

One-man Canoe: Meandering a Turkish River with Jeremy Seal

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APA: Kocabiyik, O. (2019). One-man Canoe: Meandering a Turkish River with Jeremy Seal. *RumeliDE Dil ve Edebiyat Arařtırmaları Dergisi*, (17), 515-525. DOI: 10.29000/rumelide.657930

Abstract

As a contemporary travel writer and journalist, Jeremy Seal has been travelling and writing for over twenty years with a special enthusiasm for Turkey. His first publication on Turkey was appeared in 1995 with the title of *A Fez of the Heart: Travels Around Turkey in Search of a Hat* (1995), which is a deeply instructive piece of present-day history as well as an entertaining insight into the soul of contemporary Turkey. Later publications of Seal cover *The Sneakebite Survivors' Club: Travels among Serpents* (1999), *The Wreck at Sharpnose Point: A Victorian Mystery* (2002), *Santa: A Life* (2005) and his recent travel book *Meander: East to West Along a Turkish River* (2012). This paper scrutinizes his last non-fiction *Meander* arguing that Seal nourishes his masterpiece both with the elements of travel literature and guidebooks of the touristic fashion. Therefore, he creates a unique form of literature encapsulating the new form of contemporary travel guidebooks. Foremost aim of this paper is to demonstrate Seal's *Meander* as both in the tradition of travel literature and touristic guidebook.

Keywords: Travelogue, British travelling, Jeremy Seal, meander, travel guidebook.

Tek Adam ve Tekne: Jeremy Seal'ın *Meander: East to West along a Turkish River* adlı eserinde seyahat olgusu

Öz

Çağdaş gezi edebiyatı yazarı, gazeteci, turist rehberi olan Jeremy Seal yirmi yıldan fazla bir zamandır Türkiye hakkında yazmaktadır. Yazarın Türkiye tutkusu 1980'li yılların başına dayanmaktadır. Türkiye ile ilgili ilk yayını olan *A Fez of the Heart* (Fes) 1995 yılında yayınlanmış ve Osmanlı'dan Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'ne geçişteki mikro düzlemdeki anekdotlarla önem arz etmektedir. Diğer eserleri arasında *The Sneakebite Survivors' Club* (2002), *Travel Among Serpents* (1999), *The Wreck at Sharpnose Point: A Victorian Mystery* (2002), *Santa: A Life* (2005) yer almaktadır. Bu çalışma ise Seal'ın son yayını olan *Meander: East to West Along a Turkish River* (2012) hakkındadır. Seal'ın bu çalışması hem klasik bir gezi edebiyatı formatında hem de bir tür turist rehberi kitabı özelliğinde ilerlemektedir. Bu çalışmada adı geçen eserin hem klasik gezi edebiyatının dinamiklerinden beslenerek hem de bilgilendirici ve turistik amaçlı oluşuyla üçüncü bir türü ortaya koyduğunu iddia edilmektedir. Üçüncü boyuttaki bu türü Turistik Gezi Kitabı olarak adlandırılabilir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Seyahatname, İngiliz seyahat edebiyatı, Jeremy Seal, turistik gezi kitabı, Menderes nehri.

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Introduction

Travel in its literal meaning is a movement from one place to another in time. Etymologically the word refers to *travail* rooted in Latin *tripallium* which means “very hard work.” In a descriptive and perspective definition of the term by Sir Francis Bacon in his essay “Of Travaile,” travel is defined in this way:

Travaile, in the younger Sort, is a Part of Education; In the Elder, a Part of Experience. [...] But in Land-Travaile, wherein so much is to be observed, for the most part, they omit it. [...] The things to be seen and observed are: [...] the Monuments, [...] Antiquities, and Ruins. [...] And to conclude, whatsoever is memorable in the Places; where they goe. [...] And let his Travaile appears rather in his Discourse. (1-2) (emphasis original)

Man’s entire life is an adventure, a venturing forth from one place and situation to another, and experiencing the world continuously. Experience – which stems from Latin *experiri* and means *to try*, and *to test* – is the axis of *travail*, which is painful and unpleasant at first sight, but when it comes to its end, it enhances man’s understanding of the world and self. That is what Gadamer terms learning “through suffering” (qtd. in Palmer 196). More precisely, it is “through suffering [that] one learns the boundaries of human existence itself. One learns to understand the finitude of man: ‘Experience is experience of finitude’” (196). Man’s fall from Paradise is his first *unpleasant experience* and *travail* into an exile; hence, he operates as a displaced being. Mary B. Campell argues that, “the movement of travel, whether it redeems or merely repeats that original displacement, belongs in the circle of elemental experience with ‘birth, copulation and death’” (1). The Persian and Greek myths and the earliest genres of literature are full of the signs and traces of travel. In Persian myths for instance, in the story of *Rustam* and *Suhrab* the reader encounters two heroes who undertake journeys and suffer to win the title of a hero. It is similar to Odysseus’s journey, Hercules’s departure from home, and other heroes in the myths of other nations regarding the hero’s expeditions and travels from one place to another. Peter Hulme and Tim Youngs go back to the beginning to the travel when they point out “the biblical and classical traditions” such as “Exodus, the punishment of Cain, the Argonauts, the Aeneid,” and Homer’s Odysseus as “an epic journey” (2-3).

Throughout history, man has dreamed of journeys to other parts of the globe, which is one of man’s primary objectives and activities on earth; i.e., the core of human nature is to go beyond the boundaries in which he lives disappear, man begins to explore other lands of interest. His primary desire is to refresh his thoughts, feelings and emotions when he goes outside the boundaries; hence, he experiences varieties of impressions. Moreover, in the modern times, man searches the galaxy for new and unknown places of the universe to acquire such effects. More precisely, the first and foremost source of each kind of travel lies in man’s curiosity to search the unknown. It is a dynamic process of breaking all the limits of home and encountering the immensity, oddities and unpredictabilities of the world. There are various kinds of travel from the earliest time up to modern period: pilgrimages, journeys of exploration, discovery, missionary, scientific, anthropological, and ethnographical expeditions, colonial dominance in the remote lands and tourism. Helen Gilbert adumbrates some specific forms of travel, such as “*ethical travel, environmental travel, green tourism, low-impact tourism, alternative tourism, and soft-adventure tourism*” (256-257) (emphasis original).

According to Mary B. Campbell “after we learn ‘to be’ and ‘to have’ in a new language, we learn ‘to go’” (2). This indicates that the very beginning of man’s life is a displacement from one place to another place in time. Metaphorically speaking, *life is travel* and vice versa, *travel is life*. The outstanding examples for such a symbolisation in English literature are John Bunyan’s allegory, *The Pilgrims Progress* (1678),

and Geoffrey Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. As a "cultural practice," travel is an act of exploration, research, escape, transformation, and encountering the "others," through which a traveller reaches a cultural perception and self-recognition (Clifford 31). Similarly, for Dennis Porter travel achieves its meaning in distinguishing the differences and the affinities of different cultures when they encounter each other (Porter 202-209). Claude Levi-Strauss specifies it as a departure through "time and space" (48). For Roland Barthes travel has the mode of "displacement" for exploration through the man's desires in encountering "otherness" (76-77). Jack Samash compares travel with a "creative act" (1). Barbara Korte defines it as an "intercultural construction" achieved through interaction between the subject and self and the object or world (5).

As a contemporary travel writer and journalist, Jeremy Seal has been travelling and writing for over twenty years with a special enthusiasm for Turkey. His first publication on Turkey was appeared in 1995 with the title of *A Fez of the Heart: Travels Around Turkey in Search of a Hat* (1995), which is a deeply instructive piece of present-day history as well as an entertaining insight into the soul of contemporary Turkey. Later publications of Seal cover *The Sneakebite Survivors' Club: Travels among Serpents* (1999), *The Wreck at Sharpnose Point: A Victorian Mystery* (2002), *Santa: A Life* (2005) and his recent travel book *Meander: East to West Along a Turkish River* (2012). This paper scrutinizes his last non-fiction *Meander* arguing that Seal nourishes his masterpiece both with the elements of travel literature and guidebooks of the touristic fashion. Therefore, he creates a unique form of literature encapsulating the new form of contemporary travel guidebooks.

Jeremy Seal writes mostly non-fiction which combines travel, topography, culture and history. Therefore, his last book is not an exception. His special enthusiasm on Turkey comes from once he was teaching English in Turkey for a while. Jeremy went to Exeter University and read English literature there. After a certain period of time engaging with part time teaching in Turkey, he returned to England for a spell in publishing before going full-time as a writer in 1989. Since then, he has written for the travel pages of newspapers and magazines. Apart from these periodicals including *Sunday Times*, *Sunday Telegraph* and *Conde Nast Traveller*, he has also contributed to travel-based radio programmes including *Traveller's Tree* on BBC Radio 4 and has also worked in TV. He has tutored for the Arvon Foundation and lectures and guides on cultural tours of Turkey. The subject of this study, *Meander: East to West Along a Turkish River* describes Seal's canoeing along the River Meander in one-man canoe. Shortly after the releasing, the book awarded as the Best Narrative Travel Book of 2012 by the British Guild of the Travel Writers.

As it was also mentioned in the beginnings of this article, although Seal has written a wide variety of places and subjects, including *The Sneakebite Survivors' Club: Travels among Serpents* (1999), *The Wreck at Sharpnose Point: A Victorian Mystery* (2002), *Santa: A Life* (2005), his abiding passion has been Turkey since he worked in the capital Ankara for over 10 years as an English teacher, the country which is undergone huge change over the thirty years and he has been visiting it. The focus of Seal's first book *A Fez of the Heart* was a peculiar and peculiarly Turkish history of the small red hat that was banned because it symbolized everything that modern Turkey's first president M. Kemal Atatürk sought to sweep away; orthodoxy, conservatism, and attachment to the Ottoman past.

The subject of his recent book *Meander* is a 500 km. journey made down the winding river by canoe. To rediscover, as Seal puts it, is "the productive virtue of aimlessness" (4). It is a kind of solo travelling which can be considered as a particular kind of travelling different from a touristic mess movement.

What one might think about the solo travel, actually is a kind of self-reliance of the traveller. As Seal puts it well in an interview with George Miller,

some of the other travel writers are much of the type. Without naming too many names, I think there is a real remoteness, there is the self-reliance and there is remoteness about a great deal of travel writing types of I know: a lot of them are married, and brought up families successfully but I think that despite that they are very remote-stricken which sometimes is to a greater or lesser extent, successfully suppressed which allows them to lead a normal life in terms of families, wives, husbands, and children. But I do think that there is a particular type who travels in this fashion. (Seal Interview)

The word “meandering” was an obscure meaning for me before taking a step for a research on Seal’s recent publication on river Meander. In the dictionaries “meandering” refers to the sinuous movement of a river flowing through a landscape. Furthermore, meandering has a deep past and is etymologically rooted in an actual river, the Meander now Büyük Menderes in Anatolia, Turkey. The Meander River played major roles in antiquity and then all but disappeared from the cultural imagination (Klaver 2016). The earliest mentions of the Meander are found in Homer and Hesiod between approximately 750 and 650 BC, in which the Meander region is portrayed as rather backwards.

“Windings being, of course, what I was to expect from the Meander” asserts Seal in the Prologue of his book, clearly mentioning the meandering movement of the ancient river. According to Seal, one of the features what attracts him to this type of journey lies beneath the river’s classical and biblical associations. Strabo, as Seal also mentions, was influential in his wanderings and meanderings through the river. Strabo describes the Meander as “running in a direction excessively tortuous, so that from the course of this river all windings are called meanders”. One of the most appealing meanings of the river’s name came from Ovid: “soft Meander’s wanton current”. This meaning of the word encapsulates the “freewheeling, romantic spirit that was the essence of true travelling” (Seal 3).

As a contemporary traveller, Seal not only scrutinizes the difference between travelling and touristic activity, but also highlights the romantic side of the travelling, celebrating a cadent way of perception; one-man canoeing. Through this vein, Seal’s banking on the river “was not white-water thrills but the freedom to drift gently downstream, freely attentive to the rich past of this valley on the historic borders of Asia and Europe, East and West, as well as to its present at a time when Turks especially questioned their place between these two worlds” (Seal 6). The distinction between the travel book and guide books has been studied by the scholars recently.²

Whereas guidebooks have existed since the mid-nineteenth century, they are often associated with codified culture resulting from tourism (Behdad 15). Guidebooks in particular, aspire to render a journey as easy and relaxing as possible, to make the exotic familiar, yet there are guidebooks designed for those who desire more contact with unfamiliar, who seek to distance themselves from the tourist. With this feature of the guidebooks, Seal’s *Meander* might be categorized in the guidebooks in which Seal himself desired to be in the wilderness out of the tourist itinerary. *The Lonely Planet Guide* focuses on a non-tourist journey, whereas mainstream guidebook companies such as *Fodor’s* and *Frommer’s* detail the essential landmarks and “sights of interest.”³ A primary difference between a guidebook and a travel book is that the former is primarily a reference guide, which lists accommodations, restaurants, hours

² Barrell, John. “Death on the Nile: Fantasy and the Literature of Tourism 1840-1860.” *Essays in Criticism*. Oxford: XLI (2), 1991. 97-128. Gilbert, Helen. “Belated Travel: Ecotourism as a Style of Travel Performance,” 255-74, in *In Transit: Travel, Text, Empire*. eds. Helen Gilbert and Anna Johnston. New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2002. Greenblatt, Cathy and John H. Gagnon. “Temporary Strangers: Travel and Tourism from a Sociological Perspective.” *Sociological Perspectives*, 26 (1), 1983. 89-110.

³ Lonely Planet Series, Fodor and Frommer are the largest travel guidebooks in the world.

for tourist spots, addresses of embassies. Hence, guidebooks are designed for those who intend future travel, whereas travel books allow the reader to travel along with the author without leaving one's home or nation.

Unlike the guidebook, the travel text is an autobiographical discourse that "constructs its own narrative around the general experience of its heroic traveller, expecting the reader to fill in the narrative gaps through a kind of identification with the narrator" (Behdad 44). Ali Behdad maintains that it is the author(ity) of the subjective narrator that leads to the discursive strength of travel books, but that guidebooks are multi-positional and thus less authoritative than travel books. Behdad fails to consider that while the travel book achieves discursive authority through the interpretation of the traveller, the guidebook draws its authority from a different source, the power to define and classify "sights of interest." Guidebooks merely suggest possible places interest and it is up to the reader to decide on which "sight of interest" he/she wishes to see. However, while Behdad grants the reader of guidebooks the will of reason and interpretation, he deprives the readers of travel books from this opportunity, declaring that

[t]he travelogue produces its first person subject (I) as the site of an act of interpretation – 'making sense' of the Orient – and as someone who is authorised to make meaning. The centrality and discursive authority of the first-person in turn imply exclusion, separating the Orientalist and his or her experience from the reader, whose desire or exoticism can be satisfied only as a displacement of or identification with the enunciative subject's desire, realised in his Oriental journey [...] The tourist guide, on the other hand, constructs the reading subject ('you') as a potential traveller and presupposes the realisation of its addressee's desire for the Orient. (41) (emphasis original)

Behdad also fails to consider the fact many travel books were written with an audience in mind. It is up to this audience to make sense of the travel book, to agree with or dispute its portrayal of a specific culture, identify himself with the narrator to fill the narrative gaps.

Behdad's claim on the unified nature of the first-person narrator of the travel book, as opposed to the guidebook, is also problematic. Silk contends that the "travel narrative actually highlights the fragmentation of the textual subject ... In modern travel novels this displacement is frequently so complete that the subject in question must rely on other voices in the text for self-expression" (223). Behdad merely assumes that the structure of the travel book, with its first-person narrator who can make meaning, produces a unified author and text. Porter also critiques this line of thought regarding the unity of the subject, reasoning that the travel texts are "shown to be fissured with doubt and contradiction..." (155).

Travel books also involve contact with other people and cultural practices; otherwise they would only be geographical surveys. It is this encounter with other people, the quotation of their voices that allows for a dispersed subject within the travel narrative (Behdad 155-156). Behdad says that the reader of the travel narrative had "to fill in the narrative gaps through a kind of identification with the narrator" but as one reader differs from another, so does his identification with the narrator and more importantly, his bridging of the narrative gap (156).

In the twentieth century, tourism and travel has become a vehicle for economic development and growth. The study of travel has generally concentrated on the economic, environmental and cultural impact on the host nation, yet just as the study of the travel is a recent development, tourist travel as a cultural practice also has a short history. The rise of the family income and an increase in leisure time for the middle and working classes allowed for the rapid development of the tourist industry in the late

twentieth century (Greenblatt and Gagnon 11). However, travel existed before the modern advent of tourism. From the 1830s on, Europe was covered with rail lines which made travel easier, quicker and less expensive. Travel agencies began to form and organise excursions; Thomas Cook agency organised its first expedition to Pompeii in 1864 (Aldrich 164). With this development, travel had been opened to those of the middle-class who had the financial capacity leisure time and inclination to go abroad. So while this development was not on the same scale as modern tourism, it was a part of the beginning of the travel. Associated with the travel industry, the nature of the traveller also changed: Prior to the fledgling nineteenth-century travel industry, travellers generally had to negotiate and plan their own journeys. Travel at that time, was generally limited to the upper classes, they had the financial resources, education and leisure time that allowed them to travel. With the development of nineteenth-century travel industry and the construction of rail lines, travel became more of a possibility for a greater number of people and with the arrival of the modern tourist industry more people had the chance to travel outside their home societies.

Paul Fussell argues that each of the three time periods produced three very different types of travel and

[before] tourism there was travel, and before travel there was exploration. Each is roughly assignable to its own age in modern history: exploration belongs to the Renaissance, travel to the bourgeois age, tourism to our proletarian moment... All three make journeys, but the explorer seeks the undiscovered, the traveller that which has been discovered by the mind working in history, the tourist that which has been discovered by entrepreneurship and prepared for him by the arts of mass publicity. The genuine traveller is, or used to be, in the middle of between the two extremes. If the explorer moves toward the risks of the formless and the unknown, the tourist moves toward the security of pure cliché. It is between these two poles that the traveller mediates, retaining all he can of the excitement of the unpredictable attachment to exploration, and fusing that with the pleasure of 'knowing where one is' belonging to tourism. (38-39)

Fussell proclaims that in our "proletarian moment," travel as he defines it cannot exist. Yet, I believe that travel still exists, but the traveller must adequately distance himself from the tourist. The tourist developers have invaded all cultures and all that is left is "pure cliché." Yet does the tourist industry codify culture; that is to say, one can see Europe in seven days, one has been to Egypt if one has seen the Pyramids. Tourism packages a culture so that it can be quickly, easily and safely ingested by tourists. However, at this point there comes the question, "what does the Turkish woman do after her belly-dance in front of a wide-eyed group of tourists?" My point is that outside of the tourist constructions of a certain culture, versions of that culture exist although there can be differences between the tourist and the native cultural presentations. Just as other versions of this culture exist, so does the possibility for the traveller to explore beyond the bounds of tourist constructions, to move into different cultural sphere. This also appears as one of the problems that present-day travellers have to face; they must try to explore and understand a certain culture and at the same time avoid the traps of tourist representations.

Greenblatt and Gagnon point out that despite the rapid growth of tourism since World War II, social scientists have paid little attention to the "collective individual character or impacts of travel" (89). The authors examine travel from sociology of leisure perspective. They find the study of travel productive for it represents trends in the "work-leisure" association but more importantly it allows for an analysis of the coping patterns and techniques of "human movement in the physical and social space" (91). Greenblatt and Gagnon coin the term "temporary strangers" to refer to travellers arguing that travellers, as compared to migrants and refugees, have chosen to locate themselves in a territory that is culturally, physically and socially unfamiliar. When these "temporary strangers" meet with the unfamiliar, their social training and background fails them, yet they must still manage and negotiate with the foreign. The security of the self is thus questioned and in order for the traveller to successfully manage his trip,

some form of environmental management must be conducted. Both types, the traveller and the tourist, are in search of the unfamiliar, but what differentiates the two is the degree of unfamiliarity they seek (92).

The search for the unfamiliar, for the unknown or for the unspoken is what links travel with cultural theory. Indeed as the traveller seeks to cross physical, cultural and social frontiers, the theorist also attempts to traverse methodological, theoretical, and existential boundaries. Featherstone points out that the theorist frequently uses “metaphors of movement and marginality ... Travel has often been regarded as aiding the decentring of habitual categories, a form of paying with cultural disorder, something which can also be found in postmodern theory” (126). Edward Said in his post-*Orientalism* article writes that,

the image of traveller depends not on power, but on motion, on willingness to go into different idioms, and understand a variety of disguises, masks, and rhetoric. Travellers must suspend the claim of customary routine in order to live in new rhythms and rituals ... the traveller crosses over, traverses territory, and abandons fixed positions all the time. To do this with dedication and love as well as a realistic sense of the terrain is, I believe, a kind of academic freedom at its highest. (12-13) (emphasis original)

With the combination of travel books' disguises, masks, and tourist guides' non-marginal discourses, Seal's recent work (*Meander*) serves as kind of a new understanding of writing between a touristic guidebook and travel account. In an interview with Jeremy Seal in July 2013, Denise Allen asks question whether there is always a disconcerting tension between our wish to visit areas unspoiled by tourism and the total disregard of some of the people living and working locally for the beauty of the place. Seal in his response to this question highlights the “right sort of tourism” in which he means not a mass touristic activity but also not an isolated lonely travelling. According to Seal “the right sort of tourism should certainly help; many rural Turks would be genuinely surprised to discover that foreigners view old unquestioned practices like using the river [Meander] as a drain with such horror” (emphasis mine).

It is the in-between nature of Seal's book which attracts many readers. According to Rupert Scott “this is one of those travel projects that appear delightful in principle” (Scott 1). A critic such as Scott also considers this kind of journey not only as a classical touristic activity but also a lonely travelling through a river. But canoeing Meander river starts with disaster as Seal finds river flows with “litter-strewn” (64). The first scenic panorama is beautiful in the beginning of his journey and then “for the last rafts of town rubbish – plastic bottles, aerosol cans, margarine containers and discoloured polystyrene chunks – which had gathered behind the scummy booms of fallen branches” (66). As a travel writer and a tourist guide for the region, Seal's concern for the environment not only deals with the touristic engagement but also for the future travellers who aim to take the same path or itinerary. His narrational strategy both covers the interest of traveller and touristic audiences.

Rupert Scott deals with the travelogue aspects of Seal's account, considering that his narrative strategy is disarmingly honest: “he [Seal] does not try to make things seem more beautiful or glamorous than they are, and Meander is all the better for this. He is likeable, modest, self-deprecating, well-informed and humorous – all good qualities for a travel writer” (Scott 2). On the one hand, Scott accepts Seal as a travel writer in his statement; on the other hand, he considers Seal's informative aspect in his account in which one might see this feature as a touristic account. To support the third-dimensional (an account which is both travelogue and touristic guidebook) aspect of Seal's account, Scott continues to mention that “descriptions...drawn to confuse rather than guide...There is much in this book that will be familiar to anyone who has travelled in inland Turkey” (Scott 2).

We learn from his book that Seal's dialogue with the various local people on his way is not always very exciting as the typical travelogue readers expect, but one feels that they are real and learn much about modern Turkey and its priorities. Even Seal reveals the topics such as rural Turkey on the cusp of change including the industrialization deteriorating the river's beauty, recent history of the region and so on; the natives tend to be less interested in these subjects. In the fashion of a typical travelogue tradition, his discourse covers sometimes shallow but sometimes deep dialogues with the inhabitants where Seal passes. These dialogues put the text into more literary and personal level in which a naive tourist cannot simply benefit through a touristic guidebook. Reciprocal and interactive dialogues reinforce the literary aspect of Seal's fictional account.

Solo travelling and travelling with company are two particular versions of travel. Solo travelling is actually is a kind of self-reliance: When many of the British travel accounts are analysed carefully, one can observe this common features: Without naming too many names, there is a real remoteness, there is the self-reliance about a great deal of travel writing types of that it has been known: a lot of these travellers are married, and brought up families successfully but despite that, they appear to have a very remote-strictness which sometimes is to a lesser or greater extent, successfully suppressed which allows them to lead a normal life in terms of families, wives, husbands, children. As Seal puts it, the real reason he enjoys doing his solo travelling through Meander is because:

if you are travelling in company, you have already surrounded yourself with the world which you want to explore; its the company of your friends much easier to communicate with friends and with your travelling company and what lies beyond then, its only when you are own your own that you expose yourself toward whatever it is that lies out there. (Seal Interview)

Seal here in the above quotation not only highlights the difference between the solo travelling and travelling with company, he also puts a border between a touristic and individual travelling of his perception through his meandering along the river. His approach renders both acts in a textual level. Those travelling experiences in the past were not worth-well if you are a couple; thinking about those two people shows, particularly for example James Fenton. That works in particular way but that's partly because he was travelling through territories where the wider cast is firmly occasional and fairly remote; it was a jungle or it was a river journey and there had to be the reliance to the other person of whom to play because the rest of the cast is out there and its remoteness is beyond in that case him. In that case travelling solo or with company is like a stand performance of a comedy of which one performs own his own or one needs the other person or double acting/partnership.

According to Seal's understanding of the boundaries between the touristic acting and individuality of the travelling itself, solo travelling brings "a lot of comedy that end up in my book tends to come out in the course, not at the immediate movement when the event occurs but in the course of coming home, letting the experience ferment, develop, mature and then rendering on the page" (Seal Interview). So the full comic effect comes out later in the course of rendering into the text in which most of the individual travellers have been strategically done different than those of the *Badeker* guidebooks. From the perspective of a solo traveller, and in the case of Seal's text, there might be times when the above-mentioned comic effect is far away from the actual travelling experience. If one travels own his own, he/she simply has to fall back on himself/herself. So, he/she is the one who digs out in the course of taking the notes back home, thinking about it and then in the light of a distant office, at a distant desk, bring out the comic effect.

One of the particular differences between a guidebook and a travel account lies in the fact that in later one, an individual traveller takes excessive amounts of notes. Taking notes have always been the case for Seal while he was travelling along the Turkish river. Strategically, what he writes down are specifics, in the same way that he takes photographs: “I use the camera as memoir to capture a particular item or a particular site, something of which I want to retain. But what then actually means to me I do not need to make a note at that point. So most of my notes are very short-handed; they are phrases or words rather than fully-formed sentences” (Seal Interview). Probably the fully-formed sentences come later because it is only later that the traveller works exactly what he wants to do with that particular original source material.

Apart from the note-taking side of a solo travelling, another dimension where one can differentiate in the texts is conversations of the traveller. Conversations have always been the problem for the solo travellers which these circumstances lead many of them to misunderstandings because of the language barrier. Also, it often seems impossible for a traveller particularly to be sitting opposite a person and even getting the every word. Sometimes a traveller captures as much as he can and then rephrases them later. Seal mentions his observation in such a way that,

it seems to me the best way is to just listen really hard and then that is the one instance where I will take as much as I can. So when the conversation is over and the moment that I am in a quiet place, I will get down as much as the phrasing of the conversation as I can possibly capture. But it will certainly be the case that the final rendered conversation will only be true to the spirit of what was said until that tone of what was said rather than to the actuality of the words. I mean I can't capture the actuality of the words because I have never, for example thought of recording conversations that I am going to have. I mean, I suppose it will practically be easy to do now without the subject even know that you are doing it with smart phones. But I would feel uncomfortable about doing that and I also think that it wouldn't be true to do what I have been doing well which is to listen really hard and then take the essence of what I have heard, what I have observed. (Seal Interview)

Travel writing for Seal per se “is about moving at reasonable speed through a country, through a territory and that will by nature, what you are effectively getting is the conversations with people you don't know very well” (Seal Interview). As he defines travel writing giving emphasis on the importance of conversations and rendering into text, Seal deals with the literary part of his account. There is the challenge in Seal's recent book *Meander* in that one needs to navigate through 500 km. of a river which is badly mapped. So the book is exceptional in a way that it is more expeditionary than the previous writings of Seal. In some levels, it is about attempting to get from the top of a river to the bottom of a river in one piece with a canoe. But contrary to its expeditionary nature, is the fact that the aim of this journey was not simply to get to the end. “The whole point of travelling a river called Meander is of course to meander; to be distracted, to relish the digression to see the root of the river as a means not to the end of the river but is a means going sideways into the wider culture and the history of the land” (Seal Interview). So, while the book has the classic shape of an expedition (as in the case of touristic guidebooks) trying to get from the top of a river to the bottom of it in one piece, Seal seems more in sit in the bit of the middle which is where this Meander river takes him in terms of digressions and distractions, in terms of stories, in terms of the history of the land. As Seal “recaptures the virtue of aimlessness” in his travel in the manner of a romantic traveller, he also turns to classical and recent history of the territory in a more tourist-guide fashion whom he renders the solo travelling individuality with a guidebook discourse. Therefore, he combines the classical travel account of a solo traveller and merges it into informational account. He mentions that this Turkish river “encapsulates the freewheeling, romantic spirit that is the essence of true travelling.” While he is trying to re-capture the true spirit of the romantic traveller, he is also giving references to the earlier European travellers to the region who have gone before him such as William Leake, Richard Pococke, and Francis Arundell. As one

part of *Meander* carries this romantic feature of the solo traveller, the half of the book is informative in a guidebook fashion. According to Sara Wheeler “*Meander* is an excellent introduction to Turkish history for anyone planning a summer holiday” (Wheeler, 28). While Wheeler considers Seal’s book as a more touristic guidebook, Seal, as a solo traveller in the heart of his own book, accepts his recent work as a travelogue. But Seal’s approach to this Meander journey is not only a solid classical literary text but also a guidebook. In the interview with George Miller, he expresses his idea about the touristic dimension of his journey: “There has been no pre-existing Meander tourist trail, no accommodation at all. The Meander is a river which tourism is completely ignored.” Even in his website called www.jeremyseal.com, Seal points out that he is a travel writer, journalist, book reviewer, and tour leader. As Seal’s stance seems somewhere in-between a travel writer and a tour leader, his last non-fictional work *Meander* creates a unique form of literature encapsulating the new form of contemporary travel guidebooks.

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