

»Where does the journey go to?« A birthday gift for Johanna Rolshoven 2019

Where does the journey go to? Wohin geht die Reise?

Prologue | Prolog

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Philosophy is not a substance, but an intensity, which has the capacity to suddenly pervade every subject matter: arts, religion, economy, poetics, craving, love, even boredom; it is more of a thing like wind, clouds, or storm. Like these, it creates, shakes, transforms, and destroys the place of its becoming, yet from where it vanishes in an equally unpredictable way.

Giorgio Agamben (2006)

Let us replace “philosophy” in this remark by Giorgio Agamben with “cultural anthropology”: then we are in the subject area and in the self-conception of the person to be celebrated: Johanna Rolshoven. Poaching in all matters of life and across an entire academic career is part of the flavour. Paradoxically, skills for the complex matters of living and thinking cannot be accumulated in other ways.

The collection of contributions in the reader’s hand (or on the screen) are gifts for a round birthday. For decades, she has been holding out on her thirtieth birthday, but she has now become aware that mature age has its advantages. We secretly collected the contributions until her actual birthday on 12 July 2019, and we digitally gift-wrapped them to hide them from the swarms of search engines. We are particularly pleased with their diversity. They essentially reflect what has made us Johanna’s companions: the non-tribal academy, a steady going on with a pinch of charisma and a lot of inspiration.

A website as a birthday gift is a sign of the times and a symptom of the disintegration of subject areas in the age of numerically transformed academic culture. Admittedly, it is difficult to express affection among thoughtful and observing people through footnotes that are squeezed between book covers, as in a herbarium. All of the contributors welcomed this comparatively free format, and we sense from the contributions the fragrance of this freedom – not only the freedom to think and to shape thoughts, in word, image, and sound, but also the serenity of being left to one’s own devices, of being able to take the time for reflecting, the time that becomes increasingly scarce in the daily operation of a transforming academia.

Consistently, the contributors to this birthday present do not come from academia alone. The homogeneous appearance of the contributions thanks to our editorial work somewhat obscures the diversity, even though the functional pagination reflects nothing but the order of arrival of the units. Least of all did we try to distribute the multiplicity of approaches and relationships among contributors and their inputs in a barren list. Everyone can discover and enjoy it by browsing. Whoever proceeds in a more investigative way will sense the interchange of role play and registers.

Although this birthday present does not seek to present a corporative, auctorial or authorized list of oeuvres by Johanna, nonetheless for a couple of years she has done this herself on the homepage of the department. This indicates a kind of openness without a need or desire for guarding against the future or for all times. The jetty *Molo Audace* (pre-fascist name: *Molo San Carlo*) in Trieste, which illustrated the main page of the website during its construction, is a symbolically open structure: would it be equipped with guard rails, not only would the view of the horizons of the sea be obstructed, but vessels would also be unable to berth or to be unloaded. Where nothing arrives, nothing can leave, and no imagination of a horizon, the most marked phenomenon of the sea, can take shape. Whoever dislikes swimming sets his gaze in motion and walks from the end of the jetty back to the city, into the sheath of bourgeois life.

Travelling ?

The transformation of academia has led us to the term *travelling*, with a question mark on its destination. Our question “Where does the journey go?” was definitely not asked the way trip operators (or academy bureaucrats, art curators, or space engineers) usually ask it, who first of all want to know on behalf of their clients what the destination of the trip is, and who, secondly, would not continue to offer any destination without the label “highly recommended”. Any destination that is understood as a terminus only serves for funeral services or plane disasters, which are rather unedifying. This question asks not so much about the arrival, nor really even the way as a goal, but the motives for setting out, for finding directions, for asking the right question – the practice that represents the very core of the arts and humanities. Johanna rejects the idea that “knowledge” can be gathered in plastic bags (soon to be banned, anyway) and collected in knowledge storehouses, like some kind of Scrooge McDuck money bin. Nothing would be deadlier than science conceived in such a way. If so, we would prefer to dabble in eternity, as Lea Haller (2019, on this website) proposes.

Many contributors have chosen to figuratively take up the topic of travelling and load their individual questions onto the vehicle; some take it literally by fracturing their literal approach, so that the texts are not to be misunderstood as tour guides; a few have, not surprisingly, become desperate with the topic.

In Italo Calvino’s collage work Invisible Cities (1972), travelling is a matter that materializes in speculation beyond naive descriptive grasp. In Calvino’s book, the instance Kublai Khan asks globetrotter Marco Polo, “Is your trip happening in the past?” – he continues by seamlessly asking, “Do you travel in order to recover your future?” Without doubt, this travelling is not a booked trip to nature monuments or the ruins of Antiquity. This is speculation in its original meaning of mirroring, which makes travelling appear as the constant reflection of finding one’s own directions.

Here, *travelling* means qualified movement in particular. In dealing with the question where movement leads to, we do not use the word *mobility*. Led by everyday conventions, the word *mobility* prematurely guides one toward means of transport. We recall that in the 1970s tourism research was still viewed with mistrust because its researchers were suspected of doing nothing but procuring themselves enjoyable days under palm trees. Notwithstanding, the Tourism Research Committee of the German Folklore Society formed the core of what was to become an incubator of ideas of regimes of mobilities. Note the plural *mobilities*, which has overtaken the discursive field to the extent that we ourselves would have liked to ask “Where do the voyages go to?”.

Retrospectively – and very briefly, in order not to neutralize the prospective question of “Where to” by historicizing – it becomes evident that Johanna was striving toward disclosing the notions of mobility and seeking to consolidate them

in cultural phenomenology and analysis. Roughly simultaneous with her examination of the field, in the 1990s, the *mobility turn* had repercussions, thwarting her work through the activity of a large number of young, male, and career-conscious sociologists free from phenomenological qualms and eager to make mobility themes their own. During the 2000s, she was urged to conceive mobility – like space – as a triad in which the where-to of the *destinations* or *motives* was but one of three moments; the second was *manoeuvrability* or *motility*, the (cultural) capital of movement; and the third *movement* or *emotion* (Rolshoven 2018). Triads, she discovered, keep the wheel of dialectics – and thereby of interpretation – going.

Poaching ?

Some may have been reminded by our remark above that for Johanna poaching was a flavour, and that she soon adopted the concept of “cultural poaching” (*braconnage culturel*) advanced by Michel de Certeau (1984) as a (self-)conscious practice. A follower of Martin Scharfe’s classes, emphatically stressing source criticism, she was legitimized to do so by her accomplishment in discriminating originals from simulations or hallucinations, a skill that is increasingly sought in the advancing numerical techniques of duplication, and in academia as well.

In Italo Calvino’s collage work Invisible Cities (1972), the instance Marco Polo attempts to explain how the past is continuously changing during the voyage, “since the past of a traveller changes according to the itinerary,” an estrangement arises with respect to what the traveller himself is or owns. The foreign and the familiar mirror and cancel each other. How could one express more pictorially what moving cultural analysis represents?

People who embody subject matters and languages have been of more importance to Johanna than any kind of fake correctness. She preferred to fiddle with the revolver of her forester grandmother, to follow the calculation of winemakers and the inebriation of the drinkers, with her own family’s Catalan–Limburgish–Lorrainian origins, with French women thinkers and partisans, with walking by herself or in company in cities, with attention to students and colleagues who are able and willing to reflect. This was alongside her engagement with her own family, which at a certain moment she had almost stopped believing in.

Women !

After having been away from Marburg for some decades, Johanna recognized, with a joyful startle, the “women’s office” in the form of a white resin veneered cupboard in the university department. In a chapter (Rolshoven 2010), she honours its existence, which symbolizes the beginnings of discussions by female students in Marburg with feminism and women’s studies, and at the same time of women’s studies within *Volkskunde* in the very concrete places and spaces of academia. An office occupies space, offering shelter and excluding intruders, and it serves its users with exclusivity. It is beyond question that for Johanna introducing women’s studies in the mid-1980s was never a matter of merely thematically dealing with women – such as “women in . . .” or “women and . . .” – but represented a basic perspective of research and life, a starting block for the fight for their own spaces: all of this was condensed into the women’s office, which had decidedly political dimensions. Critical stance and engagement, the inclusive use of the categories of sex, gender, and gender relations, and also commuting between subject areas and institutions were of central importance for her and her fellow campaigners. In this spirit and with consistent practice, she has met her students and colleagues, whom she has impressed and for whom she served as model of what “travelling thought” can be. The paths of her work, practical life, and engagement appear consistently fluid, process-related, and performative – again and again traced anew.

Thanks !

Thank you, thank you so much to all the contributors, who have given their most precious asset, their lifetime, in the form of time for thought and creation; time, which Kant (2006/1798, §7) saw as “nothing but a subjective condition” and which, by radical subjectivity, has coalesced into this composite work in the space of the World Wide Web.

Without Farhad Khaleghi, we would not have even considered the medium of a website – and without him the project would have failed. Because his name will not appear anywhere else, we thank him here explicitly for his technical support, generosity, and patience with the construction of the website.

Just as parcels pile up on a table for gifts based on the arrival of guests, independently of their body height or hair colour, the contributions have been left in their real-life order. The contributions were typeset by us with respect for the individual typographical and orthographical preferences of the authors. References were standardized to the MHRA style – but otherwise we abstained from a make-believe order that would pretend to a decent life and a certified career.

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Sabine Eggmann, Susanna Kolbe und Justin Winkler, 'Prologue', in *Wohin geht die Reise?*, herausgegeben von Sabine Eggmann, Susanna Kolbe und Justin Winkler (Basel: Akroama, 2019), pp. XI-XVI. <<http://www.geruchderzeit.org>> ISBN 978-3-9525134-0-8