Making Sense of Europe

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Travel writing very obviously is a cultural practice of sense making. It implies making sense of the places and people one encounters, as well as of oneself. The dimension of sense making applies even more so when the aim of the travel is education, as it was with the "Grand Tour" during the early modern period: Young men, mostly from Europe's northern countries, spent as much as three years travelling in Europe to complete their education. Apart from formal study and visits to acknowledged attractions and sights, polished manners and a more sophisticated knowledge of the world where the aims of the tour: Making sense of oneself and of foreign people and places.

In his book on travel writing, literary critic Carl Thompson points out that "all travel requires us to negotiate a complex and sometimes unsettling interplay between alterity and identity, difference and similarity."[1] He goes on to argue that because all travel involves some kind of encounter between self and others, "all travel writing is at some level a record or product of this encounter, and of the negotiation between similarity and difference that it entailed".[2] The written account, be it a dairy or journal, travelogue or guidebook for subsequent travellers, is the product of these procedures of interpretation, selection and organization of experiences and facts.

This chapter will discuss a travel journal from the late seventeenth century. It was produced by the young Johannes Lilienskiold's on his Grand Tour through Europe during the years 1668-1671, and has been preserved as a hand-written manuscript in two parts. The manuscript has been little researched, and invites a number of questions concerning the tradition of educational travel as well as

1 THOMPSON, 2011, p. 9.

2 IBID., p. 10.

the biography of Lilienskiold himself.[3] My investigation will nonetheless concentrate on a few main questions: What sense did this journey make? How did Lilienskiold carry out those negotiations between identity and similarity that his travel writing expresses? How did he proceed to make sense of the Europe he visited, what methods did he use? And what was their outcome?

My theoretical starting point for exploring the journal is the ambiguity that is intrinsic to all travel writing.[4] On the one hand, travellers are supposed to present experiences that are new to themselves and their readers. A travel text has failed its aim if it has nothing new to tell. On the other hand, travel texts normally rely heavily on commonplaces and general ideas. They also have a strong intertextuality, and tend to refer to each other, either implicitly or explicitly. They draw on conventions in the culture of their authors, building on them and confirming them, or questioning or subverting them, but nonetheless relating to them. One reason for this somewhat paradoxical conformity is that travellers to a destination tend to follow the same route and visit the same attractions. In the contemporary world, even backpackers seeking the most remote and exotic destinations tend to meet each other, *Lonely Planet* in hand. In the early modern period, in a Europe far scarcer in roads, routes and means of communication than the present, practical reasons as well as the need for safety made people follow "the beaten track" – if such a thing happened to exist. More complex reasons for the conformity of a genre confessing to novelty are to be found in the interpretational procedures themselves: For how does one experience things that are absolutely new? How do they make sense, or rather, how does one go about to make them make sense? Furthermore, how does one describe such novelties to others, who have not been there to see them? A common solution is to compare new things, new experiences and new phenomena to those already known and described. This can be done explicitly, saying that this animal, or this town, or this kind of headdress resembles something already known to the writer and intended reader alike. Even more fundamental, however, are the implicit comparisons, by which I mean making use of well established categories and patterns of meaning and evaluation.

These are general points, applying to travel writing in general, but some significant extra points can be made for early modern texts: Travel writers of this period did most often not seek originality. As has been pointed out by critics, they were not out to present their own, personal interpretations of what they saw,

3 See http://www.ntnu.no/ub/spesialsamlingene/digital/05a030477.html, 11.02.2013. http://da2.uib.no/cgi-win/WebBok.exe?slag=lesbok&bokid=lillienskiold, 11.02.2013.

4 Cf. ERIKSEN, 1997.

and even less of what they felt. Their aim was to describe the world, to make sense of it, and to make the world known to others. The claim to novelty, then, was not so much related to the traveller's personal experience and individual interpretation of places and sights. It rather concerned information about parts of the world that were not (yet) well known to the public "back home". For this very reason, early modern travel writing has in some cases been judged inferior to that of later periods.[5] Compared with travel writing from the romantic period onwards, the early modern texts appear strikingly impersonal, un-autobiographical, and often lacking in colour and detail. More recent research, on the other hand, has drawn the attention to the historical variations in travel writing, and to the fact that the travel text is always shaped by ideals and conventions from its historical context.[6]

Early modern travellers, and especially young educational travellers, were often influenced by the so-called *ars apodemica*. This literature, nearly forgotten until researched by the ethnologist Justin Stagl in the 1980s, were manuals in the art of prudent travelling (Stagl 1995). They partly resembled modern guidebooks, giving practical advice and information concerning what to see, where to stay, and how much to pay. But they also instructed their readers about *how* to collect and process information during their travel. They prescribed ambitious programmes of note-taking, diary-keeping and the making of lists and tables. They did not merely tell what to see, but *how* to see it, and what to do with the knowledge thus gained: How to describe a town, how to organize lists of sights. The books were pedagogical tools, intended not merely to help the young man make the most of his travel by leading him to the best inns and the most interesting sights, but also to make the travel improve and educate him. The practices and systems presented in the book reflect ideas about the gaining and shaping of knowledge, about how to transform experience into reliable and useful information. Carrying out these practices, the traveller would not merely find his new knowledge neatly arranged according to systems that made it all easy to remember and assess, he would also find himself the competent user of effective systems of processing, organizing and presenting information.

5 Cf. Fussell, 1980.

6 Cf. Buzard, 1993 and Thompson 2011.

Going South

The "Grand Tour of Europe" is a rather general term, including a variety of agents, projects, and aims. During the sixteenth century, the "Grand Tourists" mostly were extremely wealthy young English nobles who made the tour of the continent to gain accomplishments and education that was not available at home. In the next century, the main aim of the travels was still educational, but the activity seems to have been somewhat less restricted to the absolute elite travelling in the grand manner. Nonetheless, a Grand Tour still demanded considerable economic resources. Englishmen were still in majority, but a Grand Tour could also be part of the education for young men from other North European countries, who sought universities and institutions of learning in central and southern Europe. In addition to their studies, the young tourists were expected to acquaint themselves with the ways of foreign peoples, to polish their manners and acquire a social or professional network. The aims of these tours were not cultural, historical or aesthetic, but practical: The young men sought an education that was not available at home, and aimed to acquire competences and skills useful for their future careers.[7]

During the eighteenth century, going on a Grand Tour seems to have grown less practical and instrumental and more oriented towards aesthetic education, collectionism and experiences of art and history. While the Grand Tourists of the former centuries were very young men, even mere boys who travelled with their tutors, eighteenth century travels included more mature men, who travelled together or – if resources and social position permitted – with servants and secretaries.[8] From this period onwards, the travel texts that where produced also tended to change: they became less focused on cataloguing information or bring new knowledge about little known places, and more concerned with the travellers' personal and emotional responses to what they saw and experienced. The Grand Tour of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was turned into the Sentimental Journey of the eighteenth and nineteenth.

Johannes Lilienskiold was born in 1650 in a wealthy bourgeois family in Bergen, Norway's then largest town. He was educated at home until he embarked on his European trip together with his younger brother Jonas in January 1668. The first part of the journey took them to the capital Copenhagen with its university, where they arrived after one month of travel. They were examined by the Dean, Erasmus Bartholin, and then inscribed as students. They also met

7 Cf. HELK, 1991.

8 Cf. BLACK, 1985 and ERIKSEN, 1999.

Niels Stub, the man who was to be their preceptor during the three and a half years of European travel. At the age of 31, he was already an experienced traveller, with two longer stays at European universities behind him. Before leaving Copenhagen in late May, the company secured a pile of introductory letters from the King himself, which were to give them access to people, courts and collections throughout Europe. They then went by post coach to Hamburg.

The route they followed through Europe to Italy was conventional one.[9] From Hamburg they went to Leipzig, were they arrived in early April. They were inscribed at the university and stayed there as students for nearly one year. In January 1669, they continued and left for Dresden, where they visited the *Kunstkammer* and took part in the festivities in celebration of the birth of a young prince. In March, the travel to the south commenced, leading over Wittenberg via Frankfurt to Italy. The first stop here was Venice, where they arrived in May. Then followed Vicenza and Verona, and later Padua and Bologna where the boys where once again inscribed at the universities. They did not stay for long however; after a mere two days in Bologna the travel continued, and the company arrived in Rome in October. The winter was spent there, with numerous visits to monuments and collections. In early spring trips were made to Naples and to Tivoli, before starting on the way back north.

The return trip took them via Genova and Turin. They then crossed the Alps to Switzerland and stayed for a couple of months in Geneva before passing through Mainz and Köln on their way to Paris. The third winter was spent here, probably as students at the university. Next spring took them to London and then back to Brussels and Antwerp – were the travel journal comes to a very abrupt halt. However, it is known that both boys and their preceptor arrived safely in Copenhagen in 1771. The Lilienskiold brothers then passed their final exams at the University of Copenhagen in 1772. They both embarked on successful careers in state administration. Both ended up as local governors of Norwegian counties.[10]

Lilienskiold is a noble name. The ending -skiold (lit.: shield) is typical for the names of the new nobility created in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. When the two brothers set out for their journey in 1668, they were still plain Hans and Jonas Schmidt, sons of the powerful Hans Hanssøn Schmidt in Bergen, holder of a number of public offices and owner of a large fortune. His wealth as well as his services to the monarch probably counted when he, with his entire family, was elevated to nobility in 1676. This was the time when the

9 Cf. Helk, 1991, p. 54ff.

10 Cf. Brandt, 2000.

family took the name Lilienskiold. Between Schmidt and Lilienskiold lies also the difference that the journey of the two boys made, or at least contributed to.

Absolute rule had been established in Denmark-Norway in 1660. One effect of the new political system was that positions of higher state officials were no longer reserved for the nobility, as had traditionally been the case. Absolute rule weakened the position and power of the old nobility, and made room for new men from new families. Moreover, a growing bureaucracy created a demand for competent persons to fill the posts. To compete for such positions, however, a good education was required, preferably in law and politics. The university in Copenhagen long remained primarily a school of theology. This was the reason why ambitious and wealthy men – like Hans Hanssøn Schmidt in Bergen – sent their sons abroad. The relevant education was not to be had within the limits of the realm. Attending the University of Copenhagen was necessary merely to get the exam, while the "real" education happened through travel and study abroad. In Copenhagen, Hans changed his name to the Latinized Johannes when he was first inscribed at the university. The journey was about to begin.

As the noble name on the title page of the manuscript indicates, the travel text was produced some time after the journey. It was long believed to be the work of Lilienskiold's friend, the rector Christian Paus, but has later been correctly identified as made by Lilienskiold himself.[11] Its two parts are today kept at the University Library of Bergen and the library of The Royal Norwegian Society of Sciences and Letters in Trondheim respectively. It is a beautiful manuscript, even if blank pages show that it was never completed. As already pointed out, the work ends rather suddenly with the three travellers' arrival in Antwerp. Moreover, the blank pages interspersed in both parts of the manuscript indicate that more drawings and watercolours of the kind that are already embellishing the work must have been planned. The level of detail and precision indicates that the work is a transcript of a diary that was kept during the journey itself. Nonetheless, the Lilienskiold manuscript represents far more than the personal memories of a youthful traveller. It must be seen as a monument to its author's success, but also as part of his credentials. It is a compendium of the experience he gained and the knowledge he collected, as well as an expression of his diligence and skills as a traveller. As all travel writing, the manuscript reflects the process of making sense of novelties and new experiences while travelling. But the elaborate and embellished work also gives a glimpse into the way Lilienskiold made sense of himself and presented himself as a man of experience and competence.

11 Cf. Nissen, 1937.

Making Lists

What particularly interest me about the manuscript are the numerous lists. All sights and attractions that were visited are presented as lists, sometimes short and sometimes spanning a considerable number of pages. Within these main lists there are other lists, quoting for instance the altars and chapels within a church, the costly objects in a treasury, or the items of a collection. The lists are far more than random insertions in the text; they rather make up its main structure. The manuscript does hold some descriptive passages, of which the most extensive is about the government of the republic of Venice. Among the very few that directly report personal experience are two narratives about attempted robberies and a deceptive host at an inn outside Poggibonsi in Tuscany. Nonetheless, lists referring to sights and objects are the absolutely dominant element. Even the celebration of the newborn prince in Dresden (above) is presented in the guise of lists, presenting the distinguished guests, enumerating the figures in the parades and mentioning the entertainments that were given: theatricals, hunts, dances and so on.

This type of lists is quite common in early modern travel writing and an important reason why such texts have often been dismissed as an uninteresting and inferior type of travel writing (cf. above). Scholars have dismissed the lists as mere enumerations, sadly devoid of those stamps of the author's personality or sensibility that have been held to distinguish travel writing proper.[12] I would rather suggest that the lists represent a historically specific response to the ambiguity that is intrinsic to all travel writing: They are attempts at making sense of novelties and new experiences by means of the formulas, categories, and conventions that were available to the observer-writer. The lists are collections of information and experience, built up by the traveller and processed or organized reflecting his personal competence as well as more general ideals about the production of knowledge. They may not betray the emotions and personal impressions of a sentimental traveller, but they nonetheless present historically significant conventions of knowledge gathering and practices of information processing. Lists are not self-generating, any more than sentimental portrayals are. They refer back to deliberate choices of composition and reflect distinct principles of organization. The making of lists, therefore, must be seen as epistemological tools that Lilienskiold made use of in his work to make sense of Europe. From where did he get his tools, and what kind of sense or knowledge did they actually produce?

12 HELK, 1991, p. 33; BRANDT, 2000, p. 30.

Carl Thompson has argued that all travel texts will have to accord to what he calls "epistemological decorum". He points out that the plausibility of travel texts has depended on different kinds of authority in different historic periods. Important changes took place in the early modern period. New ideas about relevant and reliable knowledge during this period meant that "new protocols of 'epistemological decorum' took shape over the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and these protocols influenced in turn the activities and accounts of many travellers."[13] During the Middle Ages, the reliability and plausibility of travel texts were assessed by their correspondence to acknowledge authorities, most prominently the Bible, the writings of the Church Fathers and the classical philosophers. The new ideals did not only favour observation and experience above references to texts and traditions. Even the literary style changed. Thompson points out that "abstract and metaphysical speculations were to be kept to a minimum, as were the subjective impressions and personal thought and feelings. Instead, writers were advised to prioritize the observation of measurable, material phenomena in the external world."[14] Moreover, the language was to be kept simple and precise, unadorned by rhetoric and ornament. Thompson is emphatic that these ideals not merely correspond well with the epistemological ideals of the new natural philosophy, but in very concrete ways were advocated by the *Royal Society* (from 1660). To promote the Baconian principles in science and knowledge, the Society issued numerous directives to travellers, seeking to regulate what sort of information they gathered, and even more important: To control the methods used to collect and present information.

I will suggest that when it came to travel journals such as that of the young Lilienskiold, the new epistemological decorum with its emphasis on observation and experience merged with more traditional methods for processing and organizing knowledge in educational contexts, as they had been developed by the humanists of the 16th century. The *ars apodemica*, mentioned above, represented a programme of information management for travellers that kept its popularity in educational contexts until late 18th century. Justin Stagl argues that the system was invented in Basel by Theodore Zwinger and his Dutch friend Hugo Blotius in the 1570s, both strongly influenced by Ramist thought. Even if a number of other manuals came to be published, the methods go back to these two (or three, including Ramus).

Ann Blair, in her book on information management in early modern times, is more critical to the idea of a specific Ramist influence, and argues that organiz-

13 Thompson, 2011, p. 73.

14 Ibid., p. 76.

ing knowledge in lists, diagrams and tables represent older and far more general techniques. According to her, tables "which arranged material in columns and rows had the older pedigree, thanks to the continuous diffusion of Eusebius' chronological tables starting in the fourth century."[15] Such ways of organizing material were known from reference works, *florilegia* and commonplace books, which were collections of quotations and bits of information, elegant phrases, and arguments for speeches, letters and so on. Commonplace books could be produced by a student himself, who was supposed to apply systematic techniques of note-taking and collation. In early modern Latin schools, composing commonplace books by note-taking and extracting from authoritative texts held a central position in the educational programmes. Ann Moss has described the commonplace-book as "a probe and an instrument for redistributing text so as to ensure maximal retrievability and optimum application", and points out that "by collecting quotations and ordering them in his common-place-book the student constructs for himself a well-labelled and well-organized store of material, internalizes it by memory and constant use, and has it at the ready to reproduce, recycle, and recombine in compositions where authorial control is most evident in the choice and deployment of quotation".[16] Commonplace books could also be bought, however, and in this way represented early modern reference books or encyclopedias. This leads back to the same Theodore Zwinger, whose large *Theatrum Vitae Humanae* dominated the genre due to both popularity and size. Originally published in one volume 1565, an extended version appeared in 1586 and was reprinted after Zwinger's death in 1604. A yet larger version, now in eight volumes, was issued in 1631 and saw five editions without major changes by 1707.[17] Whether the predilection for lists and tables reflects a specific Ramist inspiration, then, or rather should be regarded as a more general trend in Humanist processing of knowledge, there is no doubt that it formed a strong tradition, still vital in the late seventeenth century, and important in both educational contexts and reference works. This tradition also shaped Lilienskiold's work with his journal, making him fashion his reports of objects, sites and even events as entries in a commonplace book. These conventions intersected with the new epistemological decorum.

In the travel journey, the new decorum most fundamentally asserts itself in the fact that Lilienskiold enumerates only places, attractions and objects that he has seen for himself. His short and dry entries are without the anecdotes, par-

15 Blair, 2010, p. 144f.

16 Moss, 1998, p. 423.

17 Blair, 2005, p. 270f.

allels or analogies that are characteristic of, for instance, older reference works and natural histories. Moreover, Lilienskiold never quotes authoritative authors or works that have described or discussed phenomena similar to those he has experienced. The style might be without a personal note, and the autobiographical information is scarce, but there is no doubt that Lilienskiold's own observations are presented, unaided by references to any corpus of classical texts and interpreting voices.

The entries also contain very few explicit evaluations or judgments. They mostly are plain descriptions of what can be seen, concentrating on material and size, at times with some information about use or function and origin. In a limited number of cases words such as "fine", "costly" or "beautiful" are added or the object is reported to be "held in high esteem" or to be "valuable" to its owner. There are also small ink drawings inserted in order to make things more clear, mostly when it comes to weapons or machinery and technical installations.

As already argued, the dryness of the entries and the relative lack of interpretations, either by Lilienskiold himself or by the aid of some previous authority, can be seen as the outcome of an epistemological choice, based on an understanding of knowledge as the product of observation and experience, and thus conforming to the ideals of the new natural philosophy. Whether the choice was of the young Lilienskiold himself, or made by his preceptor, who probably supervised the work with the original dairy, cannot be known. It should however be noted that it is very consequently carried out throughout the entire work, even those parts describing the initial trip the two boys made from Bergen to Copenhagen to meet their future teacher Niels Stub.

Making the lists, Lilienskiold generally enumerates churches and palaces in the order he has seen them. This also applies to the descriptions of the treasures that can be seen inside, thus producing a system of main and secondary lists. The heading of a main list is typically a town, whose attractions and sites are enumerated, or a church whose chapels and altars are listed. Within each, secondary lists are composed, enumerating, for instance, what can be seen in each room of a palace or a collection, or the pictures, paintings and objects of a chapel. It is not easy to judge whether this system of lists provides a complete descriptions of the places visited. Do they enumerate all that could be seen, or do the merely represent what Lilienskiold saw – or perhaps what he cared to mention of what he saw? Even if they should happen to be complete and exhaustive lists, it is important to note that they – despite the absence of personal commentaries – clearly reflect Lilienskiold's presence and perspective: They recount what *he* saw, they are *his* observation. The simple fact that makes them stand out in this way is that they so clearly correspond to his movement, through the church or collection, through the city, and through Europe. The text is punctuated by phrases such as "is here to be seen" or "one will see". Moreover, in the presentations of palaces, churches and *Kunstkammer* or collections, Lilienskiold gives lists of one room or chapel after the other, frequently marking the passage with "in the first room", then "in the next room", and so on. The observations are made by a real subject, seeing and moving through the chapels of the church, the rooms of the palace, and following the routes and roads through Europe. Taken together, the system of main and secondary lists reflects the topography of the places visited, as well as Lilienskiold's own movement through it – be it a single building or Europe as it appears when one travels from Bergen to Naples.

With this method of turning topography into lists, and objects and buildings into entries, Lilienskiold transformed them all into items resembling those of a commonplace book. Collecting them all in his book, in the shape of well-ordered lists of easily accessible information, Lilienskiold turned what he had seen and experienced into items of his own possession at his own disposal. In doing so, he built up a collection he could bring home with him and present later as part of his credentials: The competence gained by the Grand Tour. Lilienskiold is not known to have built up any other kind of collection from his travel, neither of art nor of natural history items. Nonetheless, in the same way as commonplace books were intended to work as a useful collection of extracted information, bits of wisdom and well-turned phrases, Lilienskiold's commonplace book was a well-ordered storehouse of useful knowledge. Arranging the experiences and observations in his journal did not merely make sense then and there, it also made this sense transferable and convertible. The knowledge itself, as well as the painstakingly demonstrated competence in processing knowledge according to cultural norms, was turned into a currency that could be used to acquire a position and secure a career back home.

The aspect of transformation and the similarities with commonplace books is even more pronounced in the tables that fill the last pages of the first half of the manuscript. They were probably made during the winter in Rome, and contain information about objects and places seen during this first part of the journey. For the second part, including the return through France and England, no corresponding tables can be found, possibly due to the abrupt ending of the manuscript. In these tables, the information and observations have been further processed and itemized. It starts with a "survey of ruins of the ancients", organized as a table with the three columns, reserved for the three categories cities and palaces, temples, and "ancient structures" respectively. Another main table cites the "curiosities" seen in museums and collections during the journey from Copenhagen to Rome. Here, the columns are marked "precious", "inventious" and "nature changed". Other tables present columns of, for instance, mountains, rivers and islands; the tombs of saints, kings and emperors; or weapons and manuscripts, idols and antiquities. Under each of the thematic headings follow columns of alphabetic lists, citing the relevant object, places and so on. In this case, the sites and objects have no relation whatsoever to topography or to their own original context. They are organized according to the alphabetical order created by their initials. Even topographical elements such as rivers and mountains are treated as items of a certain category and placed under that heading. Rivers are listed with rivers, mountains with other mountains. This itemization strongly serves to enhance the impression of a collection of movable goods, readily available to be arranged in patterns that are not determined by their circumstances of origin, natural location or even history, but imposed on them by the collector's systematic work and his tools of tables and alphabetization.

Turning objects and buildings into observations, and observations into lists and tables, Lilienskiold made sense of Europe. He turned Europe into items that could be collected, and the items into a collection that could be moved. What he brought home with him, as an asset to his future career, was the knowledge he collected on his travel. This included his language skills and his competences as a man well educated in law and politics, but also his journal containing observations and demonstrating the skills he had acquired in processing information and knowledge – in making sense.

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