


# The Luggage

By Constance Urdang

Travel is a vanishing act  
Only to those who are left behind.  
What the traveler knows  
Is that he accompanies himself,  
Unwieldy baggage that can't be checked,  
Stolen, or lost, or mistaken.  
So one took, past outposts of empire,  
"Calmly as if in the British Museum,"  
Not only her Victorian skirts,  
Starved shirtwaists, and umbrella, but her faith  
In the civilizing mission of women,  
Her backaches and insomnia, her innocent valor;  
Another, friend of witch-doctors,  
Living on native chop,  
Trading tobacco and hooks for fish and fetishes,  
Heralded her astonishing arrival  
Under shivering stars  
By calling, "It's only me!" A third,  
Intent on savage customs, and to demonstrate  
That a woman could travel as easily as a man,  
Carried a handkerchief damp with wifely tears  
And only once permitted a tribal chieftain  
To stroke her long, golden hair.

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Source: Only the World (1983)