

Afterword

I do not travel **from** my home, rather I travel **to** somewhere or something else deep within ...

As I noted in the Introduction, when I began writing this book, it was during the depths of the Covid pandemic. At this moment that you are reading this, I do not know where we are at, but I do know that we have all been on a massive emotional journey. At that time, all I felt was angry – not at anything specific, just everything. I didn't immediately recognise it, but I was the same after my mother died – I was literally 'seeing red'. It was my way of coping with the pain of loss, my way of grieving.

This anger burnt off any other emotions, from sorrow to joy (and all the others), completely blocking me. That was one of my main reasons for starting this book on emotion – I was trying to get in touch again with my own feelings. I thought that it was my lack of travel to other places that was holding me back, whereas it was something far more elemental and internal.

As I have also mentioned previously, I walk a lot, often using it as a way to think and feel. One day while I was still working on the theoretical aspects of this book, I was walking near my home around Swan Bay, which is in fact a marine national park and one of only 12 Ramsar listed wetlands in Australia, which I also overlook from my study. A breeding ground for many fish, it is a stop over for migratory birds and home for countless swans, pelicans, spoonbills, herons and cormorants. I was on a path I hadn't walked before and looked out across the water in awe – I realised that if I was anywhere else in the world, I would be deeply moved to be there and experience this. And the soundscape that day was stunning, from the swans honking and gulls squawking to the pelicans' swoosh as they landed on the water and the fish flopping back after recklessly jumping out of the water. Suddenly, my anger flew away, and I was 'feeling' again.

Taking the time to contemplate and understand my 'home' reminds me of eighteenth century Sardinian officer, Xavier de Maistre, who toured his own bedroom during a time of enforced isolation (house arrest) after he participated in a duel (McCallam, 2012). *Voyage autour de ma chambre (Journey around my room)* takes the reader not only on a physical journey around the room to which he has been confined for 42 days but also on philosophical and metaphysical journeys as he contemplates things from the mundane (the value of a good travelling coat) to the more esoteric, such as the benefits of the imagination, the existence of the soul and so on.

This was seen as an ironic work in the manner of Laurence Sterne's contemporaneous *A Sentimental Journey*, a humorous and ambiguously sentimental tale in which the protagonist views travel as an invitation to promiscuity but in fact never succeeds in his quest (Parnell, 2003). McCallam also acknowledges Sterne's influence on de Maistre's work, describing it as '... polite, mildly erotic, ironic, a discursive meandering which decentres the reading experience in a series of Sternian shifts of perspective' (2012, p. 236).

It is an amusing, satirical, reflective and philosophical take on travel – maybe we too can simply journey around our room rather than fly overseas? Well, many of us did just that when we were also forcibly locked down during 2020 and 2021, but just as he ultimately revelled in freedom, so will even the most stoic of us. Even the most fertile of minds responds to the external stimulus of other peoples, places and cultures.

While it has been considered as a parody of the more exclusive forms of travel (and writing) at the time, de Botton argues that de Maistre's work '... springs from a profound and suggestive insight: that the pleasure we derive from journeys is perhaps dependent more on the mindset with which we travel than on the destination we travel to' (2002, p. 46). During this pandemic, my mind turns constantly to de Maistre.

So, do I still need to travel to all those other places? While my home is truly full of wonder, it does not contain some of those personal challenges I have encountered while travelling to other places and immersing in other cultures. I still need to travel, not as a release from my daily life but as a means to further understand it.

And, in spite of arguing how preferable it is to remain in his room, de Maistre (1871) seems happy to be granted his liberty:

I am borne along by an unseen power which tells me I need the pure air, and the light of heaven, and that solitude is like death. Once more I don my customary garb; my door opens; I wander under the spacious porticos of the Strada dell Po; a thousand agreeable visions float before my eyes. Yes, there is that mansion, that door, that staircase! I thrill with expectation. (pp. 151–152)