiton, and Braverman come to the conclusion, a woman that is not possible to predict becomes dangerous in the eyes of others:

Guernica: That criticism also seems to speak to what we expect from female first person narrators. They’re supposed to have feelings and work through those feelings on the page.

Blair Braverman: Yes, definitely. It’s uncomfortable for people to meet a woman they can’t parse.

Guernica: Whereas a man they can’t parse is stoic and intriguingly mysterious.

Blair Braverman: Yes! And a woman is dangerous. If you can’t predict a woman’s behavior, if you don’t know—or think you know—exactly what she’s thinking, then she’s a danger. (Lewiton, 2017, n.d.)

Along with *Strayed*, Robyn Davidson’s travel is one that presents a very well-rounded transformation, which the author describes throughout. There was a stage in which she “was so fit” that she “was virtually immune to cold and pain.” Her “threshold had reached absurd heights,” and she “was now capable of cut herself or scrape a great wedge of flesh out and just murmur ‘oops’ and promptly forget about it.” This new strength and capability gave her the possibility of focusing on what she was doing (2014, p. 195). Davidson also gained “an awareness and an understanding of the earth” as she learned to depend upon it and this also gave her a sense of freedom: “The openness and emptiness which had at first threatened me were now a comfort which allowed my sense of freedom and joyful aimlessness to grow” (2014, p. 196). Davidson approaches how fear changes. Davidson’s fear changed due to her

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<sup>22</sup> <https://www.guernicamag.com/blair-braverman-natural-and-unnatural-violence/>

travel, due to her feat. Without it she would never get to know her own limits and to know this side of her instead of the limits imposed on her from society or others. “And my fear had a different quality now too. It was direct and useful. It did not incapacitate me or interfere with my competence. It was the natural, healthy fear one needs for survival” (Davidson, p. 199).

Regarding the idea of exceptionality, which Davidson wanted to fight, Susan Bassnett presents it as a form of differentiation of women,

One consistent line through discussions of women travellers is the notion that they were somehow exceptional. The theory of the exceptional woman who is somehow different from other women and therefore empowered to perform feats no normal woman would be capable of carrying out has been one of the classic ways of marginalising women’s achievements. (Bassnett, 2002, p. 228)

This exceptionality, addressed in the previous chapter and referred to in this quote, is a way of creating divisiveness among women, the ones that are empowered and able of exceptional feats and the ones who cannot or are not able to (for various reasons, or even do not wish to). Whereas for men such capacities are to be expected, to be part of their selves, for women they are an anomaly, almost as the places preserved for goddesses and mother nature.

In the essay “If I Were a Man” Rebecca Solnit states that “Perhaps as a girl, I was liberated by expectations that I’d be some variation on a failure. I could rebel by succeeding, while a lot of white middle-class men of my era seemed to rebel by failing, because the expectations had been set so very high for them” (2017, para. 4). By going against the projected ideas of what women can do they are succeeding because they were told by others that it would be a failure. Hence, bravery here would be the breaking of what is set as normal and also why for so many women they are doing something normal, just not what others set for them, but normal for the women who followed through. The normal for men in travel and travel writing is to be their domain and whatever they do will also be a success because it is their normal, what they build as the pattern to follow. Therefore, and although a contradiction, women by travelling and writing about their travels are failing, not to themselves, but regarding the expectations set for them and because, as long as travel writing continues to be seen as male it will not accept fully women’s accounts, they will be seen as a deviation.

These journeys, travels, made these women what they have become, helped them through hard times, let them get to know themselves, as Addis states, “Solo traveling made

me the braver, more confident, smarter woman I am today. I would not be who I am without having seen the Milky Way on the other side of the world, alone and enchanted” (2013, n.d.).

If women are not read or given the opportunity to be read, they will not be given the opportunity to tell their story, their experience, or even to inspire someone to go, to change, to be brave to face their own fears, or the fears brought on them by others. Certainly, there are reasons to be afraid, as we discussed and presented throughout the dissertation, but they should not be the reason why women should not continue or start to travel, and the women presented throughout showed that. Women need to be able to be and show who they are, what they are capable of and not what is expected of them and are said to be.



## Conclusion

Women's freedom of movement while traveling is dependent on what freedom is conceived for them, the dangers towards them and their own willingness to travel and move in spite of this. The three questions posed as the basis of this dissertation not only expose what women experience but are also an answer to them, by providing the ideals and prejudices behind them in societies and cultures. By asking if a woman is not afraid of traveling or of being alone, people are assuming that there is something abnormal about women being alone and present the awareness and knowledge that there might be danger attached. In fact, the idea is that it is dangerous for women to be alone, and this is the answer in itself, not only because women and men face the same fears and dangers, but women carry the sexualised fear, the risk of sexual violence and rape. To reduce being alone to this dehumanises women and takes control out of their hands, constructs an image that is continually perpetuated, that women are defenceless beings that need protection (of a male) (DeRoche, 2017). Also the victim blaming that comes with it is common knowledge that there is something dangerous for solo women, then, if something happens, it is their fault. The weight of fear towards women is also seen almost as a counterpart or a synonym of being a woman, of being female. If women are not afraid, there is something wrong with them, and this is again in itself an answer to the question and also the acceptance that someone will attack women, therefore is a reason for them to be afraid. And, if nothing happens, they were just lucky. Bravery is the response to women that venture themselves and follow their will and wanderlust, even when they do not carry a feeling of fear or question themselves about the space they occupy. In fact, one of the answers to fight for their place in the streets is in traveling solo and in publishing their traveling accounts which is exactly take space, as Lauren Elkin puts it, setting their own terms.

In society, women being and traveling alone is badly received or perceived due to many common prejudiced ideals that have been present for millennia and have adapted throughout the years. One of them is how walking alone is perceived for women; in the streets is seen as being a prostitute, hence the term "women of the streets", in nature, as another animal to be preyed upon and hunted, lacking the protection of the female figure of Mother Nature. According to Rebecca Solnit, women walking is also construed as performance rather than transport, and this implies that they walk not to see but to be seen for a male audience, thus asking for whatever attention they receive (Solnit, 2017).

As for what means being a woman and specially while on the public eye, being a woman is to be attentive, to live in a constant alert, to anticipate problems, to be relaxed, but always, in a state of alert (Ochoa, 2020, p. 88). When walking in the streets is such a strenuous activity for women regarding their freedom of movement due to harassment and societal assumptions and rules, then, to travel can be even harder. Although we have seen that even though women carry all these with them and become much more aware and sensitive to everything that surrounds them (Hart, 2018), they do it and find it to be some of the best experiences they had and will not stop travelling. This reality, then, is confronted once again with the other that culture and society create when it comes to writing and publishing these accounts. Women's travel writing has always been considered lesser and to not be true travel writing mainly because this is a male domain genre in which it is believed that it belongs only to men. Therefore, by comparing female and male travel writing characteristics through its criticism, such as veracity, the main characteristics being too personal (for women) and direct and observational (for men). Due to the "course of Odysseus" (Serrano, 2019), the image of women staying at home (Penelope) waiting for men who went to travel came into place and "The idea of travel writing as a purely male domain, where women were noteworthy exceptions, persists today," (Bird, 2015). But Mills highlights that although appealing, there are "obvious problems" with this account because "although there are taboos on women writing, which have been reinforced by women's relative lack of education and for negative judgements on individual women authors, women have nevertheless continued to write" (Mills, 1991).

Notwithstanding, what is possible to assert from the marginalization of women's travel writing accounts by comparing them to men and establishing that travel writing is a male genre is that the main problem is perception and reception because a woman "cannot control how her work is read by an audience with essentialist notions of gender" (Bird, 2015), and all due to binary and social determinism (speaking, 2017). As Carrie speaking noted, the problem regarding women's travel writing is not in the way they write but in the systemic sexism. And, along these lines, Sara Mills also states that the main difference is in the way they are judged and processed. Women's writing is considered to be different because within the lack of freedom imposed by gender, that same gender leads to providing other shapes of freedom within the lack of it (Bassnett, 2002). Also, regarding marginalization, as Strayed observes, "Men's stories are seen as universal, women's as particular. What women are up against is the battle to not be marginalized" (Friedman, 2018).

Regarding to women being in Nature, and later publishing and having their stories told, as in films, for example, one of the main conclusions reached is that there is a problem which is that women are not liked (Friedman, 2018), raising the question of likeability as a factor that prevails, “These women violate our expectations of how a woman should behave in the wilderness” (Friedman, 2018). By deviating from these expectations and also from likeability, women are punished with indifference and diminishment. If, on top of that, men do not read women and women are instilled with patriarchal beliefs, the tendency is to set aside women’s works right from the start and to rely on assumptions, even when female and male works may be very similar. A great example of the presence of genderized marginalization and attributing differences to create a separation is author Jan Morris, who at the beginning of her career was James Morris and many, knowing of her transition from male to female, began asserting that it affected her writing. Susan Bassett (2002) disproves this by analysing the author’s writing but still, it creates divisiveness. And it is the knowledge of womanhood that created it, once again proving that what is male can prevail differently in this genre just as the trick of wearing males’ clothes or passing as a men helped women to travel in safer ways in order to get rid of harassment in certain places since the beginning of travel.

The restriction of women and their being judged by likeability also comes from how, when they travel, it is not possible to control them as much, and how, when they write what they feel they control their lives, this creates fear for women are therefore not what is expected of them (Braverman, 2017). A woman without fear is not controllable in the current existing forms, a woman that is not possible to predict becomes dangerous in the eyes of others. What we find out as well is that women are not liked when they are independent. For doing what is male they are considered transgressors.

One of the solutions is to create awareness, to continue to travel and to push for publicity to change in order to present equal number of female and male authors. The presence of different views and perspectives also leads to the opening of the world and to the existing but hidden ones.

speaking provides another solution, which would be to open travel writing to the diversity of reasons why people travel and not the idea of a proper way of traveling,

Regarding freedom of movement “It is only in becoming aware of the invisible boundaries of the city that we can challenge them.” And by being flaneuses, women change the way they move through space and intervene in the organisation of space itself (Elkin,

2017) as well as by claiming the right to disturb the peace, “to observe (or not observe), to occupy (or not occupy) and to organise (or disorganise) space on our own terms” (Elkin, 2017, p. 287). And also, the ones who have the power to change need to experience these situations in order to understand what needs to be changed (Perez, 2020).

Women in the media is an important analysis with the freedom of movement of women traveling solo because the way women’s bodies are perceived and treated affects such freedom, the visual and digital shape of photography as well and the prejudices that they carry for millennia are another form of control and of “putting women in their place” which is once again inside, at home. In the case of media, it is also about dictating what their body serves for, what they can or cannot do with it and affects their image as people, how they go outside in the world, in their jobs and free time. Regarding imagery attached to women, how women are to be looked at by others, it also means that to be or to exist in its own is to be looked at but to never look inwards, only on the surface. If by going outside women are perceived as showing themselves (Solnit, 2014), then they face more constrictions when it is not their intention.

To venture into the wild by choice, on their own and for whatever reason and independently, is what sets the difference between being liked or not. Jamie Bolker (2019) presents one of the main reasons why female travel narratives are not as interesting for publishers, audiences, media, is the fact they do not fall in the common narrative of women as “victims and under the power and threat of others”. And, once again, traveling for no specific reason or to get to know themselves, to explore who they are and what they are capable of doing, can present itself as dangerous to the traditional life forms in which we live in, mainly for women. Bolker also mentions how being courageous can have more than one form, bring multitude rather than singularity to women’s stories as well as their lives, which in this genre are also of utmost importance.

Being able to show vulnerability is an important part of travel writing storytelling, especially for women. We have seen so far that for women in this genre it seems that they are always in the wrong, that being too personal, showing too much of the self, the confessional, the style more towards the memoir than the observer, and writing about feelings and being raw plays against them and is said to not belong to the genre. But, as Kathy Karlo (2018) argues, the power of people relating to the story is something to uphold. And it is usually what lacks within history in general, as well as among women, because the social atmosphere

and culture is usually told by the male narrative, as asserted before regarding film. Hence, sharing the story creates the capability of relating to experiences and to the plurality of lives instead of the binary view put towards women and other marginalised groups.

As for visibility this is a form of empowerment and a solution, as well. Without visibility, prejudices will continue to live on, and exclusion will linger. Without representation these lives will continue on the margin, not permeating the main route. According to Shivya Nath (Davis, 2020), visual representations are important in order to broaden the idea of what a traveller looks like.

The concept of bravery is one that is very mutant because, regarding women's bravery of traveling alone, it is defined against what is imposed on them, the dangers, the restrictions, the violence towards them (mainly the sexualised one) that construes bravery, which is different from men's. Questioning if a woman or anyone is not afraid leads them to question themselves. Plants the seed of doubt in someone who does not need it. Because one thing is to ask if they are ready, if they took measures and if they planed everything; another is to question the person and the situation.

Therefore, are women brave to do all of this? Yes, they are. As it is possible to see, this is a reality present in the everyday life. But we should not put women in the position of being brave to step outside of their homes or to travel alone or just for the sake of being alone. This braveness proofs the accepted normality of violence against women and all the social prejudices and considerations about women attached to it. Mainly, that it is not their place to do it in the first place. If there is bravery it is theirs and only theirs to define it because it depends on what they are afraid of, of what they face and it is very personal. And not because of what others impose and think it should be.

These questions, posed by either women or men, are in itself the answers. They know that there is a preconceived idea that women alone are somehow wrong and seeing them in this position brings these questions to mind. As Davidson points out,

It would seem that the combination of elements — woman, desert, camels, aloneness — hit some soft spot in this era's passionless, heartless, aching psyche. (...) The reaction was totally unexpected and it was very, very weird. I was now public property. I was now a feminist symbol. I was now an object of ridicule for small-minded sexists, and I was a crazy, irresponsible adventurer (though not as crazy as I would have been had I failed). But worse than all that, I was now a mythical being who had done something courageous and outside the

possibilities that ordinary people could hope for. And that was the antithesis of what I wanted to share. That anyone could do anything. If I could bumble my way across a desert, then anyone could do anything. (Davidson, 2014, p. 242)

Davidson's journey should prove that anyone can do anything they set their minds on, and that she should not feel restricted just because she is a woman or the way women are viewed, especially in this case, when we are in nature.

Women cannot explore nature because they are nature, nature is female and the social and cultural idea of it is controlled by male conceptualization, therefore nature being controlled by men means they are the ones who create the rules, much as it is and has been seen through history. Women represent a home much the same way nature represents a home. The difference lies in space and scale which is determined by male ideals, so, the outside world that should be female, is a forbidden place for women, where they face dangers when alone, thus always needing protection. Although we also know that even at home they face potential domestic violence, the relationship of women and nature forged by men explains it also: women are the force, the life, the matter, but are controlled by men. Female nature and women in nature end up being contradictory concepts. But, as Clarissa Pinkola Éstes explains, women will never be free if they do not do it: "Go out in the woods, go out. If you don't go out in the woods, nothing will ever happen and your life will never begin" (Éstes, 1992, p. 502).

Being able to express their way, their adventure, as they are and not as they are seen or portrayed as going against the prejudices created and the myths. The way that a story creates identification with the other and shows what is out there.

It is possible to assert that nature and women suffered the same process of taming, with mankind using nature at his will and turning women into homely beings, and that they were stripped of nature and of their own (interior) nature.

Women are lacking in the general picture of travel narratives, travel books published, or are they? Maybe they are not, what is lacking, as seen throughout this dissertation, is the lack of support, lack of open-mindedness, the continuous binary view towards travel and highly genderized narratives of what can be done and how to do it and of all the preconcept ideas of what women feel and do. From this grows the importance of who gets to tell the story. As it often happens, women's stories are told by men. We still picture a man even when the word used is "human". When travel guidebooks are written by men and are said to be for

everyone, how can it be so if they do not mention, for instance, how to deal with menstruation while traveling and if they do not carry (and when they do, they do not do so on the same level and can be attached to marginalised groups) the fear of rape? Also, how does freedom of movement affect women's wanderlust? Although many travel nonetheless, how is the reality imposed on them to restrict them affecting how much more they could do?

In conclusion, it is possible to assert, from the definitions provided in this dissertation, that freedom is related to the lack of constrictions, to being able to do what one wants or desires without the interference of others, therefore, according to these concepts and to societies' impositions, women do not have freedom of movement. At the same time, women do have freedom of movement because they push through and travel nonetheless, as they have for centuries, as seen by the travel accounts published and by the many accounts in blogs and Instagram pages that can be found online. In fact, it seems to be here that women get the freedom to share when not able to publish, even though Internet can be another place to restrict them, especially regarding their bodies.

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# Appendix A

Figure A1

Travel Writing Section Page 2 from Book Depository from September 2021 with five female authors out of thirty suggestions.

The screenshot shows the 'All Travel Writing' section of the Book Depository website. The page displays a grid of 30 book covers, each with its title, author, price, and an 'Add to basket' button. The authors listed are: Robert Hughes, Bill Bryson, Alastair Bonnett, Deborah Rodriguez, Robert Macfarlane, Sam Heughan, Andrew Thomson, Robert Macfarlane, Michael Booth, Daniella Moyles, George Bradshaw, David Lebovitz, Ted Simon, Joe Simpson, Peter Mayle, Martin Gayford, Marco Polo, Bill Bryson, Douglas Adams, Victoria Finlay, Ernesto Che Guevara, Peter Matthiessen, Heinrich Harrer, Adrianand Finn, Paul Carter, Patrick Leigh Fermor, Louise Lee, Sarah Turnbull, and Sarah Turnbull. The page also features a search bar, navigation links, and a sidebar with filters for keyword, price range, availability, language, and format.



Figure A2

Travel Writing Section Page 2 from Book Depository from June 2022 with five female authors out of thirty suggestions.

The screenshot shows the 'All Travel Writing - Page 2' section of the Book Depository website. The page features a grid of 30 book covers, each with its title, author, and price. The books are arranged in 6 rows and 5 columns. The authors listed are: Bruce Chatwin, Dervla Murphy, Bill Bryson, Helen Russell, Robert Hughes, Bill Bryson, Deborah Rodriguez, Bill Bryson, Lonely Planet, W.G. Sebald, Andrew Thomson, Alfred Lansing, George Bradshaw, Robert Macfarlane, Alastair Bonnett, Ted Simon, David Lebovitz, Victoria Finlay, Peter Mayle, Joe Simpson, Douglas Adams, Marco Polo, Bill Bryson, Daniella Moyles, Peter Matthiessen, and Paul Carter. The page includes a search bar at the top, a navigation menu on the left, and a footer with system icons and a date of 10/06/2022.

Figure A3

All Classic Travel Writing Section Page 1 from Book Depository from June 2022 with two female authors out of thirty suggestions.

The screenshot shows the 'All Classic Travel Writing' section on the Book Depository website. The page features a grid of 30 book covers, each with its title, author, and price. A sidebar on the left provides filtering options, and the top navigation bar includes the Book Depository logo, search bar, and account links.

**Book Depository**  
 Search for books by keyword / title / author / ISBN  
 Shop by category | Bestsellers | Coming Soon | New Releases | English | € EUR | 0.00 €

**All Classic Travel Writing**  
 Showing 1 to 30 of 4,466 results

**Filter your search**  
 Keyword:   
 Price range: All  
 Availability: All  
 Language: All  
 Format: All  
 Refine results

Book Title	Author	Price
Into the Wild	Jon Krakauer	9.38 €
Into the Wild	Jon Krakauer	8.92 €
Down and Out in Paris and London	George Orwell	11.41 €
Zen and the Art of Motorcycle	Robert Pirsig	10.94 €
Bradshaw's Continental Railway Guide (full)		27.39 €
The Songlines	Bruce Chatwin	12.36 €
Bradshaw's Handbook	George Bradshaw	14.61 €
Underland	Robert Macfarlane	13.38 €
Jupiter's Travels	Ted Simon	12.24 €
The Narrow Road to the Deep North and Other	Matsuo Basho	9.45 €
A Year in Provence	Peter Mayle	11.85 €
The Travels	Marco Polo	12.20 €
As I Walked Out One Midsummer Morning	Laurie Lee	11.74 €
The Innocents Abroad	Mark Twain	5.54 €
Travels with Charley	Mr John Steinbeck	11.80 €
Paris Letters	Janice Macleod	14.72 €
The Broken Road	Patrick Leigh Fermor	12.42 €
The Story of San Michele	Axel Munthe	11.20 €
A Short Walk in the Hindu Kush	Eric Newby	12.18 €
Skyfaring	Mark Vanhoenacker	12.19 €
Deep South	Paul Theroux	12.74 €
The Worst Journey in the World	Apsley Cherry-Garrard	16.35 €
The Voyage of the Beagle	Charles Darwin	6.44 €
Down and Out in Paris and London	George Orwell	9.83 €
The Travels of Ibn Battutah	Ibn Battutah	10.93 €
Death in the Afternoon	Ernest Hemingway	12.12 €
Bitter Lemons of Cyprus	Lawrence Durrell	9.75 €
Ibn Fadlan and the Land of Darkness	Ibn Fadlan	14.64 €
On the Way Home	Laura Ingalls Wilder	8.33 €
A Time of Gifts	Patrick Leigh Fermor	17.36 €

Figure A4

All Expeditions Section Page 1 from Book Depository from June 2022 with four female authors out of thirty suggestions.

The screenshot shows the 'All Expeditions' section on the Book Depository website. The page features a grid of 30 book covers, each with its title, author, and price. The books are arranged in a 6x5 grid. The authors listed are: Jon Krakauer, Alfred Lansing, Jon Krakauer, Simon Reeve, Patrick Leigh Fermor, Elspeth Beard, Aspley Cherry-Garrard, Maurice Herzog, Felicity Cloake, Barry Lopez, Edmund de Waal, Douglas Preston, Lauren Elkin, David Grann, Bernal Diaz Del Castillo, Margot Morrell, Huw Lewis-Jones, Alfred Russel Wallace, Graham Robb, Levison Wood, Lailur Erickson, Simon Reeve, Stephen Bown, Peter FitzSimons, Wade Davis, Dr. David M. Wilson, Mike Stroud, David Barrie, Ernest Shackleton, and Christiane Ritter. The page includes a search bar, navigation links, and a sidebar with filters for keyword, price range, availability, language, and format.

Figure A5

All Travel Writing Page 1 from Penguin Random House from June 2022 with eleven female authors out of forty suggestions.

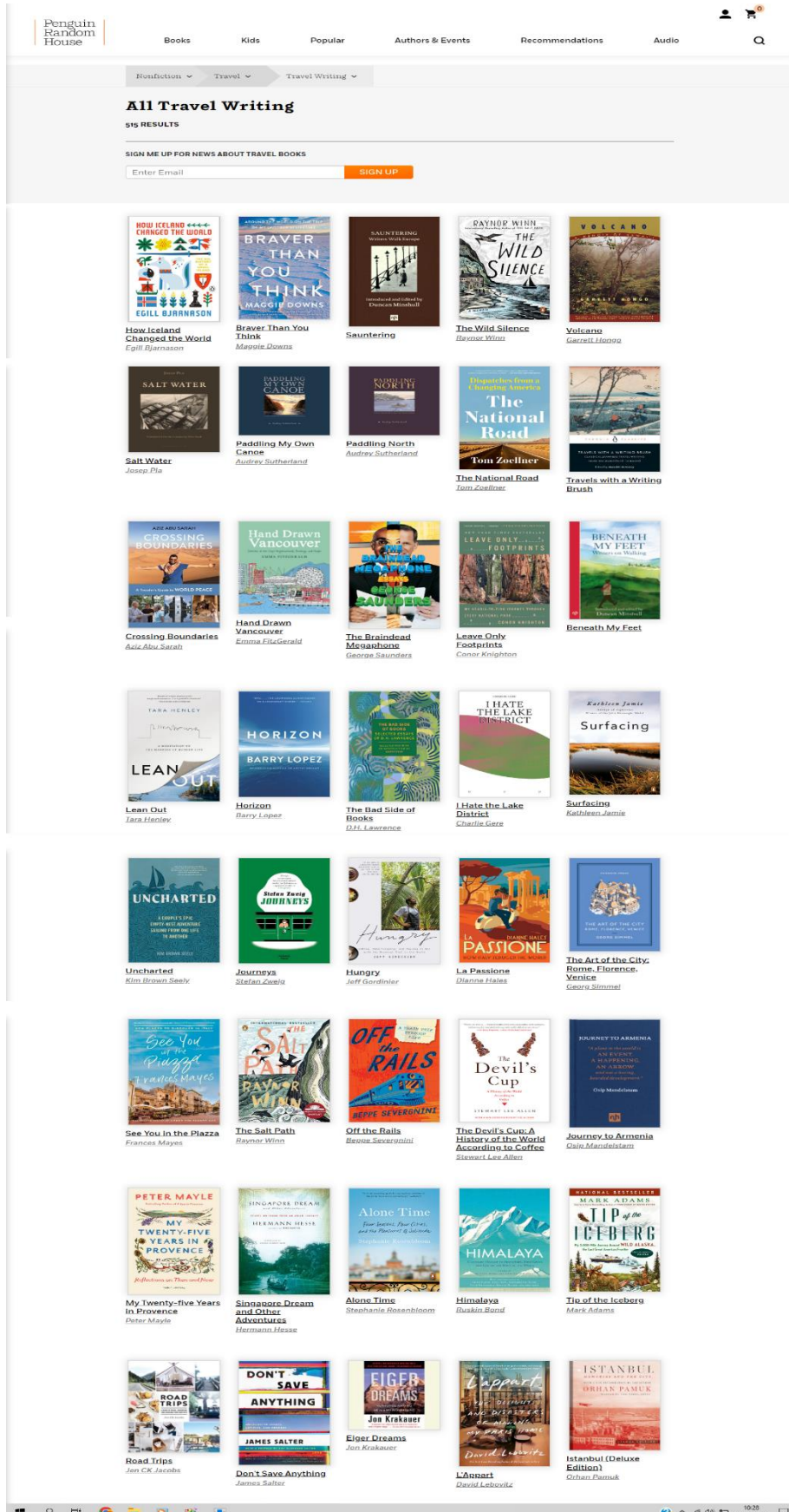


Figure A6

Travel Writing Section Page 1 from Wook from June 2022 with two female authors out of thirty-nine suggestions.

The screenshot displays a search results page on the Wook website for the category 'LITERATURA / LITERATURA DE VIAGEM'. The page features a grid of 42 book listings. Each listing includes a book cover, the title, author, a star rating, the current price (marked with a 10% discount), and the original price. The books are organized into 13 rows and 4 columns. The last row contains only 3 books. The books listed include titles such as 'As Verdades Colinas de África', 'Um Diário Russo', 'As Praias de Portugal', 'Diários de Viagem', 'Anatomia da Erância', 'O Africano da Grenade', 'CADERNOS de VIAGEM', 'Viagem a Portugal', 'Viagem a Portugal Edição Especial', 'Deus-Deus de Alexandra Lucas Castro', 'Grande Viagem pelo Império', 'Viagem a Portugal', 'A Mentanha Viva', 'O Odeur da Índia', 'Dentro do Segredo', 'O Leopardo-das-Neves', 'História Trágico-Marítima', 'Últimas notícias do sul', 'As Lutas do peixe etangado', 'O Caminho Imperfeito', 'O Grande Bazar Ferroviário', 'Breveário Mediterrânico', 'Roma - Exercícios de reconhecimento', 'Crônicas Italianas', 'Itália - Práticas de viagem', 'Viagens com o Charley', 'A Arte da Viagem', 'Teoria da Viagem', 'Anelas Brancas', 'Vaga para Pessoas que não Esto pa...', 'Crônicas de Uma Pequena Ilha', 'Atlas de Jorge Luis Borges', 'Curtas Paragens', 'Banhos de Caldas e Águas Minerais', 'Viagens de Marco Polo', 'Sul Profundo', 'A Pantera das Neves', and 'Sinal de GPS Perdido'. The authors mentioned in the text are highlighted in the original image.