



## Dans les forêts de Sibérie

*Sylvain Tesson*

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## Dans les forêts de Sibérie Sylvain Tesson

Sylvain Tesson, pour rassasier son besoin de liberté, a trouvé une solution radicale et vieille comme les expériences des ermites de la vieille Russie : s'enfermer seul dans une cabane en pleine taïga sibérienne, sur les bords du Baïkal, pendant six mois. De février à juillet 2010, il a choisi de faire l'expérience du silence, de la solitude, et du froid. Sa cabane, construite par des géologues soviétiques dans les années brejnéviennes, est un cube de rondins de trois mètres sur trois, chauffé par un poêle en fonte, à six jours de marche du premier village et à des centaines de kilomètres d'une piste. Vivre isolé du monde nécessite avant tout de s'imposer un rythme. Le matin, Sylvain Tesson lit, écrit, fume, ou dessine. Puis ce sont cinq longues heures consacrées à la vie domestique : il faut couper le bois, déblayer la neige, préparer les lignes de pêche, réparer les avaries de l'hiver... Le défi de six mois d'ermitage, c'est de savoir si l'on réussira à se supporter. En cas de dégoût de soi, nulle épaule où s'appuyer, nul visage pour se lustrer les yeux. L'inspecteur forestier Chabourov qui l'a déposé sur cette grève le premier jour le savait. Il lui a glissé, énigmatique, en se touchant la tempe : « Ici, c'est un magnifique endroit pour se suicider ». La solitude finira par se révéler fertile : quand on n'a personne à qui exposer ses pensées, la feuille de papier est un confident précieux ; le carnet de note, un compagnon poli. C'est ce journal que nous offre à lire Sylvain Tesson. En notant minutieusement, presque quotidiennement, ses impressions face au silence, ses luttes pour survivre dans une nature hostile, ses désespoirs, ses doutes, mais aussi, ses moments d'extase, de paix intérieure et d'osmose avec la nature, Sylvain Tesson nous fait partager une expérience hors du commun. Finalement « la vie en cabane apprend à peupler l'instant, à ne rien attendre de l'avenir et à accepter ce qui advient comme une fête. Le génie du lieu aide à apprivoiser le temps ». Une expérience comme seule la littérature peut la ressaisir afin qu'elle ne soit pas seulement une aventure isolée, mais une aventure exceptionnelle à la portée de tous.

## Dans les forêts de Sibérie Details

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# From Reader Review *Dans les forêts de Sibérie* for online ebook

## Diane S ? says

Living for six months. alone in an isolated cabin in the Siberian Taiga, not sure of the location or the intense cold but living and being alone sounds awfully good at times. The author arrives in February and stays until the end of July, so he deals with the intense cold first, but he has brought plenty of supplies, and plenty of reading material. I found it amusing that the only two contemporary authors on his list were James Ellroy and Michael Connelly, he calls them palette cleansers.

The prose and descriptions are amazingly beautiful. I could have picked quotes out on nearly every page. What he sees and experiences, he writes down daily in his journal as well as his thoughts and quotes from other sources, books etc. They were wonderful and he experiences something few people ever will. By book end he almost persuaded me that maybe Siberia would be the place to be alone. Not quite though, I am not that brave.

At the end of his six months these were his thoughts. "I came here without knowing whether I'd find the strength to stay; I leave knowing that I will return. I've discovered that living within silence is rejuvenating. The virginity of time is a treasure. The parade of hours is busier than the plowing through of miles. The eye never tires of splendor.

The more one knows things, the more beautiful they become."

Every time I picked up this book to read I felt a calmness and peacefulness, not many books can do that.

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## Patrick says

This is one of those books which I began by enjoying, but which so steadily disappointed and frustrated me throughout that I set it down again after a week with a sense of relief. It's not awful, and it certainly is diverting — but then any record of a six month stay in a cabin in remote Siberia could hardly fail to provide at least a few good anecdotes. The problem is that the author's penchant for aphorisms goes beyond a matter of literary style: you begin by thinking that he can't possibly believe half of the things he writes here, convinced that at any moment he is about to strike upon something else, something deeper and more insightful in his writing — but that moment of revelation never comes. There's nothing wrong with what he has to say except that it is all so sadly limited. If I were the editor and this came across my desk after our man had been out on assignment for six months, I'd send him back for six more to have a really good think about himself.

To explain: the author is a fairly well-known French travel writer, and the book (in translation) is his record of the time he spent in a tiny one-room cabin on the shores of Lake Baikal in Siberia. It's a wild, desolate and dangerous place; the lake is vast and deep, one of the biggest in the world, and entirely frozen for part of the year; his temporary home is miles from the nearest neighbour, let alone a town or village of any kind. He lives off pasta and tomato sauce, fish caught from the lake, the occasional cigar and (frankly unbelievable) quantities of vodka. He becomes friends with some of the local fishermen and rangers tasked with monitoring the local outposts of civilisation, many of whom are as eccentric as you'd expect in a book like this. He adopts a couple of dogs and he saunters around the surrounding landscape, thinking his thoughts. He

reads a great many books from the enormous (and extremely fine) reading list he's brought with him. He chops wood. He feeds the fire. He writes.

Apparently he also uses the time to make a documentary about himself, but you'd never know that from how he presents himself here. I haven't seen the film, but I only realised this after a brief Google search brought it up; a camera is mentioned once or twice here, but that's about it. Perhaps this might not strike every reader as a particularly significant omission — and I don't really feel it affects the book — but it did strike me as further confirmation of the author's total lack of self-consciousness in his work.

The presence of a camera changes its subject as soon as it is switched on, yet the work that he presumably put into making that documentary doesn't feature here at all because it isn't part of the version of himself that he wants to put into the book. Through writing it seems he has attempted to erase and reconstruct his persona into a creature that was somehow born into this world where he is not just another man on holiday, but a new resident, with as much right to be there as the birds and the bears and the fish and the ice and the trees.

There's other stuff that he half-mentions in a way that's gently infuriating: in his packing list, he mentions bringing various electrical devices, plus solar panels and batteries to charge them, and though he never details what they are, there are occasional mentions of a computer and listening to music (and of course the camera). Whether or not one can listen to music or a radio during six months in the wilderness seems to me just as important as reading — but apparently this merits no clarification. It's bizarre.

Yet the author seems entirely at home, here in this world of his own writing. Frequently his little home is compared to a return to a womb-like environment of perfect security and serenity while the worst of the weather rages outside, and it would be tough not to feel a degree of affinity at this point: after all, one needn't venture into the wilderness to crave peace of mind. But it turns out that the actual condition of hermitage is integral to the point he is making. The author is convinced that the average hermit is happier and more easily sustained than his brothers and sisters in the city; and not only that, but the hermit is also the only truly revolutionary figure in a political world. In deciding to withdraw their labour from society, the hermit detaches themselves entirely from the greater mass of civilisation, and in doing so develops into what is effectively a better class of person.

He must have been referring to a different hermit entirely, because it swiftly becomes clear that the author here remains a product of society and a participant in it, even if he is temporarily allowing himself to pretend otherwise. I have about as much patience with this point of view as I do with the rabid capitalist who insists he owes nothing to the government which built his roads, raised his children, and which will cart him to hospital and put him in the ground when he dies. As it does with all of us, society provided this author with the tools that enable him to survive out on his own: it wrote and printed his supply of books, it fashioned his wooden cabin and his cast-iron stove and his fishing rods and his down jacket and his sleeping bag. And it shaped his mind so finely that he cannot even recognise himself as a product of the world and not of his own imagination.

Nor has he even really 'left' society: he is merely on loan. The satellite phone is his umbilical cord back to the real world, and when he receives news by text message that his girlfriend has broken up with him, he weeps — as anyone else would do. The whole shape of his expedition is defined as a temporary affair, one that will not only provide him with physical and spiritual nourishment, but which will also furnish his society with another book, another film to add to our ever-growing stock of recorded encounters with the self. Such is the proof, if any were needed, that he is no more an island than any of us.

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## **Feroz says**

Despite enjoying this book quite a bit, I think it's only fair for me to warn coming readers that Tesson can at times come across more than a little insufferable. Vast quantities of alcohol and self-satisfaction are Tesson's closest companions in his tiny cabin, and while the former makes for entertaining stories, the latter only offers us dull quasi-philosophical rambling.

When the intellectual snobbery abates, a few chapters into his stay, the book is delightful. This is Laura Ingalls Wilder in the heart of Russia - a world that is amazingly foreign and very interesting to read about. My advice to anyone who picks up the book: plough through Tesson's sickly self-congratulation and a very satisfying read awaits. Don't give up!

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## **Olaf Gütte says**

Sylvain Tesson sucht die Ruhe und Abgeschiedenheit und findet sie in und um einer Hütte am Baikalsee. Vielleicht ein bisschen zu viel Lobhudelei um die Einsamkeit, aber derjenige, welcher täglich Großstadtstress erlebt und ertragen muss, wird den Autor um dieses halbe Jahr am Baikalsee beneiden.

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## **Sodatime says**

J'adore les récits de voyage et d'aventure humaine. Celui-ci est vraiment bien écrit. On ressent parfaitement les sensations d'isolement, de froid, de fatigue et aussi de découverte de soi et d'amitié. Ca donne envie de se lever et de commencer à marcher !

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## **Ocilia says**

J'ai cru que je ne viendrais jamais à bout de ce livre...

J'ai trouvé le début très laborieux. Je n'aimais pas le côté prétentieux de l'auteur, il ne se passait rien, le style d'écriture ne me touchait pas...

Je l'ai finalement trouvé moins prétentieux en avançant dans le livre, est-ce l'habitude ou est-ce vraiment le cas, je n'en sais rien. La deuxième partie du roman est tout de même moins laborieuse à lire, mais je n'y ai toujours pas trouvé grand intérêt.

J'ai tout de même retenu des réflexions et citations intéressantes, mais noyées dans un tas de mots compliqués et des litres de vodka, elle perdent un peu de leur intérêt.

Bref, 2 mois pour lire ce livre, contente d'en être venue à bout !





Le seul aspect qui me perturbe (qui n'est pas inhérent au texte, mais au personnage) est que Sylvain Tesson nous répète éprouver ce besoin de se poser, après une vie de baroudeur passée à voyager, à courir après le temps. Pourtant, son livre suivant est un récit de voyage, comme si son expérience érémitique n'avait été qu'une parenthèse et non une profonde remise en question de son quotidien. De plus, sa volonté de tester les limites en permanence, et parfois de manière complètement irréfléchie, a eu raison de lui, ne serait-ce que pour un temps, puisque cela lui a valu un grave accident. Or, à mon humble avis, le récit qu'il nous livre va à l'encontre d'une telle attitude ; l'ascèse aussi bien que l'hédonisme (cf. la vodka) mis en œuvre dans son épreuve solitaire étant des philosophies qui tendent plutôt à la connaissance des limites et à leur évitement au moyen d'un apprentissage ordonné.

Néanmoins, ces considérations plutôt périphériques ne remettent pas en question le plaisir que j'ai éprouvé à lire ce superbe livre.

Bon, trêve de bavardages ; après tant de pâtes au Tabasco et autres blinis carbonisés, je vais me rabattre sur un livre prônant le régime sans gluten ! ^^

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### **Martinxo says**

My book of the year? Quite possibly. If you are intrigued by the idea of living in a hut for six months by a lake in the depths of Siberia then this book is surely for you. Tesson is French and writes extremely well, he took 80 or so books with him (listed in the book), three or four crates of vodka and several large boxes of cigars. Sounds civilised to me. This is Tesson's only book in English, we need more!

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### **Yanni Ratajczyk says**

Deze stond al een tijdje op me te wachten, en wanneer een vriend van me onlangs een soortgelijk verblijf van drie maanden in het gure Lapland aanvatte leek het een ideaal moment dit reisverslag ter hand te nemen. Tesson besloot om zijn leven in het drukke Parijs zes maanden te verruilen voor een hutje aan het immense Baikalmeer - met zijn 31.500 vierkante kilometer het grootste zoetwaterreservoir ter wereld. Hij wil het kluzenaarschap uittesten: kan hij uit de vluchtigheid van het stedelijke bestaan stappen om zich te wentelen in eenzaamheid, natuurschoon en literatuur? Kan hij - en dat is volgens hem de meest essentiële vraag - zichzelf verdragen? Met die vraagstukken in het achterhoofd schrijft Tesson prachtige bespiegelingen over de glanzende breuklijnen in het ijs, het dartelen van mezen op de besneeuwde vensterbank, de schoonheid van de verstillings, de bruutheid van het Russische bestaan en de noden van de menselijke ziel. Inspirerende aanrader.

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### **Anina e gambette di pollo says**

Il formato standard della birra siberiana è 3 litri.

Durante un viaggio Tesson si fermò sulle rive dei Baikal e decise che prima o poi ci sarebbe tornato. Ci tornò, per sei mesi di solitudine in una capanna di tronchi 3x3: una stufa, due finestre, una porta.

Dal 16 febbraio a 16 di luglio

Ovviamente con attrezzatura di sacco a pelo, pentole e coltelli e viveri. Soprattutto Tabasco, spaghetti cinesi,



sigari cubani, vodka e libri.

Fuori tutto e nulla: nulla per un inquilino di un casamento urbano, tutto per chi sa vedere.

Quante volte abbiamo detto che avremmo avuto bisogno di solitudine, che questa società crea ripulsa, che la natura è meravigliosa?

Avere il tempo di ascoltare il silenzio, di camminare nella neve, di scivolare sul ghiaccio, di avere per compagnia un uccellino fuori dalla finestra, dei buoni libri da “leggere” finalmente. Niente orologi, televisione (il massimo che facciamo è dire ah, io non ce l’ho), cellulari, niente giornali, niente notizie. E’ vero che lui il cellulare ce l’ha, ma funzionerà solo una volta. Qualche rara visita di e ai vicini (minimo 25 km nel ghiaccio). In genere guardiani di stazioni meteorologiche o controllo delle regioni di caccia. Personaggi singolari, compagni di cene e sbronze.

Solo con la stagione buona qualche turista, francese o tedesco o olandese.

Di che parla il libro? E’ il diario di una solitudine appagante e pacifica, che nel respiro della natura trova sufficiente sostentamento alla propria anima. Le giornate trascorrono nella gestione del tempo senza obblighi, se non quelli della sopravvivenza: spaccare legna, pescare, tenere accesa la stufa, scrivere e leggere. E quelli imposti dal sorgere del sole o della luna.

Essere eremita per Tesson è una scelta, anche se limitata nel tempo.

Molti lettori direbbero “due palle”, altri accuserebbero il narratore di contemplazione del proprio ombelico, altri tremerebbero senza e-book, iphone, ipad, tablet, note book. Chi sogna una crociera è meglio non lo legga. Chi crede che il massimo sia l’avventura di un giovane incosciente alla ricerca del mondo selvaggio, non lo legga. Chi crede che la strada giusta sia Robinson che ricrea sulla sua isola i riti del mondo british, eviti. Chi è astemio, può “sentire” i profumi dell’alcool anche attraverso le pagine e ubriacarsi. Chi non mangia due volte di file le stesse cose, può intristirsi.

Gli altri ci possono provare e non rimanere delusi.

13.10.2012

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## **Sophie says**

L'auteur m'a très rapidement agacée avec ses grands airs. Je lui trouve un air de famille avec Elizabeth Gilbert : tous deux à la recherche d'une forme de transcendance, mais selon moi trop imbus d'eux mêmes pour la trouver avec humilité. Les descriptions de l'auteur de sa propre humilité et de son choix si particulier, si osé (selon ses dires) m'ont fait grincer des dents. Pour être humble, il faut avant tout oublier son nombril. Et arrêter de compter les verres de vodka avalés.

Par contre, je salue le style, tantôt presque télégraphique, tantôt enlevé, qui m'a révélé de belles images et de beaux paysages. Il m'a donné envie de rechercher des photos de la région.

Deux étoiles donc pour l'antipathie profonde du personnage, quelque peu rattrapée par son sens de l'observation et des mots.

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## **Ma says**

On peut dire que j'ai pris mon temps, que j'ai traîné, que j'ai peiné pour achever ce livre. Mais ça n'est pas sa faute. Au contraire, c'est tout à son mérite que, malgré mon apathie littéraire du moment, je lui sois restée

fidèle, y retournant quand l'envie revenait (ajoutons que lu dans le cadre du Club Lecture MS, j'avais aussi une motivation. Et qu'emprunté à la bibliothèque du coin, un impératif). Toujours est-il que Dans Les Forêts de Sibérie nous autorise à prendre son temps à la lecture. Ça se déguste, se picore, se relit aussi peut-être. Mis à part ces considérations techniques, ce livre est un plaisir. J'ai entraperçu des paysages somptueux, mais surtout j'ai rencontré un homme. Un homme que je trouve plein de défauts, des défauts aussi graves que le sont ses qualités. Un homme dont les pensées m'inspirent. Mise en abîme.

L'écriture et le rythme de Tesson semblent suivre le rythme des saisons, le chapitre d'avril est pareil au printemps, annonciateur d'une énergie nouvelle. Difficile de dire ce qui m'a tant plu dans cette lecture. Peut-être que (malgré) son propos éminemment intellectuel, nourri (pourri?) par les auteurs lus et les sentences sur le monde moderne, le livre est aussi une expérience sensible, une œuvre aussi sûre d'elle qu'elle est humble.

Points bonus pour : l'amour de Tesson pour les Russes et la Russie (et la vodka) / l'aspect "ultra-quotable" du livre (quelques pages grisées dans mon carnet) sans qu'on tombe dans l'aphorisme permanent / cette fin... je ne sais si j'aime ou je déteste, sûrement les deux, mais je n'irai pas choisir parce que c'est bien ainsi / le duo de chiens, presque un sidekick Disney^^

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## S@aP says

Lettura incantevole, con la quale sono stato in *consonanza* e armonia dalla prima all'ultima parola. Il diario di un isolamento voluto. Un viaggio all'interno del Sé. Una presa di distanza, non solo fisica, dalla realtà che tutto travolge. Con l'intento di ascoltare, prima ancora che capire. Per recuperare il *presente*, spogliandosi delle *proiezioni* ossessive, cui siamo forzati dalla vita: il continuo, e ansioso, *programmare* un tempo che deve ancora venire; il malinconico *vagheggiare* il tempo che non è più. La riscoperta del legame ancestrale e vivifico con la natura. La constatazione della coincidenza (o estrema contiguità) tra la più cupa disperazione e la più luminosa felicità, e del loro filosofico annullarsi. Il senso di una reale serenità di fronte all'incomprensibile...

Per amare questo libro bisogna avere un'inclinazione alla solitudine; tanti onesti dubbi esistenziali; idee chiare che non siamo riusciti ad applicare (anche per colpa nostra, sia chiaro; non solo per colpa "della società"); un desiderio forte di recupero della Natura; fatalismo; determinismo; cultura; filosofia. Per banalizzarlo, bastano e avanzano gli argomenti logorroici di questa nostra società, che definisce scientificamente la propria inettitudine per sentirsi autorizzata a non vedere, a non *vedersi*. Per odiarlo basta una qualsiasi paura inespressa.

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## Marc says

Sylvain Tesson is never going to be one of my favorite authors, so much is clear to me now. I got angry, last year, after reading his "Sur les chemins noirs" (no English edition yet), because of his misanthropy and cancerous self-pity. This earlier work, "Six months in Siberian forests" is also a diary report, this time of a stay in a log cabin on Lake Bajkal, in Siberia in 2010. This book is more digestible, because Tesson is much more descriptive, and paints the harsh living conditions (especially in the winter) in that region. Occasionally there are charming sketches of the natural beauty of living near and on that massive lake (with the loud sounds of explosion, in the movement of the ice).

But once again I was annoyed by his continual attacks on modern civilization and humanity in general, his denigrating statements about other people (he both uplifts and downsets the habits of Russians), and his

pathetic self-pity. His diary is filled with very superficial statements of wisdom, with continuous drinking bouts, and rather boring reports of his hiking trips. Several details just don't fit, like the reference to the ongoing Arabic Spring (that was a year later!). Also, from his description it is very clear he didn't really live a hermit's life: he constantly got visits, or went to visit other people in the neighborhood (to drink and exchange very common opinions on life), and – through a computer and camera's – he had a regular outside line. So it seems to me that Tesson doesn't live up to the myth he creates himself. Only occasionally he has moments of clear insight in his escapism: *What am I? A coward that is terrified of the world and therefore has withdrawn into a log cabin in the forest. A funk who sinks in silence not to see the scenes of the time or to avoid bumping into his conscience as he walks along the shore*".

When you want to read about solitary life, in a much deeper and authentic way, I'd advice to read Rebecca Solnit or Karl-Ove Knausgard, and - although a bit outdated now - even "Walden" by Thoreau captivates far more.

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