

FABIOLA SALERNO

MOVING IDEAS

A Mash up of Old and New Worlds

Vol. 2

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THE LAST COUPLE OF WORDS LEFT



GRAND TOUR is really a significant couple of key-words for our historical and cultural excursus. The Eighteenth century was in fact a century of great travels and great travelers who preferred the direct experience instead of something narrated. The *grand tourists* didn't travel for pilgrimages or business or embassy matters: they didn't have any motivation but the curiosity to see everything and to talk about everything. It was **Richard Lassels** to use the words *Grand Tour* for the first time in his *Voyage or a Complete Journey Through Italy* in 1670: he meant a proper tour with departure and arrival in the same place. The *Grand Tour* was seen as an instrument of education, a way to exchange cultures and ideas, an occasion of comparison, an opportunity to improve the critical consciousness. The *tourists* were, obviously, the people who could afford the costs of this kind of journeys: young people of the English aristocracy, artists, men of culture used well-equipped coaches and took long tours regularly. Italy soon became the choice which no one could renounce to, and the reasons were many: it was considered an open-air museum; a place with a sunny and clear weather; an immense casket rich of archaeological sites; a library which scented of Renaissance; a multitude of art, music and theatre.



Let's read what **Francis Bacon**, a philosopher of the Seventeenth Century, suggested in *Of Travel*, one of his essays:

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. It is a strange thing, that in sea voyages, where there is nothing to be seen, but sky and sea, men should make diaries; but in land-travel, wherein so much is to be observed, for the most part they omit it; as if chance were fitter to be registered, than observation. Let diaries, therefore, be brought in use. The things to be seen and observed are: the courts of princes, especially when they give audience to ambassadors; the courts of justice, while they sit and hear causes; and so of consistories ecclesiastic; the churches and monasteries, with the monuments which are therein extant; the walls and fortifications of cities, and towns, and so the heavens and harbors; antiquities and ruins; libraries; colleges, disputations, and lectures, where any are; shipping and navies; houses and gardens of state and pleasure, near great cities; armories; arsenals; magazines; exchanges; burses; warehouses; exercises of horsemanship, fencing, training of soldiers, and the like; comedies, such whereunto the better sort of persons do resort; treasuries of jewels and robes; cabinets and rarities; and, to conclude, whatsoever is memorable, in the places where they go. After all which, the tutors, or servants, ought to make diligent inquiry. As for triumphs, masks, feasts, weddings, funerals, capital executions, and such shows, men need not to be put in mind of them; yet are they not to be neglected. 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. First, as was said, he must have some entrance into the language before he goeth. Then he must have such a servant, or tutor, as knoweth the country, as was likewise said. Let him carry with him also, some 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; nay, when he stayeth in one city or town, let him change his lodging from one end and part of the town, to another; which is a great adamant of acquaintance. Let him sequester himself, from the company of his countrymen, and diet in such places, where there is good company of the nation where he travelleth. Let him, upon his removes from one place to another, procure recommendation to some person of quality, residing in the place whither he removeth; that he may use his favor, in those things he desireth to see or know. Thus he may abridge his travel, with much profit. 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. Let him also see, and visit, eminent persons in all kinds, which are of great name abroad; that he may be able to tell, how the life agreeth with the fame. For quarrels, they are with care and discretion to be avoided. They are commonly for mistresses, healths, place, and words. And let a man beware, how he keepeth company with choleric and quarrelsome persons; for they will engage him into their own quarrels. When a traveller returneth home, let him not leave the countries, where he hath travelled, altogether behind him; but maintain a correspondence by letters, with those of his acquaintance, which are of most worth. And let his travel appear rather in his discourse, than his apparel or gesture; and in his discourse, let him be rather advised in his answers, than forward to tell stories; 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.

Analyze the text point by point: which point do you agree with, with which one you don't? Prepare a detailed list to share with your classmates.

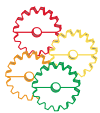
How is the XXI-century way of travelling different from the way in the XVII/XVIII-century?

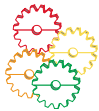
Have you ever travelled in Italy or abroad? Tell your experiences. If you haven't, tell how and where you imagine your first journey.

The itineraries were established by past experience: the whole Tuscany and Rome were the privileged destinations and very often the *grand tourists* arrived in Naples. The South of Italy and Sicily were included in the tour later, in the following century.

The coach was the protagonist of the tour: it took care of the microcosm that it had inside and offered the possibility to look at the outside macrocosm through its windows. The landscape became the reference point of these *tourists*, food for thought, something to observe to feel. The slowness of the *tour* (Florence-Rome could even take 6 days) favored a pleasant social life inside the coach: the little group played chess, spent their time with board games and, above all, they read, painted and wrote. There was a varied production of drafts and sketches, notes and outlines which later became the books and the pictures which we know today. It was a way to take photos in a period when photos didn't exist: they wanted to record every moment to keep memory of their experience abroad.

Here is a page of sketches and notes by **Joseph Wright of Derby** who visited Rome in 1770s: which monuments can you recognize?





The web is full of pictures by the Eighteenth-century artists who visited the smartest Italian towns and depicted them with great sensitivity. Choose some of the 700 *Grand Tour* pictures depicting Italy from the North to the South and make a publicity leaflet writing a brief description for each picture.

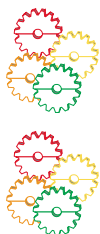
Let's read now a short passage from *Travels through France and Italy*, a collection of letters by **Tobias Smollet**. He lived the last years of his life in Leghorn: he died in 1771 and was buried in the Old English Cemetery of the town.

For four zechines I hired a return-coach from Pisa to Florence. This road, which lies along the Arno, is very good; and the country is delightful, variegated with hill and vale, wood and water, meadows and corn-fields, planted and inclosed like the counties of Middlesex and Hampshire; with this difference, however, that all the trees in this tract were covered with vines, and the ripe clusters black and white, hung down from every bough in a most luxuriant and romantic abundance. The vines in this country are not planted in rows, and propped with sticks, as in France and the county of Nice, but twine around the hedge-row trees, which they almost quite cover with their foliage and fruit. The branches of the vine are extended from tree to tree, exhibiting beautiful festoons of real leaves, tendrils, and swelling clusters a foot long. By this economy the ground of the inclosure is spared for corn, grass, or any other production. The trees commonly planted for the purpose of sustaining the vines, are maple, elm, and aller, with which last the banks of the Arno abound. (It would have been still more for the advantage of the Country and the Prospect, if instead of these they had planted fruit trees for the purpose.) This river, which is very inconsiderable with respect to the quantity of water, would be a charming pastoral stream, if it was transparent; but it is always muddy and discoloured. About ten or a dozen miles below Florence, there are some



marble quarries on the side of it, from whence the blocks are conveyed in boats, when there is water enough in the river to float them, that is after heavy rains, or the melting of the snow upon the mountains of Umbria, being part of the Apennines, from whence it takes its rise.

(from *Letter XXVII*)



There are some comparisons between Italy and England and between Italy and France: can you distinguish them?

Would you like to try your hand at painting the landscape described by Smollett in the text above? Use the tools that suit you.



The Grand Tour ended at the beginning of the XIX century because it became difficult to travel around the Continent during the French Revolution and Napoleonic battles. When the travels restarted, the Grand Tour style couldn't revive anymore: there was a radical change in every field, first of all in the means of transport. But man never stops travelling, he never stops looking for something because of, or thanks to an eternal restlessness which is a state of mind. **Bruce Chatwin**, a great traveler and writer of our time, in his 1997 *Anatomy of Restlessness*, talked about the adventure for travelling like a dimension of human dynamism which not only enlarges the minds but, really more important, it gives shape to the minds.



What destination would a XXI-century traveler like? Go to <http://viaggi.repubblica.it/articolo/mese-per-mese-le-12-occasioni-da-viaggio-del-2010/219920> and have a look of the new 12 wonders of the world for 2010. Organize a brochure translating in English the information the site suggests.



Go back to the first page of this chapter and read again the 12 words written in the box: tell the class the reason why each word is representative of the period you have just studied.