Travelling In and Out of Italy

Travelling In and Out of Italy: 19th and 20th-Century Notebooks, Letters and Essays

By

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INTRODUCTION

> *Viaggiare serviva e serve a guardare il mondo esterno, presente e passato, ma anche a guardare se stessi, a interrogarsi sul mondo, sugli uomini, sul destino di ognuno. Viaggiare per "filosofare," cioè per gusto del sapere e del capire, che (insieme all'amare) sono parte essenziale della vita.*
>
> —Giacomo Corna Pellegrini[1]

It is Ulysses in the *Odyssey* who is both the first traveller as well as the first to tell the tale of his travels. Driven by Neptune's persecution, his wanderings through fantastic and dangerous lands enable him to return in the end with a new knowledge of the world and its ways. It is not insignificant that his route is a circular one: drawn increasingly further away from the known and the familiar, it is through his encounters with what is a different reality that he arrives at understanding, identity, and self-knowledge.[2]

These other worlds visited by Ulysses constitute a threshold between two different realms of experience, and the experience of home as opposed to elsewhere, self as opposed to other, are thereby reconciled without the loss of the defining characteristics of either.

The mapping of the complexities of those routes of passage which grant or deny travellers an encounter with otherness in its various forms will be the objective of this study, which will focus in particular on travel-writing in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

An examination of *genre* conventions and other elements which shape the representation and narration of travel will show how the terms "travel" and "traveller" acquire different connotations in different historical

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[1] "*Travel still offers what it did in previous ages, a means of looking at the external world, past and present, but also of looking at oneself, of asking questions about the world, humankind, and the destiny of each individual. Travel as philosophical pursuit, undertaken out of desire for knowledge and understanding, which – along with love – are an essential part of life.*"

[2] Cf. Pino Fasano, *Letteratura e viaggio* (Roma-Bari: Editori Laterza, 1999) 10.

periods. These shifts in meaning will also be considered as a function of the individual traveller's aesthetic sensibility and his particular relation to the existential and psychological dimensions of travel. Travellers in previous centuries provide a valuable index to the preconceived ideas and stereotypes of the day. Their writings, inasmuch as they reflect such a wide range of individual sensibility, culture, and experience, offer a variety of perspectives on these prevalent ideas, even as their authors retrace the well-worn fixed itineraries established by the fashions and habits of their time and place. The travel account will become an important instrument for the expression of philosophical, scientific and political ideas, and tales of travel, real or fictitious, will, in fact, be the first bestsellers.[3]

The second and third chapters will be devoted to specific texts and the contexts in which they were produced. An examination of notebooks, letters, *reportage* and essays will enable us to bring the hermeneutic significance of travellers into sharper focus and to extend the reflections made in Chapter 1. These works span a period of approximately sixty years, beginning with 1889, which marks the year of Benedetto Croce's notebook devoted to his travels in Spain, and ending with 1953, when Guido Piovene publishes his *De America*.

Any attempt to cover such a vast period naturally raises certain issues. Given that in the nineteenth century alone there are countless works which address, however tangentially, the theme of travel, one might legitimately ask whether the analysis of a specific theme demands a study of all those works which instantiate it. However, since a deductive approach does not require that each occurrence of a phenomenon be examined in order to describe it adequately, it should be sufficient for the purposes of this study to dwell at length only on some few pre-eminent writers whose works most fully express, in my opinion, the spirit of nineteenth- and twentieth-century travel-writing in and out of Italy.

The relationship between travel, place, and otherness oscillates between simple curiosity on the part of the traveller, a desire for adventure and, what is typical of so much nineteenth-century travel-writing, the quest for a sense of identity which is unfettered by the repressive elements in the traveller's native culture. Travel becomes a means of understanding the world and of overcoming those preconceptions and stereotypes which are part of the traveller's cultural baggage. It broadens the scope of the world's possibilities by jarring one's sense of the ordinary and the

[3] Cf. Guglielmo Scaramellini, "Raffigurazione dello spazio e conoscenza geografica: i resoconti di viaggio," *Geografie private: i resoconti di viaggio come lettura del territorio*, a cura di Elisa Bianchi (Milano: Edizioni Unicopli, 1985) 40.

extraordinary, enabling the subject to experience reality on more than one level.[4] An analysis of such new experiences must adopt an interpretive approach based on a specific "grammar of tourism," which is superimposed on a "grammar of the quotidian."[5] Differences between the traveller, an active agent who experiences deeply, and the tourist,[6] a passive subject and mere consumer of a product,[7] have long been the subject of scholarly debate.

> Il viaggio consiste, da un punto di vista psicologico, nell'applicazione alla realtà di un paradigma interpretativo specifico che trova la sua giustificazione formale nell'intervento di una frattura della normalità spaziale. Lo spostamento implica una definizione del nuovo luogo raggiunto ma anche, per contrasto, una reinterpretazione di quello che è stato lasciato. L'antinomia fra paradigma quotidiano e paradigma turistico è ben rappresentata dagli interrogativi che il nativo di una città si pone quando osserva l'entusiasmo dei turisti vaganti per le strade del suo quartiere, che a lui pare gradevole ma banale. Lo stesso luogo che suscita il fervore degli uni, per l'altro è indifferente. ... Pochi cittadini hanno spontaneamente visitato i musei della propria città, pur conoscendo quelli di altri paesi, mentre è raro che si frequentino le bellezze artistiche di un nuovo ambiente, pure una volta desiderato, se ci si trova a risiedere in esso con stabilità.[8]

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[4] Cf. Felice Perussia, "Note sulla psicologia della testimonianza di viaggio," *Geografie private: i resoconti di viaggio come lettura del territorio*, a cura di Elisa Bianchi (Milano: Edizioni Unicopli, 1985) 134.

[5] Ibid., 125.

[6] Mireille Rosello's essay "The Critic as Tourist: Hottentot Venuses and Comparatist Glands," *Paragraph* 18.1 (March 1995): 75-89, offers an interesting reflection on possible similarities between the tourist, viewed as a caricature of the authentic traveller because of the superficial and homogenising nature of his way of seeing, and the interdisciplinary literary critic who casually makes his way through different fields of specialisation.

[7] Ibid., 127.

[8] "From a psychological point of view, travel consists of applying to reality a specific interpretive paradigm whose defining characteristic is the disruption of one's habitual sense of place. The shift implies a definition of the new place to which one has travelled but also, conversely, a re-interpretation of the place which has been left behind. The antinomy between the daily and the tourist paradigms is nicely captured by the questions a native asks himself when he observes the enthusiasm of tourists wandering through the streets in his neighborhood, which to him seem pleasant enough but banal. The same place which generates excitement among the former, to the latter is a source of indifference. … Although they may have been to museums in foreign countries, few people have on their own initiative visited those of the city in which they live, and however much one may have

Another difference between the traveller and the tourist is that one is writing within a cultural framework which includes Herodotus and Stendhal, while the other takes photographs in order to produce tangible evidence of what he has seen and to appropriate it. If the signs of the traveller's presence are those he leaves indirectly by means of the written word, what defines the tourist are his photographs.[9]

> Il resoconto di viaggio è (almeno in parte) una fotografia, prima che questa venisse inventata. Così come la lettera è (almeno in parte) una telefonata senza fili. È un congegno che il soggetto mette in campo per trasformare la propria rappresentazione del mondo in fatti obiettivi. ... La fotografia parla in primo luogo al fotografo, il resoconto è rivolto per convenzione ad altri, ma entrambi servono a testimoniare al soggetto, in primo luogo a lui e soltanto a lui, che il suo lontano sentire coincide con una realtà rappresentata. Il resoconto si sposa infine con una funzione, che secondo Morin (1965) è essenziale al viaggio, e cioè quella di esorcizzare la morte. Il racconto ipostatizza i segni dell'esperienza, moltiplicandone il godimento ma anche isolandoli dalla storia. "Ciò che la Fotografia riproduce all'infinito ha avuto luogo solo una volta: essa ripete meccanicamente ciò che non potrà mai ripetersi esistenzialmente" (Barthes 1980, p. 2). Nella lettura del diario, come nella foto dell'attrice da giovane, si può ritrovare una difesa dalla fragilità dell'esistenza. Attraverso una metonimia percettiva, certificata dalla tangibilità del supporto di carta su cui è stata depositata l'esperienza viene fantasticamente isolata dalla decadenza del tempo.[10]

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formerly desired to see them, artistic treasures of a new environment are rarely sought out once one has taken up stable residence in that place." Felice Perussia, op. cit., 130.

[9] Ibid., 135.

[10] "The travel account is (at least in part) a photograph, prior to the invention of photography. Similarly a letter is (at least in part) a wireless telephone call. It is an instrument used by the subject in order to transform his own representation of the world into objective fact. … The photograph is taken first and foremost for the photographer himself, the travel account is by convention addressed to others, but both are above all a means of demonstrating to the subject – and to him alone – that his distant perception coincides with a representation of reality. The travel account is related to another function, which according to Morin (1965) is essential to travel, namely, that of exorcising death. The travel account hypostatises the signs of experience, multiplying its pleasures but also isolating them from history. 'What the Photograph endlessly reproduces has occurred only once: it repeats mechanically that which can never be repeated existentially' (Barthes 1980, p. 2). As in the photograph of the young actress, so in the pages of a diary one can find a defence against the fragility of existence. By means of a perceptive metonymy,

Eric Leed in *The Mind of the Traveler*[11] provides an analysis of the structure of travel and its transformations over time. This will lead him in his next book, *Shores of Discovery*,[12] to concentrate in more detail on the different typologies of the traveller from the earliest of times up to the present day. Leed's diachronic analysis also explores the historical contexts in which these typologies were formed and the complex network of factors which determines the nature of travel and influences the ways in which its participants define themselves as travellers.

James Buzard[13] too has offered a thought-provoking account of tourism, travel, and travel-writing which investigates the clear distinction between the terms "traveller" and "tourist," between experience deemed as authentic, as opposed to trips taken merely for pleasure and entertainment. Marshalling a vast range of sources from literature, travel-writing, guidebooks and periodicals, Buzard's study of early eighteenth- and nineteenth-century European tourism sheds light upon an important aspect of the history of modern culture. Thanks to travel guides like Baedeker and above all to the activity of travellers such as Thomas Cook and John Murray III, a much broader range of social classes is able to embark on trips which are no longer limited to the European continent. This continental tourism, which seems to dominate English and American literary imaginations and which, from the beginning of the nineteenth century, is in a constant state of expansion, creates a powerful distinction between the genuine traveller and the mere tourist. Much scholarly work has been devoted to analysing the differences between these two types.[14] Customarily criticized for his superficial way of seeing and his mechanical

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guaranteed by the very paper on which it has been left, experience becomes fantastically isolated from the decay of time." Felice Perussia, op. cit., 138-9.

[11] Cf. Eric J. Leed, *The Mind of the Traveler: From Gilgamesh to Global Tourism* (New York: Basic Books, 1991).

[12] Eric J. Leed, *Shores of Discovery: How Expeditionaries Have Constructed the World* (New York: Basic Books, 1995).

[13] James Buzard, *The Beaten Track: European Tourism, Literature and the Ways to Culture, 1800-1918* (New York: Oxford UP, 1993).

[14] Cf. Dean MacCannell, *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class* (New York: Schocken Books, 1976) 9-10. Among the many works which address even briefly the differences between travellers and tourists, in addition to Buzard's book cited above see also: Frances Bartkowski, *Travelers, Immigrants, Inmates: Essays in Estrangement* (Minneapolis/London: U. of Minnesota Press, 1995); Patrick Holland and Graham Huggan, *Tourists with Typewriters: Critical Reflections on Contemporary Travel Writing* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998); Carol Traynor Williams, ed., *Travel Culture: Essays on What Makes us Go* (Westport: Praeger, 1998).

repetition of itineraries followed by others before him, the tourist remains satisfied with uncritically reliving those experiences. Yet the advent of a new phenomenon has been the focus of recent sociological studies on travel and tourism. The *post tourist*, a term coined to describe this new type, is characterised by a heightened self-consciousness which distinguishes him from his predecessors:

> Above all, though, the post-tourist knows that he is a tourist: not a time traveler when he goes somewhere historic; not an instant noble savage when he stays on a tropical beach; not an invisible observer when he visits a native compound. Resolutely "realistic," he cannot evade his condition of outsider.[15]

[15] Quoted in Alison Russell, *Crossing Boundaries: Postmodern Travel Literature* (New York: Palgrave, 2000) 6.

CHAPTER ONE

A BRIEF HISTORY OF TRAVEL LITERATURE

1.1 A Definition of Travel Literature

The noun for travel in Italian (*viaggio*) is masculine, but it derives from the Latin word *viaticum* ("money for a journey") whose gender was neuter. The word *via* ("way" or "road") is feminine, according to the etymologist Cristina Vallini, "forse perché subisce l'azione del carro – *vehiculum*, da *veho* "trasporto" – e ne diventa il solco sul terreno."[1]

Words which are quite different in meaning are related to the Indo-European root *MEI: "la parola latina *meatus* significava un complesso di 'passaggio obbligato, 'il 'corso' degli astri, la 'vena,' il 'letto' del fiume, ovvero le tracce permanenti di un movimento o di un passaggio artificiale."[2] The idea that travel involves something difficult or strenuous, a painful distancing or separation, is brought out by the etymology of the English verb "to travel" which derives from the French *travailler*, whose primary meaning is "to work" but which can also express "to trouble" or "to worry," all of which senses are conveyed by the English noun "travail" (apparently the French verb comes from the Latin *trepalium*, an ancient instrument of torture).[3]

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[1] "Perhaps because it is the recipient of the action of the cart (*vehiculum*, from *veho* "to transport") and becomes a grooved or furrowed surface." Cristina Vallini, "Le parole del viaggio," *Viaggio di donne*, a cura di Andreina De Clementi e Maria Stella (Napoli: Liguori, 1995) 8.

[2] "The Latin word *meatus* expressed different kinds of passages [:] the 'course' of the stars, the 'bed' of a river, 'vein,' or things that were seen as the permanent traces left by movement of some kind." Ibid., 13.

[3] Cf. Luigi Monga, "Travel and Travel Writing: An Historical Overview of Hodoeporics," *Annali d'italianistica* 14 (1996): 11-2.

1.2 Travel-Writing from its Origins to the Nineteenth Century

From their advent in the eighteenth century, travel accounts, guidebooks, diaries and letters, all contributed to the formation of an extraordinarily successful literary genre. After having been the domain of "un'esperienza di élite raccontata in libri e scritture che recavano il forte accento dell'individualità dell'esperienza,"[4] the rise of tourism in the nineteenth century was accompanied by an increase in travel-writing which has continued to this day.

Studies of recent decades which address the various interpretive difficulties posed by travel-writing have improved our understanding of the reasons underlying the popularity of such a capacious and resilient genre, while also providing a more comprehensive view of the relations between travel and writing from the eighteenth century to the present.

Although they still adhere to certain literary conventions, the works of Italian memoirists and travellers of the eighteenth century provide an exceptional view of the cultural renewal of the period. Departing from the critical and moral essay of the Humanistic tradition, their writings begin to approach areas previously occupied by journalism and the epistolary genre. The empiricist approach of the Enlightenment also plays an important role in their work, which reflects an increased interest in concrete detail ranging from natural phenomena and works of art to the customs and practices of different cultures.

Following English models, specialty bookstores in Italy have for several years offered not only guidebooks but a wide variety of travel literature from the ancients to the moderns. Some publishing houses produce specific collections dedicated to travel books in order to meet the demands of a growing public readership. On the crest of this burgeoning interest, the Italian Association of the Study of Travel Literature was founded in Rome under the auspices of the Italian Encyclopedia and proposed as its primary objective the cataloguing and study of all the writings of foreign travellers in Italy and of Italian writers abroad from the sixteenth to the twentieth century.

Thanks to the surviving accounts of pilgrims, merchants, and navigators, our knowledge of the travel-writing tradition extends as far back as 1100.

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[4] "The élite, whose writings derived their strength from the exceptional nature of the experiences recounted." Elvio Guagnini, "Viaggi e 'reportages' dall'Unità alla Grande Guerra," *Terza pagina: la stampa quotidiana e la cultura*, a cura di Ada Neiger (Trento: Edizioni Quadrato Magico, 1994) 261.

In pre-modern times travel was always a means to a specific end, such as the embassies established by the Franciscans among the Tartars. That lay Christians should venture to holy sites which were in areas under Muslim control is another indication that the goal of travel was not simply pleasure or personal cultivation. The written accounts and reports of pilgrims bear witness to the fact that travel has long been a culturally sanctioned mass phenomenon, with the same itineraries repeated time and again.

Petrarch's *Itinerarium Siriacum* is similar to the kind of journeys recounted by pilgrims, with the chief difference that its narrator does not travel himself but rather advises a young man whom he cannot accompany. One of the work's main features of interest lies in the fact that it is not the fruit of direct experience; it is essentially bookish in nature, anticipating an imaginary trip which is largely based upon material recounted in previous texts.

An invaluable source for investigating this period are pilot-books, the journals kept on board ships in which navigators could find established information about ports, landing-places, and other items of navigational importance. This canvas could then be filled in with further details, such as information regarding recent events or the social customs of the places visited. Another interesting kind of text are the so-called mercantile tariffs on which annotations of places, goods and prices were made. In many instances these provided a source of inspiration for future travel accounts.

Yet the work which surely deserves pride of place for its singular importance and the mythical role it has played is *Il Milione*, which survives in various transcriptions and translations in the fifteen most important languages of the time (including Latin, Gaelic, Bohemian and Tuscan) and testifies to a wealth of experiences. Dictated in 1298 by Marco Polo to his cell-mate Rustichello da Pisa in a Genoese prison, it was not originally written in Tuscan but in an Italianate French and bore the title *Divisament dou Monde*. The man-of-letters Rustichello was well versed in the French language, as indeed were many people throughout Europe, including merchants. It is uncertain how much of the text is attributable to Marco Polo and how much to his collaborator; perhaps the details of the account are Polo's own, while its literary form is the work of Rustichello. On the other hand, some scholars maintain that Polo never travelled to China at all and that the particulars of his narrative were provided by his father Niccolò and his uncle Matteo, and then integrated with the material which Marco gathered in Constantinople, where he had had frequent contact with Persian merchants and their guides. Whatever the case may be, its distinctive combination of adventure romance and travel-writing, in which personal elements and mercantile traditions

coalesce to create not reportage but a work of imagination, continues to engage readers.

Polo often writes about places to which he never travelled, while in other instances he makes no mention of cultural customs which one might expect to find included in his account. Perhaps the most remarkable example of such an omission is the practice of foot-binding among the aristocracy in China. Ensuring that girls' feet did not surpass any but Lilliputian dimensions was something that shocked all travellers, and one contemporary of Polo, the Franciscan Odorico da Pordenone, dedicated memorable pages to this issue. By contrast Polo's work, firmly grounded in the mercantile tradition, provides another indication that the pre-modern traveller does not typically recount his experiences as an end unto itself, but rather selects information and tailors his account so that it might prove useful to merchants and other fellow travellers. *Il Milione* has had countless readers and thereby provided a route through which the East could make a breach into the collective imagination of the West.

Polo's writings constituted a model from which countless future writers derived their inspiration and material. One of the more singular works it generated is *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville*, written in Anglo-Norman French around the middle of the fourteenth century and quickly translated into many European languages. "Sir John" is himself a fiction created by the real author, who draws heavily from previous works in composing his account. This imaginary voyage was one of the most famous travel books of its day and was to be quoted by subsequent generations of writers such as Tasso, Ariosto, Cervantes, and Shakespeare.

As should be clear from the preceding observations, many works of travel-writing were produced by borrowing material from other texts and expanding upon established motifs. Even in the case of Magellan, for example, it is difficult to distinguish his authentic texts from those which have been attributed to him by tradition.

The navigation of the Atlantic and the discoveries that followed give rise in the fifteenth century to a new literary production which changes the perspective of its readers. This new public now reads about voyages not out of necessity, but for pleasure, and while in Antiquity and the Middle Ages the dominant mode of travel was centripetal, from the periphery to the centre (as in the case of religious pilgrims), in the Renaissance this trend is reversed. People now begin to travel from the centre toward the periphery of Europe, to places hitherto unknown, and new ways of thinking about travel begin to take root. While there are clear elements of continuity between Antiquity and the Renaissance, new developments that would come to characterise modern travel are established during this

period. There is not, of course, a complete break with the past, since the very conception of what is new can only arise within the confines of a preexisting tradition. Even the encounter with otherness does not excite a sense of marvel or of something absolutely new because it is tempered by a diachronic view of diversity. The frequent comparisons of Native Americans to men of the Golden Age provide a clear example of this mode of understanding. Projecting their own world-view and traditions onto places and peoples new to them – something which, for the most part, was pursued with an untroubled conscience – had a profound impact on how Europeans viewed their own cultures and their roles as modern men.

The discovery of new worlds also provides fertile ground for visions of the "marvelous" to mingle with traditional mythological elements, a phenomenon which may be observed in Christopher Columbus' descriptions of men with dogs' faces or with only one eye, of mermaids or the island of women. All of these images are of classical derivation filtered through the medieval tradition, and not authentic accounts of the Indios, with whom he would have had considerable difficulty communicating.[5]

Among the established practices underlying the corpus of texts pertaining to the New World, the most common is the convention of "theft."[6] Personal commentary proves an exception to the rule of transferring material from one text to another, and the effect of such borrowings on the reader is a sense of *déjà vu*, not only in those writings which take Columbus as a model but in countless future works as well. The traveller-writer repeats what has already been written, relying on a tradition which may seem at times to owe more to ink than it does to actual experience. Many years later this process of recycling was to culminate in the fixed repertoire of images found in the travel-writing of Gozzano and De Amicis.[7]

The greatest achievements in the realm of travel-writing in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries are represented by the work of a Humanist and functionary of the Venetian Republic, Giovanni Battista Ramusio. His celebrated *Delle navigationi et viaggi* (reprinted in 1978 in Einaudi's

[5] Giulia Lanciani, "Il meraviglioso come scarto tra sistemi culturali," *L'America tra reale e meraviglioso. Scopritori, cronisti, viaggiatori*, a cura di Giuseppe Bellini (Roma: Bulzoni Editore, 1990) 215-6.

[6] Cf. Marinella Pregliasco, "Tipologia di un viaggio minimo," AA.VV., *La letteratura di viaggio dal Medioevo al Rinascimento: generi e problemi* (Alessandria: Edizioni Dell'Orso, 1989) 63.

[7] Cf. Giorgio Raimondo Cardona, "I viaggi e le scoperte." *Letteratura italiana*, diretta da Alberto Asor Rosa, Vol. 5, "Le Questioni" (Torino: Einaudi, 1986) 687-716.

Millenni series and edited by Marica Milanesi) is a monumental compilation of accounts from Asia and Africa and a prime illustration of the growing and varied connections between travel and writing.

In the seventeenth century the subject of travel is frequently taken up in dramatic works, novels and short stories, thus infusing more strictly literary works with the novel and extravagant motifs characteristic of Baroque sensibility.

> Molti generi letterari barocchi ricorrono alla dimensione spaziale del viaggio per sviluppare o variare la loro trama narrativa. In particolare la tragedia, la commedia, il romanzo e la novella amano sovente servirsi del viaggio per allargare la scena della loro azione, cogliere i personaggi in situazioni imprevedibili, lusingare la fantasia del lettore con la presenza di paesaggi remoti e favolosi.[8]

Travel undertaken for political reasons is less common in seventeenth-century Italy than it had been in the preceding century. This is due in part to the fact that Italy was no longer at the centre of international commerce, and those who ventured beyond the country's boundaries acquired a keener sense of its unstable conditions. Travellers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries have been the subject of studies by Marziano Guglielminetti in a volume of the series *I Classici Italiani* and an entry in the dictionary of Italian literature (both published by Utet), and by Ezio Raimondi for the Garzanti publishing house.

For Guglielminetti the seventeenth century is a contradictory one, in which Enlightenment views and fifteenth and sixteenth-century experiences converge. Since travel-writing is not an expression of the Baroque style, the relationship of the seventeenth-century traveller to the new Baroque sensibility coming to the fore in literature does not readily lend itself to broad formulations and must be examined in individual authors on a case-by-case basis. (It may be observed, however, that many works of this period are characterised by an impulse to cast a fresh glance at the process of colonisation, with an inclination towards both the picturesque and the morbid.)

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[8] "Many literary genres of the Baroque period make use of the spatial dimension of travel in order to develop or vary their narrative plots. In particular, the tragedy, comedy, novel and short story often delight in travel material as a means of broadening the scene of action, capturing their characters in unpredictable situations, and stimulating the reader's imagination with the enticements of remote and fantastic landscapes."
—Marziano Guglielminetti, a cura di, *Viaggiatori del Seicento* (Torino: Utet, 2007) 9.

Francesco Carletti is the first great writer of this period. A member of a merchant family, he undertakes a voyage around the world between the end of the sixteenth century and the beginning of the seventeenth, sojourning in Mexico, the Philippines, and Peru. The hybrid nature and richly descriptive prose of his *Ragionamenti di un mio viaggio intorno al mondo* are characteristic of much seventeenth-century mercantile writing and Carletti clearly aspires to join the ranks of those merchant-navigators who, like Marco Polo, had transformed their commercial enterprises into cultural quests for world knowledge. Throughout his work he exhibits an almost religious devotion to his merchandise and is grief-stricken by the loss of it at the end of his voyage. For his sovereign, Ferdinand I of Tuscany, he includes a descriptive account of European foreign commerce at the beginning of the seventeenth century, a period in which Italy, now under the domination of Spain and Portugal, played an essentially marginal role in such affairs. Carletti is on somewhat shakier ground when faced with a less familiar reality, which results in a demystifying, crudely realistic account of the process of territorial expansion. His focus on the darker side of commerce and its cost in human terms is characteristically Baroque in its insistent probing, and his own defeat at the hands of the ruthless laws of profit is described in terms which resonate with some of the newer scientific and philosophical ideas of the day.

An important writer who pursues diplomatic objectives in his travels is Pietro della Valle, whose *Delle condizioni di Abbàs re di Persia* chronicles his activities throughout Asia between 1614 and 1626. Among his ambitions is the renewed expansion of Christianity in the Orient, largely unaware though he is of the role economic interests were to play in the future process of Christianisation. His writing does not fail to include some of the most well-worn *topoi* of Baroque culture, from the cult of ruins to the exaltation of martyrs. Unsurprising also is his predilection for the macabre which characterises his depictions of the agonising death of an Indian wife and his visit to the mummies.

Alongside writers such as these there is a rich panorama of texts written by travellers whose activities are religious and missionary in scope. The year 1622 sees the founding of the pontifical congregation *De Propaganda Fide*, as well as a college devoted to educating the missionary clergy, the Jesuits. Such texts, while less interesting from a strictly literary point of view, nonetheless have a great deal to say about the ways in which their authors viewed the world. As they encountered startling aspects of different cultures, many of these writers sought ways to include them within the bounds of Christian spirituality, and their efforts to

achieve a sympathetic understanding of the other's reality suggest qualities which were lacking in their less open-minded Renaissance predecessors.

Cristoforo Borri, for example, writes in praise of the Buddha, and in Giovanni Filippo De Marini there are pages expressing approval for the reforms carried out in China by Confucius, who is seen as a defender of justice against intolerance. Another Jesuit, Francesco Giuseppe Bressani, writes an account of Canada (then New France) in which he draws attention to the brutal methods employed in civilising the native population.

Unlike most missionaries, lay travellers tend to hold fast to their preconceived ideas. While richly stylised imaginative writing may be found in their private diaries, there is little that suggests a genuine desire to understand their new surroundings, and one senses that travel is not viewed as a means to knowledge but rather undertaken on the basis of a pre-determined set of values. A particular brand of short-sightedness and bias can be seen at work in Francesco Belli, a Venetian who in his *Osservazioni nel viaggio* praises the constitution of Venice above those of all other European countries.

If Carletti's text inaugurates the seventeenth century, the two volumes Giovanni Francesco Gemelli Careri dedicated to his travels throughout Europe bring the century to a close. (The works of both authors, however, attained printed form more or less during the same period, as Carletti's *Ragionamenti* was published posthumously in 1701, some eight years later than Careri's *Viaggi per Europa*, which appeared in 1693.) Although there are some broad similarities between their voyages, the perspectives of these two writers are decidedly different. Careri's approach to travel belongs to the pre-Enlightenment period and is not predicated on any assumptions of Western superiority. Unsympathetic towards any deference shown to the authority of the ancients, his writing is remarkable for its freedom of judgment, faith in progress, and the fresh perspective he brings to subjects which were by no means new. He contrasts the vitality of the new Europe with the spectacle of decadence, squalor and inertia of the major Italian cities, placing an emphasis on social aspects in a way which anticipates the encyclopaedic scope of the eighteenth century. Of equal interest is his *Giro del mondo*, a reportage published in 1699-1700. Its chief value, apart from the faithful description of places visited – especially those which were not part of the conventional itinerary and unknown to contemporary travellers – lies in its list of suggestions for the model traveller: always write two copies of observations so that, "andandone l'una a male, colla valige, l'altra possa serbarsi in mano sicura di qualche amico" ("should one be ruined inside one's luggage, the other will be safely in the possession of a friend") (VI:287); "avere qualche mezzana

notizia delle cose a medicina appartenenti, e spezialmente alla chirurgia" ("always have a few elementary notions about things pertaining to medicine, and especially surgery") (VI:287); know how to draw in order "per servirsene quando si truova alcuna bella statua, edificio, anticaglia" ("to be able to make use of it when one finds oneself in front of a beautiful statue, building, or relic") (VI:292).[9] In addition, as Stefania Buccini has observed, the book offers "il suo contributo alla storia culturale del tardo Seicento come documento di un processo di transizione dalla *Weltanschauung* barocca a quella razionalistica ed erudita del primo Settecento."[10]

With the emergence of the Grand Tour in the eighteenth century, travel-writing undergoes yet another shift in perspective. An older tradition – which in some respects resembles the Grand Tour – is the educative trip or *Peregrinatio academica*, which originated in the Middle Ages when foreign students attended Italian universities, especially those at Padua and Bologna. It evolved from a carefully designed curriculum to become part of the education of the youth of the privileged classes and achieve quasi-institutional status in the sixteenth century. Insofar as it was conceived as the completion of studies which were essentially theoretical and bookish, it stands in contrast to the Grand Tour, which posed as its objective learning from the "book of nature" in accordance with the models of the New Science. (One is reminded of the educational principles set forth in Francis Bacon's *The New Atlantis* which stressed the importance of direct experience).[11]

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[9] Quoted in Stefania Buccini, "Coerenza metodologica nel *Giro del mondo* di Giovanni Francesco Gemelli Careri," *Annali d'italianistica* 14 (1996): 255.

[10] "A documentary contribution to the cultural history of the late seventeenth century, a transitional period which marks the decline of the Baroque *Weltanschauung* and the beginnings of the rationalistic and erudite early eighteenth century." Stefania Buccini, op. cit., 256.

[11] See especially the studies by Cesare de Seta, "L'Italia nello specchio del *Grand Tour*," *Storia d'Italia*, *Annali 5*, a cura di Cesare de Seta (Torino: Einuadi, 1982), 125-263; Giorgio Raimondo Cardona, op. cit., analyses the genres and subgenres of travel seen as a literary experience which, albeit a comparatively minor one, is nonetheless rich in narrative devices and linguistic aspects; Cesare de Seta, *L'Italia del Grand Tour: da Montaigne a Goethe* (Napoli: Electa Napoli, 2001); Attilio Brilli, *Quando viaggiare era un'arte: il romanzo del Grand Tour* (Bologna: il Mulino, 2002) investigates the historical and literary dimension of travel viewed as intellectual adventure and as a noble art form; Marc Boyer, *Il turismo: dal Grand Tour ai viaggi organizzati* (Torino: Electa/Gallimard, 1997) examines travel and the role of thermal baths, nascent bathing centres and mountains throughout Italy and Europe; Atanasio Mozzillo, *La frontiera del Grand Tour: viaggi e viaggiatori*

The Grand Tour has its origins in early seventeenth-century England, the point of departure for the first trips with well-planned itineraries which typically included France, Holland and Italy. It continued until the nineteenth century, when the Napoleonic Wars put an end to this type of formal travel and its ideological underpinnings and authentic spirit had begun to wane even among the greatest travellers of the century. The name was apparently first used during a trip to France by Lord Granborne in 1636, but as we have seen, travel had played a significant role in European culture since the Middle Ages, when the primary destination was the Holy Land and, somewhat later, Rome itself. The different spirit and motivating factors of these early travellers should be borne in mind, for they were distinct from their modern counterparts' love of discovery, passion for art and nature, and their desire to gain first-hand knowledge of ways of life different from their own.

Although the Grand Tour originates in England, as early as the seventeenth century there are travellers of various kinds – writers, musicians, philosophers, scientists – from many other European countries. During this period differences in the traveller's area of provenance contribute to the variety of travel patterns and activity. However, by the eighteenth century, the Grand Tour had become something of an institution, with codified practices, and the traveller's nationality is of considerably less importance.

The relationship between modern travel in Europe (exemplified by the Grand Tour) and the arrival of modern science is an important aspect of the history of travel and travel-writing. One approach to gaining a better understanding of this complex relationship is to examine the extent to which travel contributed to the advancement of a modern intellectual paradigm.[12] Yet the influence exerted in the opposite direction must be considered as well, for the increasing dominance of the new scientific outlook brought about profound changes in the intellectual make-up of the travellers themselves and, consequently, the nature of the writing they produced.

In 1625 Francis Bacon, among those who rank travel highly for its paedagogical value, writes his essay "Of Travel" in which he stresses its importance in the new system of knowledge and provides instructions –

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nel Mezzogiorno borbonico (Napoli: Liguori, 1992); Cesare de Seta, a cura di, *Grand Tour: viaggi narrati e dipinti* (Napoli: Electa Napoli, 2001).

[12] Cf. Eric J. Leed, in *The Mind of the Traveler: From Gilgamesh to Global Tourism* (New York: Basic Books, 1991) argues that travel, particularly the explorations and discoveries made during the Renaissance, played an important role in paving the way for the ascendancy of modern science.

similar in spirit to the precepts of the Grand Tour – regarding how travel may most benefit one's education:

> Il viaggiare, nei più giovani, fa parte dell'educazione; negli adulti, fa parte dell'esperienza. Chi viaggia in un paese prima di conoscerne un po' la lingua, vada a scuola e non in viaggio. Approvo che i più giovani viaggino con la guida di qualche tutore o domestico serio, purché sia uno che possieda la lingua e sia stato prima nel paese, per cui possa dir loro quali cose son degne d'esser viste nel paese dove viaggiano, quali persone bisogna cercare di conoscere, e quali studi o discipline il luogo offra: perché altrimenti i giovani viaggeranno bendati e si guarderanno attorno ben poco ... Se desiderate che un giovane rediga un compendio del suo viaggio, e in poco tempo accumuli molto, dovete far questo: ... porti con sé qualche carta o libro che descriva il paese dove viaggia, ciò sarà una buona chiave per la sua indagine; rediga anche un diario; non si fermi a lungo in nessuna città grande o piccola, più o meno a seconda che il luogo lo meriti, ma non a lungo. ... Quanto alle conoscenze da cercare in viaggio, quella che è più di tutti utile è la conoscenza dei segretari e impiegati degli ambasciatori, perché così, viaggiando in un solo paese, succhierà l'esperienza di molti ... Quando un viaggiatore ritorna a casa, non abbandoni completamente i paesi dove ha viaggiato; ma mantenga una corrispondenza epistolare con quelli di sua conoscenza che siano di maggior valore. E il suo viaggio appaia piuttosto nel suo discorso che nel suo abito o nei suoi gesti: e nel discorso, egli sia prudente nelle risposte piuttosto che pronto a raccontar storie. E sia evidente che non cambi i modi del suo paese per quelli dei luoghi forestieri; ma soltanto, semini alcuni fiori di ciò che ha imparato all'estero in mezzo ai costumi del suo paese.[13]

[13] "Travel, in the younger sort, is a part of education, in the elder, a part of experience. He that travelleth into a country, before he hath some entrance into the language, goeth to school, and not to travel. That young men travel under some tutor, or grave servant, I allow well; so that he be such a one that hath the language, and hath been in the country before; whereby he may be able to tell them what things are worthy to be seen, in the country where they go; what acquaintances they are to seek; what exercises, or discipline, the place yieldeth. For else, young men shall go hooded, and look abroad little … If you will have a young man to put his travel into a little room, and in short time to gather much, this you must do … Let him carry with him … a card or book, describing the country where he travelleth; which will be a good key to his inquiry. Let him keep also a diary. Let him not stay long, in one city or town; more or less as the place deserveth, but not long. … As for the acquaintance, which is to be sought in travel; that which is most of all profitable, is acquaintance with the secretaries and employed men of ambassadors; for so in travelling in one country, he shall suck the experience of many … When a traveler returneth home, let him not leave the countries, where he hath travelled, altogether behind him; but maintain a

Over time the Grand Tour undergoes a process of normalisation and systemisation, as can be seen in the specific guidelines introduced for the obligatory keeping of a diary. A higher value is attributed to strict accuracy of observation and objectivity, and this leaves little space for second-hand accounts, wild speculations and the many marvels so common in travel-writing of the Middle Ages.

Thomas Coryate, one of the pioneers of the Grand Tour, helps to usher in this new kind of travel-writing with his *Crudities*, penned after a trip through Europe in 1611. In France Montaigne records his travel impressions of Italy and Germany in a diary (*Voyage en Italie*) which was not intended for publication. Discovered in 1770, it shows great sensitivity to geography and landscape, and reveals insightful observations regarding the social world as well. Worthy of note among later contributions from the English-speaking world are Joseph Addison's *Remarks on Several Parts of Italy, &c. in the years 1701, 1702, 1703*, and the writings of George Berkeley, the first foreign writer – travellers did not typically venture further than Naples – to describe in keen detail the deep South of Italy.

However, the text which most merits acknowledgement for its sheer originality is Laurence Sterne's *A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy by Mr. Yorick*,[14] an unusually ironic work for the literary standards of its day and one of the progenitors of the sentimental genre, which was to have numerous imitators in nineteenth-century Europe. Sterne's decision to associate his work with a genre which had reaped great success in England is a shrewd one, but in fact his *Journey* marks a departure from the category suggested by its title. Aided in part by the author's fame and the events surrounding his work, it was to exert a lasting influence on fictional writing as well.

The text was begun in the spring of 1767 and its conclusion written in the autumn of the same year, a period in which Sterne was striving to regain his status in the literary world. His previous book, *The Life and*

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correspondence by letters, with those of his acquaintance, which are of most worth. And let his travel appear more in his discourse, than his apparel or gesture; and let it appear that he doth not change his country manners, for those of foreign parts; but only prick in some flowers, of that he hath learned abroad, into the customs of his own country." Quoted in Attilio Brilli, *Il viaggio in Italia: storia di una grande tradizione culturale dal XVI al XIX secolo* (Milano: Silvana Editoriale, 1989) 31-3. (New edition: *Viaggio in Italia: storia di una grande tradizione culturale*, Bologna: Il Mulino, 2008).

[14] Laurence Sterne, *A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy by Mr. Yorick* (New York: Penguin Classics, 2001).

Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman (1760),[15] suffered a critical setback after its initial acclaim because it was considered by many to be simply a bizarre work. From Sterne's letters we learn that *A Sentimental Journey* was conceived as the story of the protagonist's experiences on the Grand Tour, and Yorick's trip is clearly intended as a parody of such journeys. He travels through France and fails to see anything of interest, resulting in a narrative full of trivial and truncated episodes.[16] When Yorick finds himself in Paris, for example, as opposed to an engaging description or insightful observation, the reader encounters the following:

> When the barber came, he absolutely refused to have any thing to do with my wig: 'twas either above or below his art: I had nothing to do, but to take one ready made of his own recommendation. – But I fear, friend! Said I, this buckle won't stand. – You may immerge it, replied he, into the ocean, and it will stand – What a great scale is every thing upon in this city! Thought I – The utmost stench of an English periwig-maker's ideas could have gone no further than to have "dipped it into a pail of water" – What difference! 'tis like time to eternity.[17]

Although there are hints of a parody of *Tristram Shandy*, they are quickly dropped, not sufficiently developed to be regarded as an important feature of the work. In fact Sterne's real design in his *Sentimental Journey* is the creation of a new form of narrative, which will have many nineteenth- and twentieth-century imitators (among these Ippolito Nievo in *Il barone di Nicastro*). To mention only one of its innovative features, narrative structures which readers had come to expect are withheld and displaced by episodes that vary considerably in length. The stop at Calais, for example, occupies half of the entire book, and what follows could scarcely be called a narrative of Yorick's trip in any traditional sense, but rather a succession of passages of psychological import. As the etymology of the title's key word may suggest, the book is as much about the mind

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[15] Laurence Sterne, *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*, edited by Ian Campbell Ross (Oxford, New York: Oxford UP, 1983). Particularly worthy of note among the numerous critical studies are: Melvyn New, ed. *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992) and Melvyn New, *Tristram Shandy: A Book for Free Spirits* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1994).

[16] As is evident from almost all the title pages of travel books from Defoe to Smollett, such works were expected to provide vivid depictions of actual things found in the places visited.

[17] Laurence Sterne, *A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy by Mr. Yorick*, cit., 48.

and its journeys (or vagaries) as it is about sentiment. Sterne's delight in such meandering is evident throughout, especially in the preface, which appears not at the beginning (where one might reasonably expect to find it) but several pages into the book.

The work's central focus of attention is Yorick and his idiosyncratic perceptions and observations. This is a narrator whose presence is everywhere felt, in contrast to what one finds in more orthodox travel accounts where the first-person is introduced only as a concession to the demands of the narrative's structural integrity. The model traveller-writer was otherwise expected to speak as little as possible of himself and to substantiate the authenticity of his experiences by directing his attention outward to the things around him.

In this case the reader knows of France only that which has made an impression on Yorick, who records nothing of a strictly documentary nature. The result is a journey in terms of introspection and private diary; a subjective vision that distinguishes it from the tradition and which has more in common with the travel notebooks and letters which will be considered in the second chapter. We cannot be certain whether the protagonist has actually journeyed to France or simply concocted the entire affair. By positioning his book squarely within the genre of the travel narrative only to attribute it to a fictional character, Sterne provides his contemporaries with a chastening demonstration that the distinction between reality and fiction, between objectivity and artifice, is a slippery one indeed.[18]

A work that was to meet with an equal degree of success and which is more closely bound to the tradition of eighteenth century travel-writing is Goethe's *Italian Journey*. In Goethe's case as well, the conjunction of travel and writing mark a crucial stage in his development as a writer. His Italian tour took place between 1786 and 1788 but the book was not

[18] It is interesting to note that Pirandello, when searching for new prose directions in his essay on humour, cites Sterne as the master from whom he derived certain elements in his narrative writing, such as the episode of the nose in *Uno, nessuno, e centomila;* and in the essay "Non conclude," in *La Preparazione*, a. I, n. 82, of 17/18 August 1909, pp. 1-2, quoted in Giancarlo Mazzacurati et al., *Effetto Sterne: la narrazione umoristica in Italia da Foscolo a Pirandello* (Pisa: Nistri-Lischi, 1990) 439, he states, "E tra i libri, a cui più di frequente ritorno, due ne amo sopra tutti: *La vita e le opinioni di Tristano Shandy* dello Sterne, il più sconclusionato dei romanzi che vi siano mai scritti (sic) e l'Amleto dello Shakespeare . . . " ("Among those books to which I return most frequently, there are two which I love most: *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy* by Sterne, the most rambling, open-ended novel ever written, and Shakespeare's Hamlet …").

published until 1816. This considerable gap between the work's occasions and its final composition provided the time and perspective necessary to rework and refine the letters and diary-entries first drafted during the course of his travels.

Unlike most young travellers, Goethe is obliged to journey incognito because of his fame. He is drawn to Italy not only by his interest in the language and culture but also by a family tradition of sorts, as his father had travelled throughout the peninsula in 1739-40 and produced his own *Travels through Italy*. Goethe sets out on his tour convinced that it will enhance his fame as a writer and that the formative trip *sui generis* will be both a capstone of his cultural pursuits and a rebirth. The predominance of description in Goethe's writing distinguishes him from many contemporaries like Sterne and places him in the company of those seventeenth and early eighteenth-century travellers whose chief object of attention was the natural world. While this focus is attenuated in his completed book, Goethe's letters abound with information about geology, botany and mineralogy. The reflections on atmospheric phenomena and plants are indicative of the influence of Enlightenment culture, as is his interest in the connections between people and landscape. Such detailed descriptions may convey an almost overwhelming desire to classify and to understand the world in its totality. Although the primary focus is nature, Goethe also devotes considerable attention to questions of art, especially that of classical antiquity, and his approach to the subject shows his indebtedness to the achievements of previous generations of innovators such as Winckelmann.

In the wake of the Grand Tour tradition, Goethe brings with him guides and other books, but his aim is to see something that had eluded other travellers or that been seen merely through the prism of guidebooks. The intensity of his interest in the natural world and his fresh approach to it are attributes which distinguish him from Montaigne and other illustrious predecessors. The eruption of Vesuvius, for example, is depicted in extremely fine detail and demonstrates his mastery in describing natural phenomena. Another valuable contribution is Goethe's all-encompassing vision of Italy, which gleams through the bulk of typically erudite commentary and offers glimpses of a land of archetypes where a genuine rediscovery of man and art may be achieved.

Following Goethe there is a shift in the centre of gravity and the Italy of the Grand Tour extends to that quintessentially archetypal *locus*, the

South.[19] This period witnesses an increased interest in Mediterranean culture, Sicily, Greece and the African coasts, as well as an increase in the number of archeological expeditions. In 1801 a "counter-trip" on foot from Trieste to Sicily is undertaken by Seune, whose privileging of the periphery and lesser known paths marks a departure from established norms and anticipates the new Romantic mode of travel and writing.

It is worthy of note that Italian travel-writing between the Renaissance and the nineteenth century has not always been granted the critical attention it deserves. Significantly, the preceding pages have been devoted to two eminent writers, one English and the other German. The scholar Giorgio Cadorna, for example (cf. p. 9, note 4), brings his discussion of the history of travel in Italy to an abrupt halt at the sixteenth century and proceeds to the late nineteenth-century travel-writings of De Amicis, who is credited with infusing the genre with renewed vigor. This gap of roughly four centuries reflects his contention that travel-writing in Italy begins in Antiquity and ends with the Renaissance, whereas in Europe at large it begins to emerge as an important genre only in the seventeenth century. Such a view can only be accepted in part, for even if the Italian literary production during this later period cannot be compared to that of other European countries, the absence of any reference whatsoever to the Italian contribution has scant justification at best. In this context it is worth calling attention once again to the volumes dedicated to travellers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in the Ricciardi and Utet histories of literature.

The fact that Italian travel-writing of this period is comparatively less well known may be explained by the political and cultural context of the time. One important consideration is that the *Signorie* did not participate in the conquest of the New World. In addition, the cultural hegemony of Florence from the beginning of the seventeenth century contributed to the view that literature, as the most complete form of cultural expression, has no relevance to what Leed calls scientific travel.

The experience of travel has significantly shaped and contributed to modern

> definitions of scientific objectivity and is implicit in the development of modern consciousness … Indeed, I suggest that the experience of travel constitutes the sensual ground implicit and explicit in the choices and preferences that make up modern observational science, even though, clearly, the concepts and methods of this science already existed within the

[19] The Italian segment of the Grand Tour ended in Naples and could be represented visually as an upside-down pyramid with Naples at its tip.