

DAAD Summer School
“Dialogue on Cultural Heritage in Times of Crisis”

POMPEII IN TRAVEL LITERATURE

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ABSTRACT

This paper addresses the travel literature during the 17th up to the 19th century, which emerged as a result of the popularity of the so called “Grand Tour”. First of all it will discuss the Grand Tour and its itinerary and how it changed after the discoveries made in Pompeii and Herculaneum. Secondly it will show closely who participated and how this particular genre of literature reflects the experiences of these travellers. It is interesting to observe to changes: on the one hand the route itself modifies due to these new sites but also the people taking it upon themselves to visit Italy and the antique sites experience a notable development.

Keywords: travel literature – Pompeii – Grand Tour – Herculaneum – elite

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Basak Delice, born on December 15, 1991, recently handed in her Masters thesis on “Hermaphrodites in the Antique” and graduates in Classical and Christian Archaeology at the Friedrich-Alexander-University of Erlangen-Nuremberg. Her main focus lies on architecture and urbanism, specifically in Hellenistic and Roman Times as well as the sculptures and wall paintings of these periods. The topic of her Bachelor’s thesis dealt with the so-called “Ptolemaion of Limyra” – a tower tomb from the time of Ptolemy II dedicated to him by the people of Limyra.

1. THE GRAND TOUR AND ITS PARTICIPATORS

The beginning of the so called 'Grand Tour' can be dated back to the 16th century when artists from Germany and the Netherlands begun to travel southwards – especially to Italy.¹ Greece and Asia Minor were not really an option since they were not as easy to access as Italy regarding the political situation both being part of the Ottoman Empire.²

Purpose of these travels was to study the art of the ancient world and the Renaissance and also to use the knowledge that was acquainted during these studies in their own works of architecture, sculpture etc.³ At least this was the main goal of the artists of all sorts coming to Italy. The second group was the high society - the elite and the aristocratic parts - of northern Europe.

These young men were on their own for the first time, independent from their parents, and had to take care of themselves without any help – neither financially nor in any other way.⁴

But as stated above those who travelled were also artists and architects to whom their itinerary served as a special form of additional education.⁵ In the 17th century however the British discovered this way of travelling and the route itself as some sort of a special privilege for those who considered themselves as an educational elite.⁶ Diplomats and statesmen from England, France, Sweden, Germany and many more European nations began travelling south.⁷ The first one to establish the term 'Grand Tour' was Richard Lassels in 1670.⁸

2. THE ROUTE

The trip itself developed a status which became mandatory for a young British man if he wanted to be considered for public office as stated by Francis Bacon in 1615.⁹

The voyage took about ten months and started around September by passing through the Alps, then arriving in Genua on October and continuing afterwards to Florence.¹⁰ In November the traveller arrived in Rome for a short stay and went on to the south; after Naples and Paestum it was possible to travel further south but most travellers chose not to since this part of Italy was considered to be less attractive.¹¹ The important cities of the Magna Graecia as well as Pompeii and Herculaneum became relevant after their discoveries in 1738 and 1748.¹²

Rome was the highlight and hot spot of the tour and therefore the whole wintertime was spent here.¹³ Returning to the north, through Venice and Veneto, from the 18th century on also visiting Vicenza due to Palladio, became mandatory.¹⁴

Another way of travelling was to for example start off in England, passing through the Netherlands and France, and then take the searoute from Marseilles to Genoa.¹⁵

¹ Pieper 2008, 3.

² Ingamells 1996, 23.

³ Pieper 2008, 3.

⁴ Sweet 2012, 23.

⁵ Pieper 2008, 3 f.

⁶ Pieper 2008, 4.

⁷ De Seta 1996, 13.

⁸ De Seta 1996, 13. Pieper 2008, 4.

⁹ De Seta 1996, 13. Pieper 2008, 4.

¹⁰ Pieper 2008, 4.

¹¹ Pieper 2008, 4.

¹² De Seta 1996, 14 f.

¹³ Pieper 2008, 4 f.

¹⁴ Pieper 2008, 5.

¹⁵ De Seta 1996, 14. Ingamells 1996, 22.

Until 1920 this was the standard route for every participant of the Grand Tour.¹⁶ It had to change when other parts of Europe became more important for modern art and industrial developments and after that it was modified.¹⁷

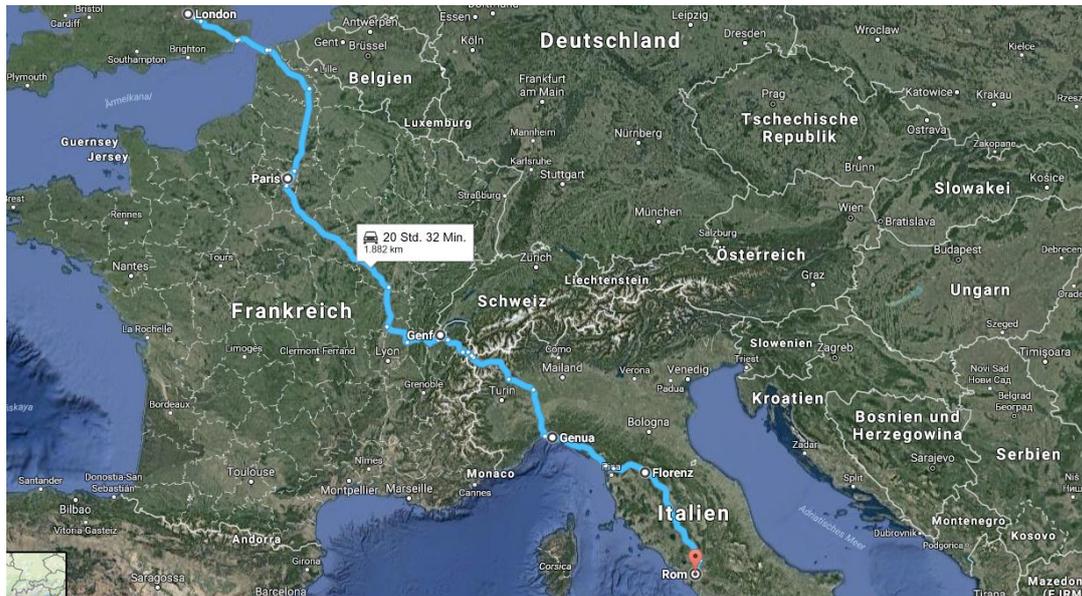


Figure 1. Example for the route, starting in London.

Education however was not the only purpose of the trip but also to engage with the local folks and learn their customs and traditions, the music and theatre – all in all the Italian way of life.¹⁸

It became a habit to compose some sort of diary of one's own journey and so the genre which is known to us as travel literature established itself and evolved during the centuries.¹⁹

The circumstances of the tour were very harsh: one had to either hire or bring their own vehicle which was highly recommended since it was hard to find a comfortable one in Italy.²⁰ The roads were either dusty in the spring or flooded in the winter and you had to hire a so called ‚vetturino‘ – someone we would call a guide these days.²¹

3. HERCULANEUM AND POMPEII

The first one to describe Herculaneum was the French attorney and author Charles de Brosses in 1750 when he visited the site in 1739.²² Horace Warpole was the first Brit to describe his experiences in a letter to his friend Richard West.²³

Pompeii became popular in the 1760s and soon afterwards people began to mention the site in their letters and descriptions of their voyages.²⁴ In 1762 Johann Joachim Winckelmann states that the British are the only

¹⁶ Pieper 2008, 5.

¹⁷ Pieper 2008, 5 f.

¹⁸ De Seta 1996, 14.

¹⁹ De Seta 1996, 15.

²⁰ Ingamells 1996, 21.

²¹ Ingamells 1996, 21 f.

²² Fitzon 2004, 2.

²³ Fitzon 2004, 3.

²⁴ Fitzon 2004, 3 ff.

ones burdening themselves with visiting Pompeii.²⁵ But a few years later it became a mandatory stop during the Grand Tour and between 1750 and 1870 every third traveller also visited Pompeii.²⁶

This was due to a change in the mind and reception of antique sites and their buildings: once again Winckelmann was the first to write that for the artists and architects of his time it was only possible to fully understand the past and to become as qualified as possible for one's craftmanship if he understood these buildings and these cities.²⁷



Figure 2: Letter from Joseph Wright with sketches of Castel St. Angelo and St. Peters (1774).

Since it was almost impossible to travel to Greece to see the original works, the Italian South was sort of a substitute since these parts were the old Greek colonies.²⁸ One was also forced to see for himself since the documentation of the sites only developed slowly and were not public but only accessible for a selected audience.²⁹

For Herculaneum for example the „Antichità di Ercolano Esposte“ became the most important published work by the Accademia Ercolanese between 1757 and 1792 in eight magnificent parts which were more popular for their pictures and tomes.³⁰

However these sites still did not manage to become very popular. And this is the point where our problems which also exist in general regarding the travel literature begin.

4. THE LITERATURE

The literature developing during the trip was supposed to be a diary and a story at the same time. The traveller could describe the roads he took, how these were travelled, what he saw. Especially the last part became more and more the focus of these books, essays and letters. The writer was supposed to be able to describe the sites and buildings in a way so that the reader did not necessarily had to take the trip himself.³¹

²⁵ Fitzon 2004, 4.

²⁶ Fitzon 2004, 5.

²⁷ Fitzon 2004, 6.

²⁸ Fitzon 2004, 7.

²⁹ Fitzon 2004, 7.

³⁰ Von Hase 2013, 216.

³¹ Fitzon 2004, 28.

This ideal was brought to paper by August Schilling in 1847. Of course not everyone travelling Italy and writing diaries or letters thought about publishing these and so some of these later on published ones had to be worked over and were changed in some way.³²

A problem caused by this genre is that they are in no way objective but rather just show what the author saw and what he regarded to be important, beautiful etc. to write down.³³ These were not only illustrating the texts but rather served as inspirational material for artists everywhere in Europe and for the elite to pick motives and patterns according to their taste for their orders regarding art, interior design, gardens and so on.³⁴

Beginning in 1750 and up to 1870 most of the travelers and authors of travel literature were not young men but middle-aged around 36 years.³⁵ Since from the 1800s on it was not just a trip the rich and royal families took but also anyone who could effort it, the elite like young gentlemen, artists, sculptors etc. travelled in young years whereas the rest only did so when the necessary resources were established which mostly occurred when they already were a little older.³⁶ Therefore the content was mostly no scientific or philological discourse but rather became literally travel literature in which the subject and his or her experiences and opinions became the center of attention.

Literature about Pompeii and Herculaneum was always written after the visits since it was forbidden up until the beginning of the 19th century to make sketches or write something down right away there and then.³⁷ So time passing between the visit and writing down the details was another problem regarding authenticity and correctness of the content. However the two sites became more popular over time and were constantly visited especially after the new railways were built: in 1839 the first ever route in Italy was opened and it took the passengers from Naples to Pompeii.³⁸

It did have several reasons though why these sites were treated as so called *„segreto di stato“*: they were also *„Affare di stato“* since the financial support came from the state and their goals were firstly to enrich the collections with the discoveries from both cities and secondly to enrich the world with new material and show the public these successful findings.³⁹

There are two turning points to constant regarding the trip: with the discovery of the Campanian sites the route was modified and they were added to the itinerary and secondly the people travelling changed: not only the British pupils with their tutors were travelling to Italy, but also people from the middle class looking to educate themselves in everything regarding antiquity.⁴⁰

In the 1840s travel literature kind of found its end when general handbooks like Badecker or the ones from John Murray were published for a large audience.⁴¹

5. CONCLUSION

In conclusion people taking this trip are firstly artists and the high society of northern European countries and their main focus lied on Italy due to its accessibility. Moving reasons were the desire to feel and see the landscape of antiquity – also by using their knowledge and broadening it by visiting these old cities and sites. The highlight of the tour of course was Rome.

With time though the circle of participating people changed and it became more or less a question of wealth. Also new discoveries such as Pompeii caused a change in the usual tour taken. These changes are also

³² Fitzon 2004, 31.

³³ Fitzon 2004, 36.

³⁴ Von Hase 2013, 216.

³⁵ Fitzon 2004, 123.

³⁶ Fitzon 2004, 123.

³⁷ Fitzon 2004, 36. Von Hase 2013, 216.

³⁸ Fitzon 2004, 121.

³⁹ Von Hase 2013, 216.

⁴⁰ Fitzon 2004, 125.

⁴¹ Fitzon 2004, 9.

evident in the changes of the literature itself which more and more became a guide rather than letters and descriptions of experiences made during the stay.

Travel literature can be a letter, an essay or a description in a journal kept during the trip. However it is difficult to see this genre as a scientific one since this is evidently not the case. Mostly the author describes his experiences and the things he saw in a very subjective way which also regards sketches, drawings plans etc.

Yet it can be helpful when looking for clues or if one tries to understand the people of a long gone era and their lives.

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Pompeii in travel literature



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Structure

The Grand Tour

Who participated and why?

The route and its development

Pompeii and Herculaneum

Conclusion

The Grand Tour

- Starts out in the 16th century
- People from Northern European countries travelling to the South, mainly Italy
- Becomes a term coined by Richard Lassels in 1670

Who participated on the Grand Tour?

- Young men from wealthy families
- Artists, e.g. sculptors or painters
- Members of aristocratic elites, royals
- Later on also women
- Salesmen, distributing Italian goods in any form
- Diplomats and other statesmen

Purposes of the Grand Tour

- Learn more about ancient art and architecture
- Use own knowledge of ancient literature
- See not only the objects but also the landscape (keyword: romanticism)
- Get a feeling of the atmosphere of “long gone time”
- For artists it meant to learn from the Italian masters
- Luring the new “customers” which requested their works for their own use



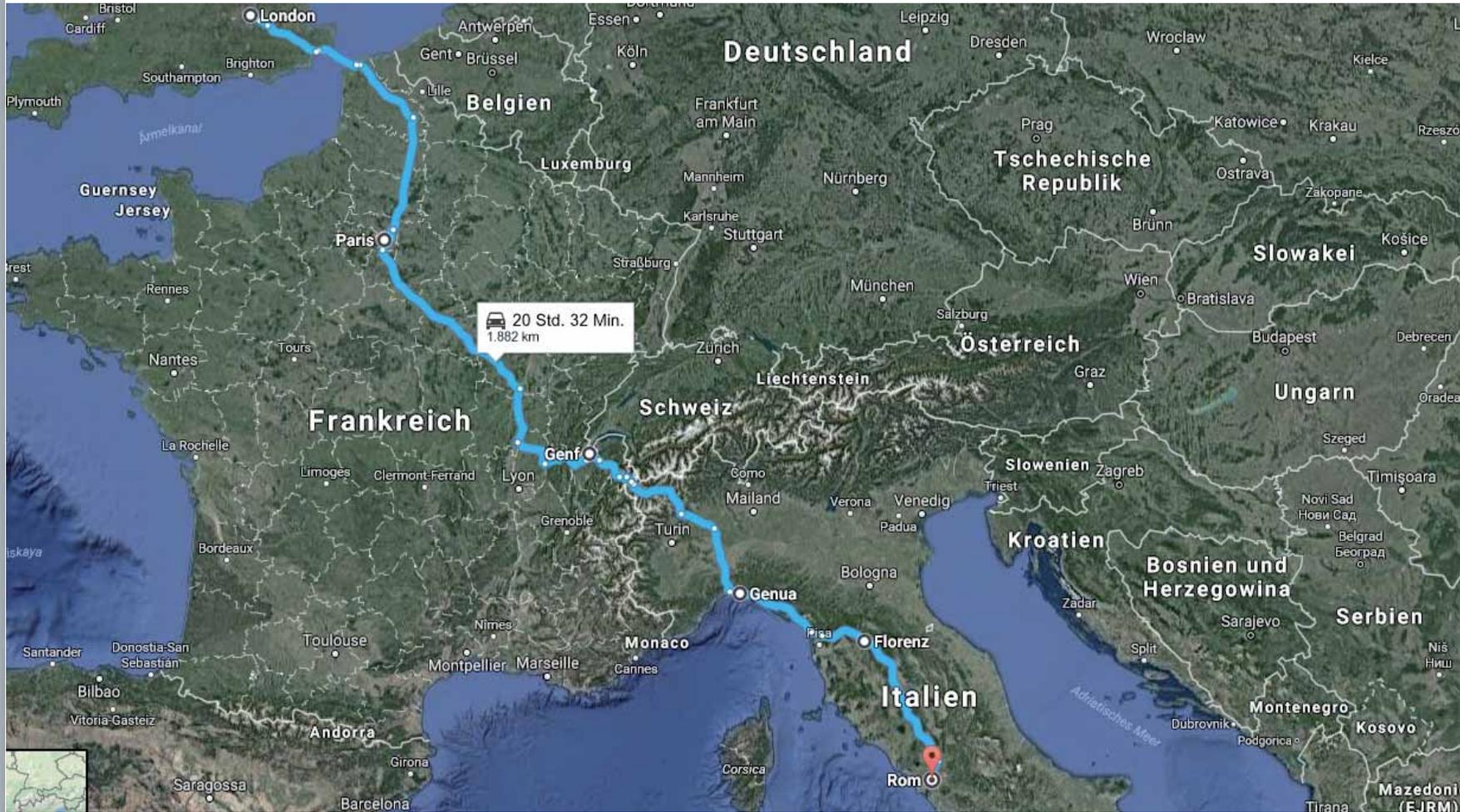
Portrait of a Young Man by Pompeo Batoni, ca. 1760–65



Purposes of the Grand Tour

- Become more independent from one's family, emotionally, physically, and financially
- Educational purpose: to see the antique sites and learn more about antiquity in general
- In cities like Venice also the Middle Ages could be studied
- Also: get to know the country, its people, their behavior, customs, culture, lifestyle etc.
- Learning to adapt to those new circumstances

The route





Giovanni Paolo Panini (ca. 1692-1765) "View of the Roman Forum" 1747.

Goethe about Rome

“Rome is the place, where in our opinion the whole antiquity comes together in one, and also what we see in the old poets, in the old statesmen, we believe that we even feel that more in Rome. Like Homer didn't compare himself to other poets, Rome can't be compared to another city, the Roman environment can't be.”



Letter from Joseph Wright with sketches of Castel St. Angelo and St. Peters (1774)

Pompeii and Herculaneum

- After their discoveries become relevant in the literature in the 1760's
- After that more people travel further southwards instead of returning up North, e.g. to Venice from Rome
- still these sites apparently did not meet the expectations of the visitors, as stated in the literature
- Critic regarded size, darkness, ornaments, style and other points



Johann Joachim Winckelmann, by Anton Raphael Mengs, ca. 1777.

Problems

Subjectivity is a good example as one of the problems regarding travel literature, for example as seen in this statement by Jean-Claude Richard de Saint-Non:

“ The orders are of small proportions, a circumstance, that takes away a lot from the architecture, because suddenly it can't be denied, that either the bigger or lesser impression a building gives us is depending on its size.”

Conclusion

- The popularity of the Grand Tour is important for travel literature
- People taking this trip are firstly artists and the high society of northern European countries
- Their main focus lies on Italy due to the accessibility
- Moving reasons are the desire to feel and see the landscape of antiquity, using their knowledge and broadening it by visiting the old cities

Conclusion

- Highlight of the tour of course is Rome
- With time the circle of participating people change, it becomes more or less a question of wealth
- Also after new discoveries such as Pompeii cause a change in the usual tour taken
- These changes are also evident in the changes of the literature itself which more and more becomes a guide rather than letters and descriptions of experiences made during the stay

Conclusion

- Travel literature can be a letter, an essay or a description in a journal kept during the trip
- however it is difficult to see this genre as a scientific one since this is evidently not the case
- Mostly the author describes his experiences and the things he saw in a very subjective way
- This also regards sketches, drawings plans etc.
- Yet it can be helpful when looking for clues or if one tries to understand the people of a long gone era and their lives