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Song of the Wayfarer: Auvergne According to François Cassingena- Trévedy

Eric Bordessoule and Michel Lompech

- 1 Wayfaring is often studied using both quantitative and qualitative methods (questionnaires, surveys, interviews). Taking a step aside, we are interested in a travel narrative, the *Cantique de l'Infinistère* by François Cassingena-Trévedy¹. Questioning the relationship between geography and literature (Rosemberg, 2016, De la Soudière, 2019), our approach questions the "spatiality" that can be read in this narrative, which bears witness both to a singular experience of mountain spaces and to a spatiality of existence revealed by wayfaring; it offers, regardless of the depth of the reading, a fine example of geographicity. This study is therefore part of a geographical approach to travel literature, which examines the spatial referents of the text, analyses the writing codes of space and the nature of the meaning that is attributed to space in the narrative.
- 2 Itinerancy is a mode of travel that seeks to experience space in a different way and, through this experience, seeks to give personal meaning to places through contact with nature (Berthelot, 2008). This recreational practice is particularly conducive to a spatial experience based on a relationship to space established through the prism of emotions that thus restores a true geography of the senses. This sensorial approach is part of a research perspective that is in full expansion, an "emotional turn" where emotions constitute a true dimension of space and landscape (Davidson et al., 2007). This Song recounts six days of solitary hiking in the Auvergne Mountains by Fr. Cassingena, a monk at the Benedictine abbey of Ligugé (Vienne).
- 3 This itinerancy is original, as the Auvergne, lacking the grandiose and the spectacular of the high mountains, is not often the first choice for long hikes. However, its setting nevertheless gives a very special tone to the wayfaring of our soloist. Within the quadrilateral formed by the Cézallier, retreat and the feeling of being somewhere else are not due to the distance travelled or the height of the ascent, but are nourished by

this "horizontal altitude" (p. 83) which is its primary resource. We will show how roaming in the mountains reinforces an experience of interiority and even sacredness. We will also reflect on the singular relationship between walking and spatiality, a reflection that takes up the teachings of "classical geography" as well as those of mesology. Finally, reading this book reveals a sensitive testimony to the rurality of Upper Auvergne (Puy-de-Dôme, Cantal).

"A metaphysically pure mountain"

- 4 The author creates a detailed account of the geography of the Cézallier; a narrative which describes the mountainous margin, then studies the connection made between the experience of itinerancy and religious retreat, and finally recalls the role of medieval monasticism in the elaboration of the landscape.

"The drunken boat of the summer pastures"

- 5 The story exploits the different dimensions of the Cézallier. First of all, this massif is imposing because of its vast horizons which invite the body and soul to roam; it also reveals itself as an immense pastoral domain devoted to summering, like a real human desert, favourable to retirement; finally, it represents a space of passage along a path which is both spatial and spiritual.
- 6 The Cézallier, seen as an archetypal cow mountain where "incandescent rivers have become pastures" (p. 82), is a huge summer pasture with peat bogs and lakes (p. 22), and is a space that has been anthropised and yet little artificialized. Above 1,200 metres, summer pastures have replaced the beech woods. These summer pastures, the work of human societies since the clearing of the land in protohistoric times, have acquired an immemorial character that "[raises them] to the rank of eternity" (p. 82). The Cézallier is a special case within the volcanic mountain range, due to the size of the pastoral estate, which occupies more than a third of the area, and the way it is used. Indeed, from the Middle Ages onwards, the occupation of the summer pastures was largely open to outside herds. A vast movement of exogenous appropriation consecrated the failure of attempts at collective exploitation of the grasslands by a peasantry more concerned with grain than with cattle. The author also recalls the original etymology of Cézallier, from the Auvergnat language *seijavei*, "land for rye" (p. 23). From then on, rural life was very early based on the superimposition of an autochthonous agropastoral system often confined to the poorest lands, these *frau* "ungrateful moors, communal or sectional pastures whose encumbrance by rocks made access difficult" (p. 131) and a distant transhumance occupying the best part of the high altitude pastures.

Figure 1: Pastoral estate of Auvergne mountains

- 7 In the hands of the labourors of the Limagne region, then of the large landowners of the Aurillac basin, or more recently of these new conquerors, the breeders of Aubrac aveyronnais (Bordessoule, 2001), the "mountains", annexes of neighbouring low countries or more distant regions, have remained largely dissociated from local breeding. This rupture is amplified by the fact that roaming is part of a territory at high altitudes which is marked by a triple marginality. In addition to the spatial marginality of the high summer pastures that are dissociated from the agricultural territory and the permanent habitat, the temporal marginality of areas that are used at best for three or four months of the year and finally the economic marginality that sees the primacy of external transhumance imposed on the local peasantry. The desert thus appears to be the result of an interlocking of socio-spatial constructions of marginalisation.
- 8 The disappearance of cheese production in the summer pastures and the exclusivity of the mountain pasture where man is absent have since sealed the human marginalisation of these Highlands. Fr. Cassingena's path is marked by references to this long pastoral history, successively evoking the possessions of Aubazine Abbey in the Middle Ages, the "Far-West" railway line, testimony to the old transhumance railways, or the now ruined *burons*² of traditional mountain cheesemakers.
- 9 From the overabundance of pastures, which only the summer grazing of the herds, comes the image of "that great nothing" (p. 80); this oxymoron adorns the void with the virtues of a "sedative poultice" (p. 15), and it is certain that this evolution of the landscape gives the impression of a sleepy rural life. Avatars of the desert and oceanic solitudes, the summer pastures, travelled in autumn when they are deserted by cattle,

offer contemplation of these "immobile landscapes" (p. 149) transcended into "a province of the soul" (p. 14).

Spiritual Retreat and itinerancy in the Auvergne Mountains

- 10 The practice of spiritual retreat is found in many religions. It is the search for isolation, in order to listen to an "inner voice". In the Christian tradition it is associated with the "desert", which, according to Cardinal Ratzinger, is "the place of silence and solitude". It is a place where one takes distance from everyday events. It is a place where one flees from noise and superficiality. The desert is the place of the absolute, the place of freedom, where man finds himself confronted with his ultimate demands"³. The geographer questions this statement. What desert? What distance? What is this silence made of? The reading of Fr. Cassingena's journey through the Auvergne answers these questions. In his "itinerant retreat" (p. 153), the author experiences the very low population density of the volcanic mountain, which he presents as the largest desert in Western Europe. For him, it represents a "French wilderness", where "nature" certainly dominates, but a grazed nature, planed by peasant civilization, and which, left in disinheritance by modernity, somewhat plays for him the role of the desert of the Scriptures.

Figure 2: Map of densities in volcanic mountains of Auvergne

- 11 Situated at an altitude of between 1200 and 1400 metres, the softly undulating plateaus of the Cézaillier offer hikers an almost uninterrupted view of the landscape, devoid of the contrasts common to the mountain domain. The volcanic edifice with a marked profile and the most spectacular vestiges of glacial erosion give way to the very gentle curves of Pliocene basalt tables, genuine *trapps* of the Massif Central. Seemingly monotonous in appearance, the topography of this volcanic chain, which peaks at

1,551 m. at the Signal du Luguët, makes it difficult to comprehend its mountainous nature. Fr. Cassingena underlines the "modest", "reasonable", "physically less obvious" (p. 132) character of this mountain which, according to André Fel, "spreads out more than it rises" (Fel, 1983).

- 12 During his itinerancy, the author sets himself apart, searching for that "emptiness" that leaves room for an "inner search". Various works show that hikers are generally in search of a virgin space, and explore the limits of the Oekumene (Girault, Laslaz, 2018). Note that this monk "established" in an abbey, teaches in Paris, often travels to Brittany and gives lectures in France: his way of living is polytopic (Stock, 2006) and his need for retreat is comparable to that of many of his contemporaries. The success of this story among the public – Catholic and beyond – testifies to a secularisation of the experience of retreat through itinerancy, shifting from a religious experience to a secular spiritual approach. This Song of the Infinite is halfway between these two approaches.

Sacred mountain, evangelical space, pastoral and spiritual margins

- 13 The longest chapter of the book reports the crossing of the Cézallier (pp. 79-96). F. Cassingena confers on this massif a high degree of sacredness, transforms it in his personal "Horeb". The reference to Sinai assimilates this landscape to a form of hierophany. Research shows that the "sacred" would organise the expanse of the profane world according to the rules of sacredness (Delbaere, 2017). The sacred mountains are characterised by the evidence of their mass (Canigou, La Salette). The flatness of the Cézallier thwarts this law, because in its position as a threshold, it is not immediately recognisable. Spatial rules emerge in sacred landscapes: centrality and periphery, the separation between the sacred and the profane; the axuality of the high places (mountains, trees), and symbolic correspondences. On the Cézallier, horizontality absorbs the other characteristics (volume, verticality, dimension). The place dissolves into space because "Here is only somewhere, in the roundness of the world" (p. 86). It is a sacred and decompartmentalised space, a temple with ruined walls: "this church razes and encloses nothing" (idem).
- 14 Is it necessary to recall the role of monasteries in shaping the landscape of the western countryside? In Haute-Auvergne, our Benedictine monk recalls, the Abbey of La Chaise-Dieu had about fifteen priories (p. 114), including that of Allanche. A historical reading of this medieval landscape work (Delbaere, 2017) shows that these landscapes were structured by five "evangelical principles" defined on the basis of the observation of Christ's movements: the desert, the rejection of an institutionalised setting in space of the relationship with God, continuous displacement, the figure of the threshold, and finally, the only "sacral axis", the body of the Risen One. These keys help to read the sacred spatiality attributed to the Auvergne mountains. The desert is the summer pasture. The rejection of the space of the temple gives way to the celebration of the path, "the sacred resides much less in the goal of the path than it wanders, so to speak, in the path itself" (p. 89). The marginal position corresponds to the phenomenological recognition of the elements of nature, of the "mere being of trees, rocks, cattle and men" (ibid.).
- 15 These representations are rooted in historical geography. The medieval space corresponded to the village and its *ager*, was "surrounded" by wood, *silva*, or often in

the Upper Auvergne, by a *saltus* made up of heath and pastures. Within this margin "the hermits conversed with God [...] without settling down permanently [...] as their master, the gyrovaga and chorebishop monks, had done [...], i.e. moving in a circle, like nomads travelling across the steppes and meadows from one end to the other along a marked but open route, surveying the places which were to become, in the eyes of landscape societies, the complement and critical counterweight necessary for all urban life." (Delbaere, 2017) Fr. Cassingena carries out the same roaming on the plateaus of Auvergne, and the echo his book finds bears witness to the extent to which in contemporary society the space of itinerancy complements urban space.

Wayfaring, space and mountain walking

- 16 Reading the Song reveals not only the evocation of a sensitive geography, but also an account of some of the teachings of classical geography, and the author's reflection on space has many convergences with the mesology developed by Augustin Berque.

Hiking and geography

- 17 Hiking has been a practice of geography since its university beginnings, and geographers were great walkers, such as Raoul Blanchard or Pierre Deffontaines, who wrote that "there is only walking to see well"⁴. Cassingena makes an apology for walking (pp. 97-104), adding that "one only walks well when walking alone" (p. 102).
- 18 His itinerancy is geographical. First of all, in its preparation, thanks to the meticulous study of maps: "they were my book of hours" (p. 27); the "sagacity of a look at the map" (p. 43) allows a good knowledge of the morphology of the terrain, the volcanic forms, the hydrography of the rivers of the Pays des Couze which originate in the Cézaillier (p. 108); in this way one can recognise the natural openings of the mountain area through the valleys. Moreover, the map does not simply trace the route, it represents "the archive [...] of a human history" (p. 28).
- 19 Let's take a look at the various networks that lead through the territory. It follows the footpaths (GR 4-30-41) which, starting from paths, connect with the old *drailles*⁵. We walk on cobbled roads, and the only asphalt "axis" that we cross at the end of the route is the modest RD 3, the only transverse one (north-west/south-east) in the Cantal road network. Unlike high mountain itineraries, which explore unmarked routes, our traveller follows the direction of the old pastoral routes, showing that the "void" has never been absolute.
- 20 At each stage of his journey, his gaze differentiates between "new geographical entities" (p. 118), regional sub-units such as the Pinatelle, the Limon plateau and the Planèze de Chalinargues. The art of observing a landscape in its great masses, its structure and its relief, this ability to distinguish "small countries" as well as individualities in the series of trivialized landscapes, as "natural numbers" (idem), and to divide up space, is the best part of regional geography (chorography), an exercise that has been somewhat forgotten since the evolution of the discipline and of which the excursion reminds us.
- 21 Three key words sum up the geography of this region: "the countries cut off, the desertification caused by the rural exodus, the absence of major economic centres"

(p. 15). However, on the slower scale of the walk, the settlement reveals its nuances: the seasonal habitat in the commune of Anzat-le-Luguet differentiates between the still active, abandoned or otherwise transformed *burons*; and it is fair to write that the large farmhouses, often the seats of modern farms, "preface" (p. 120) the hamlets (p. 120). The multitude of these hamlets breaks up the settlement⁶: sometimes with market centres (Brion) or a small rural community (Pradiers, 94 hab.), they often remain elementary like Jassy, "which is actually not much" (p. 74). At a barely higher level, Cassingena distinguishes between "racy" villages like Dienne, with its largely preserved architecture, and hesitates in front of Allanche, whose commercial facilities contrast with the modesty of the town (790 inhabitants): "I have a mixed feeling of returning to the town" (p. 110).

Figure 3:

- 22 The vocabulary is associated with the mountain area (*ubac*, *névé*, *écir*), the paleoclimates (moraine, glacial valley, peat bog) and of course volcanism (stratovolcano, dyke, maar). The foreign terms give local realities access to generic models: thus the author really elevates the Céallier to the rank of *altiplano* (p. 23) or compares Boutaresse, one of the five hamlets of the large commune of Saint-Alyre-ès-Montagne (41.07 sq.km , density of 3.1 inhabitants/sq.km), to "a *douar* in an immense desert" (p. 75).
- 23 Toponymy is the usual tool of map commentary. The Benedictine's erudition dates back to the Auvergnat language to clarify toponyms with rustic consonances (p. 28). The *Peyre del Cayre* (p. 131) recalls the laying of an ashlar when the communes were delimited during the Revolution, when there were no obvious boundaries, which corresponds well to the open space of the Plateau du Limon. In this region, a term from agrarian geography, "l'assolement de la désolation" ("rotation of desolation", p. 151), redoubles the emptiness of the landscape at the end of autumn.

Wayfaring and Mediance

- 24 *Wayfaring* is not only rediscovering the lessons of a somewhat scholastic geography. It is also rediscovering the meaning of our relationship with space. It is possible to read this inner journey as a small treatise on the relationship that the individual has with space while walking.
- 25 The landscape is not reduced to a simple morphology. Only our positivist reading, which somewhat mistreats the text, reconstructs the fabric of Céallier's landscape. However, the Céallier considered as a subdued space is summed up by the void that is ignored in the map of the railway network mentioned at the beginning of the story. It is the "space without", deprived of all the factors that have contributed to its very low density. Surveying the landscape features on the Céallier plateau is a futile exercise, because "the sign of the profound alteration of the landscape [...] consists less in the altitude than in the void" (p. 80). Considering the void and the desert objectively does not explain the attraction of the mid-mountain; it is necessary to approach them differently, to gain height; moreover, "nothing can be understood except in altitude" (p. 82).
- 26 Plato in the *Timaeus* differentiated space from place (Berque, 2000). These terms correspond to two ways of understanding space and reality. Low density, the absence of

urban centres and structural networks are part of the space seen as *topos*. If, on the other hand, we consider that each reality has a place, then the space unfolds as *chôra*. The Platonic ontology of *chôra* anchors beings in a place, gives them an origin, a flesh, a history, a future. And walking allows us to apprehend this other nature of space. The author does not go to the promontories to do geography, but to enjoy space. At the top of Mont Dore, on the Paillassière summer pasture or the Limon plateau, he climbs each time on a "balcony of the sky" (p. 36) to make "profuse haymaking of pure space" (p. 149), of this space which is one of the necessary and intimate components of all forces and all forms of life.

- 27 Wayfaring is not effortless, and the ordeal endured by the body is necessary suffering ("the flesh cleanses the spirit", p. 98) to bring the individual to the awareness of his *chôra*: walking is "the true means at his disposal to take the measure of the world and of himself" (p. 101). By introducing speed, the technique cuts man off from his environment. The automobile "gives man too advantageous an idea of himself" (p. 98). Leaving the passenger compartment of their car, which extends the domestic space, tourists see their *chôra* lost in an immense, limitless space on the high plateau. If the space is only a container, the "emptiness" of the Cézallier is frightening, because it is nothing. In order to grasp "this great surrounding nothing" (p. 80), we need the rhythm of walking, because "instead of reducing the distance, walking leaves it intact" (p. 101), because it measures the world by the yardstick of the body: "the real dimensions of the world remain those of which the body alone [...] is the yardstick" (*idem*). This observation is similar to A. Berque, who recalls that the old units of distance in inches, cubits, feet, were bodily analogies used to measure, locate and delimit space. The "pure space" provided by the walker therefore has nothing to do with that of locations.
- 28 The modesty of the peaks of this mountain enhances the value of walking and makes it possible to assess distance: "my entire route is in my field of vision, both the one I have already walked and the one I still have to do" (p. 84). And at the end of his or her journey, the walker is surprised by "the perception of the enormous distance that, without the slightest concession to the spirit of excess, I have been walking calmly for days" (p. 132). Walking gives a literal and full meaning to the distance sought by the itinerant retreatant. What's more, these great spaces offer infinite horizons, where body and mind are liberated: "you don't suffocate, you breathe, your gaze doesn't stumble, it lets off steam. One could not dream of a more powerful vasodilator than such a landscape" (p. 133).
- 29 A. Berque reminds us that since the discoveries on relativity, all the sciences must "re-close the Universe", i.e. posit that size, space-time, are not infinite, that the dimension of the universe is limited, in other words that the universe has a horizon. The resorption of altitude by flatness clears the view of the Highlands. "A mountain that is physically less obvious, but [...] metaphysically purer. The secret of this charm is that the altitude here leaves the latitude intact and promotes the perception of horizontality. The dimensions of the mountain (size, altitude, slope) widen to the cardinal landmarks. And only walking gives the meaning of this new space, as it "experiences the transition from the mountain to the mountain". This sentence is reflected by Jean-Marc Besse's idea on the horizon as "the overflowing power of the being that presents itself in the landscape" (Besse, 2009).

Inhabiting the Highlands Desert

- 30 Throughout his itinerary, Fr. Cassingena paints a nostalgic picture of the human landscape of these Highlands where legacies and elements of renewal are closely intertwined.

Figure 4: Itinerary of François Cassingena-Trévedy in Upper Auvergne

A dying world

- 31 Fr. Cassingena's journey is not just a week's walk, but around multiple temporalities mixing the thickness of geological time, the stages of human occupation and the duration of a life that already remembers a bygone one. Thus, when he evokes the sadness of "the once burning and now extinct lands" (p. 13), he refers as much to the austerity of the volcanic landscapes, to a rural society that is disappearing, as to his memories of childhood holidays. First of all, the author replaces the evocation of a peasant land whose settlement, habitat and pastoral activity are rooted in time. There are as many clues to the human occupation of the Highlands. He lingers on the drawing of a village around its *couderc*⁷, the status of a village once rich in monks and faith, the profane and sacred interest of a church. He thus restores the secular framework of a rural village with its bell towers, *drailles* and *burons*.
- 32 This knowledge of rurality proves to be intimate with the memories of holidays spent at the L'Angle farm, the starting point for his wayfaring. As a child, little François came to La Bourboule to treat his asthma. The discovery of this environment has left its mark on the author, who composes a sensitive geography of emotions, sounds and smells. This evocation of the land of childhood is close to the "first country", this Cantalian

valley of Santoire, to which an author like Marie-Hélène Lafon dedicates a part of her work⁸. In their relationship to space, the inner feeling reveals "the extreme density of rural things" (p. 67). In these highlands, "night, snow and silence" make "the unheard-of bells of Christmas resound" (p. 34). Smells are catalysts in this geography of emotions, whether it be the smell of the farm's kitchen at breakfast, the scent of the hay in the stable, the "jam of bygone summers" (p. 41) or the scents of the forest crossed in autumn. There is also the expression of this "liturgy of the seasons" (p. 67), which gives more rhythm to rural life than in the city. By pointing out that "there was definitely a lot of snow and a lot of children in those days" (p. 37), the stylist emphasises the fact that the rural world of his childhood belonged to the past by pointing to demographic decline and global warming. He expresses this nostalgia in particular in his description of a rustic kitchen. Frozen in darkness, the room appears as the essential place of a rural micro-geography. Its décor bears witness to a bygone age, punctuated by a clock that is now nothing more than "the last heartbeat of a whole world that is about to disappear" (p. 162).

The modernisation of a mountain livestock farm

- 33 Quoting Virgil, Fr. Cassingena celebrates the work of the land; however, beyond the rustic utopia, this fine scholar also proves to be a good connoisseur of agricultural realities. He does not fail to mention the infestation of mole rats, a veritable scourge of the grasslands, and he tells us at random along the way about the mutations of upland farming, which no longer fits in with tradition. At the head of modernised farms, a new generation of breeders has been able to breathe new life into this highland area. Of course there is a contrast between the farm at l'Angle (commune of Mont Dore), faithful to the Ferrandaise breed, and the impressive GAEC de Chaumiane (commune of Compains), a large producer of Saint-Nectaire farmers with a herd of Montbéliarde and Abondance livestock. Through remarks, Cassingena gives an account of the diversity of these Highlands. The end of the "milk mountain" system put an end to the economy based on the manufacture of buron cheese, but did not prelude a decline in livestock farming. A renewal has taken place, as can be seen in the new livestock buildings and the more mixed herds than in the past. In the Cantal massif, it was based on the emergence of suckler farming for meat production. In the Puy-de-Dôme sectors, Saint-Nectaire's farm production contributed to the maintenance of a dairy model.
- 34 Agricultural decline remained limited. The territory of the void is not for those who know it. A veritable "still landscape", the pastoral landscape has essentially been preserved, even if Fr. Cassingena notes the presence of spruce and Douglas fir plantations, testimony to the reforestation of the late 1950s, at the height of the crisis of traditional pastoral formulas. The main change lies in the ruin of the "burons", which have become useless with the generalisation of the cattle-raising mountains, very rare still in activity, like the one at La Paillassière bas, belonging to a cooperative of shepherd's huts. In short, Fr. Cassingena underlines some features the renewal and diversification of livestock farming. Noting the presence of buffalo herds or the agro-ecological concerns of the "Élevage autrement" network of stockbreeders, he highlights the capacity for innovation in the Highlands.

Deep rural resilience

- 35 Characterised by population decline and extensive livestock farming, the Cézallier highlands seem to be deprived of prospects. However, through his observations and the recollection of his encounters, Fr. Cassingena conjured up this prognosis: rural life remains, even renews itself. The landscapes, the heritage in all its diversity and the very marginality of this highland range now constitute as many amenities, ferments of spatial requalification and new attractiveness.
- 36 A remnant of a commonplace green tourism, the *gîte* that welcomes him to the hamlet of Chaumiane offers services from another time, unsuited to current demands. For a long time, the volcanic mountain has remained marked by the outdated image of thermal baths, stays by returning emigrants and a social tourism with little value. New concepts are appearing, an alternative between a generic countryside and a more demanding and sometimes distorted high mountain, the cow mountain is asserting itself as the framework of a tourism of wide open spaces combining the discovery of a preserved environment, sports leisure activities and a rich heritage. The innovations exist, as Fr. Cassingena shows us with the Cézallier cycle railway, a tourist reuse of the old summer pastures railway line, and the existence of new places to discover the natural and cultural heritage of the Highlands, such as the Maison de la Pinatelle in Chalinargues, a partner of the PNR des Volcans (Volcanoes NRP). Also in Chalinargues, the local school was used in 2011 as a filming location for a remake of "La guerre des boutons", a curious mix of nostalgia and modernity of a revalorised rural area. In Collanges (a hamlet in the commune of Dienne), Fr. Cassingena notes the renovation of burons "transformed into posh holiday resorts" (p.138), while at the end of his itinerary, he approaches the Lac du Pêcher where a luxury hostelry has recently been set up. Rich in space, nature and traditions, the volcanic mountain, which has been declared a "national park of interiority" (p. 16), is today renewing its tourist activity, a renewal to which the author sometimes takes a critical look when he denounces the followers of a sporting hike who are more concerned with performance than with encounters (p. 129). Fr. Cassingena knows how to appreciate the richness of these encounters and grasp their significance. For example, while making a stop at the "bistrot" in Brion, he discusses literature with the owner, a former bookseller in Toulouse, and thus shows us that the field of residential migration is now widening to these extreme margins. This place serves as a tearoom, a library, and an herbalist's shop and signals the beginning of a sociological change and the emergence of new rural conviviality. The latter are superimposed on the traditional forms, hunting and its group beats or the rural vigils to which the walker is invited during one of these stages.
- 37 In the end, Fr. Cassingena's story is a bearer of hope, as the author shows us the resilience of a society of the few that know how to preserve and reinvent a whole rural sociability. The solitary walker expresses here a deep empathy for this rare but authentic humanity in which he has "only met friends" (p. 176).

Cum ipso in monte

- 38 "With him on the mountain", this spiritual motto sums up the situation of the reader closing the book of this monk who is in turn a geographer, an ethnologist of a dying world and a spiritualist sharing his mystical experience. Practicing itinerancy makes us

rediscover the role of space in our lives, through the teachings of geography, through walking, and through hindsight on historical developments.

- 39 Fr. Cassingena makes other interesting remarks that the dimensions of this article do not allow us to relate. We should study the meaning of roaming that the Hebrews expressed in the biblical verses that mark out the text (Piveteau, 1995); or else we should locate the traces of the spiritual that still dot the space and experience of today. But what has been developed is enough to show that this *Cantique de l'Infinisterre* creates for the geography of wayfaring a commentary comparable to what the 1974 publication of Georges Pérec's *Espaces d'espaces* represented for the New Geography.

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NOTES

1. François Cassingena-Trévedy, 2016, *Cantique de l'infinistère. À travers l'Auvergne*, coll. Arpenter le sacré, Desclée de Brouwer, 175 p.
2. Winter refuges commonly found in the Auvergne.
3. *Le Ressuscité*, 1986, Desclée de Brouwer.
4. Letter to Geneviève, August 9, 1954. Deffontaines collection from the BNC.
5. « Waymark » or « milestone » in English.

6. For example Anzat-le-Luguet has 19 hamlets over 66.56 km².
 7. Collective meadows located in the villages of Auvergne.
 8. In particular in *Traversée* (Guérin 2015) and *Histoires* (Buchet / Chastel 2017).
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ABSTRACTS

There are different approaches to writing travel narratives and literature about mountain wayfaring. This article studies the journey of a contemporary writer in the highlands. By providing a historical context for the space crossed and by confronting the expressed emotions brought on by the landscape which led to the marginalization of the Cézallier massif, the study shows how one can elaborate on the experiences felt in a certain location and give a sense of place and represent the countryside in a sensitive way.

INDEX

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