

*Topoi, topographies
and travellers.*

Papers of a conference at the Swedish Institute for
Classical Studies in Rome, 10–12 November 2016

Projects & Seminars 6

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Introduction

The present digital volume – generously hosted on the website of the Swedish Institute in Rome – refers to the international conference “Topoi, topographies and travellers: travel literature at the crossroads between real and ideal”, held at the same institute between 10–12 November 2016. This was the last public act of the project “Topos and Topography: Rome as the Guidebook City” (2013–2016) financed by the Swedish Foundation for Humanities and Social Sciences (*Riksbankens Jubileumsfond*), hosted by the Swedish Institute and led by Anna Blennow and Stefano Fogelberg Rota.

The project investigated guidebooks and guiding texts from the Middle Ages and up to the twentieth century with the aim to establish a deeper understanding of the guidebook as a genre and of the rhetorical strategies as well as the textual and visual structures of the texts; an enquiry which resulted in the publication of *Rome and The Guidebook Tradition: From the Middle Ages to the 20th Century* (Berlin/Boston: de Gruyter 2019).

The conference was meant as an occasion to enlarge the scope of “Topos and Topography” to three areas relevant to the study of guidebooks but also more generally to that of travel literature and history of travel. These aspects were treated in three different panels – “Topoi, or the fictionalization of places”, “Topographies, or the physicality & textuality of travelling” and “Travellers, or the transformations of identities”.

In the following thirteen essays, forming a selection of the contributions to the conference, two main themes stand out: topography and traveller – and not least how these interact with each other. The papers range greatly not only geographically but also temporally, with the city of Rome as overarching model. However, as all roads lead to Rome, they equally lead from Rome. This publication deals therefore also with areas and places beyond the Eternal City. The contributions presented in the volume are chronologically ordered, with the exception of the introductory and concluding keynote papers.

How different *topographies* are described and/or shaped is a central concern for most travel literature. Several among the authors discuss how cities, places, and heritage sites create, and are created by, literary topoi. Chloe Chard’s fortunate definition of imaginative topography as those “rhetorical and theoretical strategies for understanding and appropriating the foreign” is an appropriate introduction to several essays in the present volume. The dual concept of a city as both a physical place and an ideal is evident for Rome, but also narratives and histories of other places with the same tension between facts and fiction are addressed in the volume.

How texts emanate from a place or journey, and, vice versa, how texts contribute to creating pre-conceptions and experiences of a place, how a place can be experienced through texts, and how texts and literary traditions are transmitted over time through the practice of travelling – all are aspects addressed in the thirteen essays.

The physical side of travelling, that is the geographies, topographies and landscapes both rural and urban where the traveller moves and acts, forms the backdrop to the second main theme of this volume, *Travellers*. The obstacles and risks that each traveller has to face during a journey arouse affects and emotions in the individual, but cause also rhetorical responses in guidebooks and travel literature. Will the traveller conquer or succumb to the implicit or explicit dangers, and how can literature help? This problematic process borders on the question of identity and transformation. Are the innate qualities of the traveller kept and protected, or will the traveller through a dissolution and reformation of self rather rise anew as more cultivated and mature?

The first two essays of the volume, the late Monica Hedlund's paper 'Preachers, supplicants and pilgrims. Two Vadstena brothers in Rome', and Claes Gejrot's survey 'Medieval Swedish Pilgrims in the Charter Material', are dedicated to the typical Rome-traveller of the Middle Ages: the pilgrim. Hedlund describes the short pilgrim diary kept by Clemens Petri and Johannes Matthei of the Birgittine Order at Vadstena, Sweden, during their journey to Rome in 1487–1488. Their main mission was to work for the canonization of St. Katarina, daughter of St. Birgitta (which they succeeded in doing), but during their stay, they also duly visited the main pilgrim sites at the time, as listed in for example the ninth-century *Martyrologium* of Usuardus, to which the posts in the diary bears strong resemblance, and to which, as Hedlund shows, the brothers must have had access.

Another individual account, that of industrious Swedish pilgrim Pål Måg in the early fifteenth century, is taken as a point of departure for Claes Gejrot's study in how and why pilgrimages were undertaken in medieval Sweden. As the charters from the thirteenth–sixteenth centuries testify, two main types of pilgrimage can be discerned: penitential and compulsory pilgrimage, for example as punishment for a crime, and pious pilgrimage, performed voluntarily as acts of personal piety. A valuable appendix with detailed references to the 120 medieval charters studied by Gejrot is also included in the paper.

Ingrid Rowland deals, on the other hand, with a complicated topography when she takes us on a fascinating tour to an early model and/or competitor of Rome: Viterbo. In her essay 'Viterbo as a Model of Rome in the Work of Annius of Viterbo', she addresses the very concepts of reality and fiction as these are joined together in Annius's early modern 'archaeological' method. With his astonishing inventiveness in retracing and forging sources for the history of Viterbo, Annius stands out as an author surprisingly conscious of the force of fiction for the affirmation of a certain topographical vision.

In 'A Compendium of the Ancient Magnificence of Rome: Giacomo Manilli's 1650 guidebook to the Villa Borghese', Eirik Arff Gulseth Bøhn discusses Giacomo Manilli's influential guidebook to one of the most visited suburban villas of seventeenth century Rome: Villa Borghese. By carefully recreating the context for Manilli's guidebook, Bøhn investigates both the position and status of the author, guardarobbiera at the Roman court, and of his readers. These were, supposedly, mostly *ultramontani* coming from north of the Alps, for whom the author created an artistic common topography, which stands out, at times, as both overtly and implicitly poetical.

Early modern travellers to Rome had somewhat other goals than the pilgrims of the Middle Ages: education and formation of identity through close contact with the political and cultural European scene. In his paper 'The Transformation of a Swedish Traveller – the Naples syndrome?', Anders Bengtsson presents a recently discovered diary written in French by the Swede Eric von Roland during his Grand Tour at the turn of the eighteenth century. The diary serves among other things to illustrate the tension between protestant North and catholic South, and the sometimes contradictory experiences of the northern traveller regarding foreign morals and ways of living, typically heightened in the description of Eric's visit to Naples.

Thomas Velle provides insight in the process of necessary selection in the sometimes highly repetitive descriptions of Rome in guidebooks and travel literature in 'Leaving out Rome. Ludvig Holberg's Comical Presentation of a City and its Travellers'. The solution found by Dano-Norwegian author Holberg, as Velle shows, is to leave out the historical city in the description of his four-month stay there in the early eighteenth century, and in doing so parodying typical travel narratives of his time. Highlighting the shortcomings of a tourist, the playwright Holberg turns Rome into a comical stage.

Humour and comic situations aroused by travellers meeting with a foreign topography is central also in Chloe Chard's 'Not Just "Tittering at the Natives": Laughter in Italy and in a Colder Climate'. Chard discusses similarities and differences in the description of laughter and comical situations to be found in travel literature from both heavily mediated places – such as the Rome of the Grand Tour – and the, at least during the early modern period, less visited region of northern Europe.

In 'Strangers to London. The transformations of travellers and go-betweens in three mid 18th-century travelogues', Jacob Orrje shows how two groups of boundary-crossing actors, "travellers" and "go-betweens", move in different ways in the urban space of London. Through three Swedish travelogues, Orrje illustrates how "travellers" often face obstacles that have to be overcome in order to achieve knowledge of the city and become part of social networks and, ultimately, to be transformed into natives. "Go-betweens", on the other hand – for example Swedish merchants in London – possess a higher degree of communicative and cognitive skills, and thus serve as mediators between cultures as well as between the traveller and the city.

Travelling as forming of identities is the subject also for Ola Svenle's paper 'Academy travel identity – Swedish architects studying in Italy in the late 19th century'. Svenle shows how academic identity and the practice of architectural drawing as foundation for professional knowledge were refined through study trips to Italy in a period when the wide diffusion of industrially printed images called for a counter-reaction from artists and architects.

Ragnar Hedlund takes us instead to another city attracting multitude of visitors and entailing the very concept of change and renewal: Constantinople / Istanbul. In his "A dream to dream again": accounts of travels to Constantinople in the late 19th and early 20th centuries' Hedlund examines the role of guidebooks for the formation of a personal view on the sites visited in some influential and original Swedish travellers / writers such as Per Emmanuel Bergstrand and Fredrik Böök.

In her rich presentation – for both insights and images – Jilke Golbach addresses one of Rome's many paradoxical features: the city's capacity to merge past and present in its essence. In 'Topoi Revisited: memory and temporality in Sharon Kivland's "Freud on Holiday" and Evelyn Hofer's "Emerson in Italy"' Golbach walks with us on the path of two major Rome-travellers – Sigmund Freud and Ralph Waldo Emerson – to discuss how their journeys are re-enacted in the works of Kivland and Hofer.

Enclosing the contributions at the conference as well as in the present volume, the two keynote papers by Beverley Butler and Wim Verbaal masterfully balance and elaborate the themes of topographies and travellers, ideal and real, textualities and mentalities.

In 'Rome Syndrome – 'Tourism, Heritage and Guidebooks at the "Crossroads of the Real and the Ideal"', Beverley Butler focuses on so-called "Heritage Syndromes" – a condition where overwhelming emotions manifest in specific behavioural patterns, often typically located at crossroads between real and ideal where idealized images conflict with the reality of place. These syndromes act in a double way: on the one hand a way for persons to possess places, but on the other hand also a way in which places can possess persons. Butler exemplifies with the strong emotional and aesthetical experiences of Sigmund Freud and Stendhal in Greece and Italy, and in her conclusion also underlines that along the routes of travellers have always been the movement of exiles and refugees – something that Freud, too, encountered in his final years.

Movement through heritage sites at a much earlier period is analysed in Wim Verbaal's 'Making the Stones Speak. Pre-Constructing Rome', where he initially analyses the 16th-century humanist practice of presenting Rome as built upon classical texts, and (re)constructed from books. Verbaal shows how narratives and places are intertwined in endless urban tales of Rome, and then sets out to re-read the two most important topographical texts on Rome from the twelfth century: *Mirabilia Urbis Romae*, and Master Gregory's *Narratio de Mirabilibus Urbis Romae*, both at first sight literary products, seemingly focused on classical Rome only. In Verbaal's view, however,

they rather constitute descriptions of a city of divine wonders and resurrection, and *Mirabilia*, he argues, can be read as a liturgical guidebook to the papal processions through the city.

The conference in 2016 was the concluding event of a string of activities performed by the “Topos and Topography” project through its active years. As the contributions to this volume, our workshops and seminars brought us to various places in both time and space, and just as these essays, the project gravitated around the city of Rome as the center of our universe. Along the way, numerous people and institutions have offered generous inspiration and support: here, it suffices to thank all the contributors to the volume and to the conference; the Swedish Institute for Classical Studies in Rome and its Director Kristian Göransson, our ever welcoming host in the eternal city; Stefania Renzetti and Astrid Capoferro at the Swedish Institute for skilled and kind support, and last but not least, the Swedish Foundation for Humanities and Social Sciences, without whose extensive grants this tale of Rome would not have been possible to write.

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