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## EARLY MODERN *GRAND TOURER* IN POLAND-LITHUANIA: FICTION OR REAL POSSIBILITY?

### Abstract

In the last fifty or so years, Grand Tour has become a very popular and extensively researched phenomenon. Although mainstream researchers have analyzed various aspects of the Grand Tour, they have tended to adopt a narrow definition limited to the experiences of young English gentlemen undertaking a study tour of Italy and France. This article poses a somewhat provocative question: was the Grand Tour feasible as a study tour of an English gentleman visiting Poland-Lithuania? Based on contemporary travel writing, the author reveals the challenges and the difficult logistics of such an undertaking.

**Key words:** *grand tour*, travel literature, early modern Poland-Lithuania

**Słowa kluczowe:** *grand tour*, literatura podróżnicza, nowożytna Rzeczpospolita polsko-litewska

“The Grand Tour is not the Grand Tour unless it includes the following:  
first, a young British male patrician (that is, a member of the aristocracy or gentry);  
second, a tutor who accompanies his charge throughout the journey;  
third, a fixed itinerary that makes Rome its principal destination;  
fourth, a lengthy period of absence, averaging two or three years.”<sup>1</sup>

I set off from Rome on a journey to Russia, in the midst of winter,  
from a just notion that frost and snow must of course mend the roads,  
which every traveller had described as uncommonly bad through

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<sup>1</sup> Bruce Redford, *Venice and the Grand Tour* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 14.

the northern parts of Germany, Poland, Courland, and Livonia.  
I went on horseback, as the most convenient manner of travelling<sup>2</sup>.

*Grand Tour* as a notion, but more as a social and educational phenomenon, has established its position in late-twentieth and early-twenty first century scholarship. The number of works devoted to this phenomenon, analyzing it from various perspectives, points of view, and across various connections with other notions goes into hundreds, if not thousands<sup>3</sup>. The notion was for the first time used by Richard Lassels in his guide on travel to Italy<sup>4</sup>, published posthumously in Paris, and later with some changes in England. In the introduction to the volume, we find the following words: “no man understands Livy and Caesar, Guicciardin and Monluc, like him, who hath made exactly the Grand Tour of France and the Giro of Italy”<sup>5</sup>. This quote is perhaps the most cited fragment of Lassels’ book among authors writing about the Grand Tour in its various forms and on its historiography. Surprisingly, it is quoted with one omission; many authors do not provide it *in extenso*, but leave out the names of Guicciardin<sup>6</sup> and Monluc<sup>7</sup>, limiting themselves to the much more famous Livy and Caesar.

There is no doubt the Grand Tour was an important educational undertaking for many young Europeans in the early modern period. From a modern historiographic perspective, two phenomena appear to be characteristic of Grand Tour scholarship (with few exceptions): The first is this idea of limiting “grand touring” to British gentlemen. The second is the itinerary of which countries and cities were to be visited to consider such travel a Grand

<sup>2</sup> Rudolph Erich Raspe, *The Surprising Adventures of Baron Munchausen* (The Project Gutenberg EBook, 2006), Chapter II, [gu003154.pdf – livrosgratis.com.br, accessed 18 December 2020].

<sup>3</sup> Jason Kelly, ‘Reading the Grand Tour at a Distance: Archives and Datasets in Digital History’, *The American Historical Review* 122/2 (2017), 451-463; John Wilton-Ely, ‘Classic Ground: Britain, Italy, and the Grand Tour’, *Eighteenth-Century Life*, 28/1 (2004), 136-165; Barbara Ann Naddeo, ‘Cultural Capitals and Cosmopolitanism in Eighteenth Century Italy: the Historiography and Italy on the Grand Tour’, *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 10/2 (2005), 183-199; Jean Boutier, ‘Le grand tour: une pratique d’éducation des noblesses européennes (XVIe-XVIIIe siècles)’, *Le voyage à l’époque moderne*, No. 27 (Paris: Presses de l’Université de Paris Sorbonne, Cahiers de l’Association des Historiens modernistes des Universités, 2004), 7-21; Gilles Bertrand, ‘Le voyage et les usages de l’espace méditerranéen à l’époque du Grand Tour’, ILCEA. The foregoing is but a representative list of studies in English and French. Each provides information on additional books and articles devoted to the Grand Tour in diverse setting and seen from many perspectives.

<sup>4</sup> Richard Lassels, *The Voyage of Italy, or a Compleat Journey Through Italy in Two Parts* (Paris, 1670).

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. a<sub>vir</sub>. The introduction to the work does not have page numbers.

<sup>6</sup> Francesco Guicciardini (1483-1540), was a Florentine writer, friend and critique of Machiavelli. He was known in his times as the author of the history of Florence and monumental history of Italy (*Storia d’Italia*; 1537-1540), cf. Roberto Ridolfi, *The Life of Francesco Guicciardini* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1968).

<sup>7</sup> Most probably Blaise de Lasseran de Massencome, seigneur de Monluc known as Blaise de Monluc (1500/1502-1577), author of popular *Commentaires de Messire Blaise de Monluc* (Bordeaux, 1592), describing 50 years of his service and sometimes referred to as a ‘soldier’s Bible’.

Tour, with a particular emphasis being placed on Rome. The quote presented at the opening of this paper, drawn from Bruce Redford's study, confirms this. However, research suggests that this is a very narrow interpretation of the nature of the Grand Tour. Indeed, much extant evidence belies Redford's argument, for there are numerous examples of Europeans from other countries embarking on similar educational undertakings.<sup>8</sup>

This study is not primarily concerned with the demography of Grand Tourers. Rather, it is concerned with the geography of the Grand Tour itinerary and asks whether it could be extended to include other destinations, in particular the territories of Poland-Lithuania.

Lassels was himself a tutor who accompanied young English gentlemen on several trips<sup>9</sup>. He toured France six times and Italy on five occasions, but also visited Germany, Flanders, and the Netherlands on his journeys<sup>10</sup>. Yet in the introduction to his work, he suggests visits to Italy and France (in such order), with the possibility of touching the Holy Roman Empire. Nowhere does he mention going further east<sup>11</sup>.

The two essential and incontrovertible ingredients of a "Grand Tour" are education and travel. A young traveler should visit sites rich in art, architecture, and artefacts of the past on a journey that should be relatively comfortable and untroubled. How might Poland-Lithuania fit into such a rubric?

Early modern travelogues describing Poland-Lithuania show Kraków, Toruń, Gdańsk, and Sandomierz as cities of considerable splendour and richness<sup>12</sup>. Some smaller centres also attracted attention. Warsaw is being described more broadly in the eighteenth century<sup>13</sup>. Yet

<sup>8</sup> Bertrand, 'Le voyage et les usages de l'espace méditerranéen à l'époque du Grand Tour', *op. cit.*; Maeve Devitt Tremblay, 'The Princess and the Dwarf: Polish Perspectives on Collecting and the Grand Tour', *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 41/1 (2018), 25-42. Geoffrey Trease, *The Grand Tour* (London: Heinemann, 1967), 1 writes that: „The Grand Tour was not an exclusively British phenomenon”, and sees the possibility of extending it to other “northern nations”.

<sup>9</sup> Edward Chaney, 'Richard Lassels [Lascelles] (c. 1603-1668)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 2004.

<sup>10</sup> Lassels, *The Voyage of Italy*, *op. cit.*, p. a<sub>IV</sub>.

<sup>11</sup> This short paper grew out of curiosity and as a short mental exercise. Asking whether early modern (British) Grand Tour to Poland-Lithuania was possible, I would like to provoke a small discussion, but also suggest a need to analyze the problem in a larger work on travel writing, which could even take the form of a Master's Dissertation. This contribution is a form of a working paper with more questions and hypotheses, than answers.

<sup>12</sup> Seventeenth century accounts of travel to Poland-Lithuania have been studied almost thirty years ago by Teresa Chynczewska-Hennel. Her study: *Rzeczpospolita XVII wieku w oczach cudzoziemców* (Wrocław-Warszawa-Kraków: Ossolineum, 1993) provides an interesting and valuable introduction to the topic of travel literature on Poland-Lithuania in the seventeenth century. Quite surprisingly it is not very outdated and the arrangement by topics is modern and stands the test of time. Yet new accounts have been added to the bibliography and the book does not go into details, in particular such as the country's suitability for a Grand Tour experience.

<sup>13</sup> The splendor of Warsaw grew with the city being chosen as a residence by the Polish king Sigismundus Vasa at the end of sixteenth century. In the earlier times it was a rather small and less important town, without many Romanesque, Gothic or Renaissance artifacts, without a university and a royal palace.

none of these can challenge the richness, beauty, and impact made on visitors to Rome, Bologna, Padua, Venice, and other Italian cities. While Polish-Lithuanian citizens possessed numerous paintings and sculptures, as well as oriental art and rich libraries, one had to visit the private residences of selected nobles and aristocrats, all of which were inaccessible to a simple British gentleman. Of course, one can imagine a British noble family, or even rich merchant sending their sons to chosen Polish and Lithuanian courts, but not on the scale characteristic of the *Grand Tour*. Poland-Lithuania simply did not offer such ample opportunities to learn as Italian or even French cities could offer. What's more, if one were looking for additional learning opportunities, the Polish schools lacked the kind of curricula that drew tourers with the Italian, French, and even Spanish institutions.

Despite this, it is nevertheless worthwhile to explore some of the factors beyond education which may have influenced British decisions to extend their Grand Tour itineraries *en route* to Italy via the Netherlands, Germany, and Poland-Lithuania. Here, we turn to accounts of early modern travelers to glean evidence of their travel in these regions and suggest how some factors may have weighed on British decision making. This is not, however, an exhaustive study of such accounts; rather, what follows is an examination of a few exemplary testimonies chosen in the hope that they will provoke further, deeper research into the topic.

In 1674, the Rev. Robert South accompanied as chaplain the English ambassador, Laurence Hyde (later Earl of Rochester), to Poland<sup>14</sup>. South described the conditions of their route in his travel diary:

As an Introduction, you are to understand, that there are scarce any Inns in that Country, except those the Natives call *Karczma's*, where Travellers are obliged to lodge with the Cattle. These Inns, or rather long Stables, are all built up with Boards, and cover'd with Straw, within there is no Furniture, neither are there any Windows, but all the Light comes in either at Holes made by the Weather, or the Crevices of ill-joined Boards. 'Tis True, at the further End they have a little Chamber with a Fire-Hearth; but to make an Abatement for that, there is no Lodging in it, because of the Gnats, Fleas, Bugs, and especially the Noisom Smell that incommodes it. For if they happen to have a little Window there (which is a Rarity if they do) yet they never open it, tho' the Weather be at its Extremity of Heat: So that Strangers chuse to lie in the aforesaid Stable where the *Gospodarz* or Inn-Keeper Lodges himself and his Family, than to be suffocated by the Stink and Smell of so close and small a Room. In the long Room there is also an intolerable Smell, occasion'd by a parcel of rotten Cabbages, which those People always keep by them. And this, though it may be agreeable enough to the Natives who are used to it, yet to Strangers it must be very offensive.

<sup>14</sup> Alexander Gordon, Robert South, *Dictionary of National Biography* (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1885-1900), vol. 53, 275-276.

In the Inns or stables, there are no Tables or Beds, except one of the last in the little Room just mention'd, which no body cares to lie in, because they can have no Sheets but what are as course as Sackcloth, and have been often lain in before. Neither is the Straw in the Stable much better, because (even at that) every Company cannot have fresh; For the *Gospodarz* after his Guests are gone, generally gather it up, and preserve it for New Comers. Yet is it, in this Condition, preferably to the Bed, by Reason that he most commonly Airs it after it has been used<sup>15</sup>.

Similar observations appear in the travel diary of Gaspar de Tende, Sieur de Hauteville. It is likely he used the same information as South, both of whom edited their travelogues upon their return home. De Hauteville writes:

There are no Inns in Poland, where one may Lodge conveniently, and be Accommodated with a Bed. The only Houses of Entertainment are built of Wood, which they call *Karczma*, where Travellers are oblig'd to Lodge with the Horses, Cows and Hogs, in a long Stable made of Boards, ill joyn'd, and Thatch'd with Straw; 'Tis true, there is a Chamber at the end of it, with a Stove, but 'tis impossible for one to Lodge in it in the Summer, because of the Flyes, Fleas, Bugs, and the Noisome Small of the place, for they never open the Windows, even in the hottest Weather; so that Strangers chuse rather to lye in the Stables in the Summer, than in the Chamber. And besides, the *Gospodarz*, or Inn-keeper Lodges in that Room with his Children and whole Family, and usually keeps a Hogshhead of stinking Cabbage the smell of which is extreemly offensive to Strangers, tho' the People of the Country, who are accustom'd to such perfumes, are not incommoded by it.

Those who have occasion to Travel in the Summer, may avoid these Inconveniences by Lying in a Barn upon fresh Straw; for the *Gospodarz* gathers and Locks up every Morning the Straw which was given at Night to those who Lodged in the stable of Chamber, in order to reserve it for those who shall come to Lodge after them<sup>16</sup>.

A few years after de Hauteville's journey to Poland, another description of the country was printed in London. Once again we find a parallel account:

'Tis very inconvenient Travelling in this Country, by reason there are very few Inns to be met unless it be in great Cities; and therefore a Traveller must be careful to carry his Provisions along with him. However 'tis very true that in some Parts you shall meet with Gentlemen and

<sup>15</sup> Robert South, *Posthumous Works of the late Reverend Robert South, /.../ IV. An Account of his TRAVELS into Poland with the Earl of Rochester, in the Year of 1674 /.../* (London, 1717), 100-102.

<sup>16</sup> Le Sieur de Hauteville [Gaspar de Tende], *An Account of Poland Containing a Geographical Description of the Country, the Manners of Inhabitants, and the Wars they have been Engag'd in; the Constitution of that Government; Particularly the Manner of Electing and Crowning their King; his Power and Prerogative: With a Brief History of the Tartars* (London, 1698), 205-206.

some Burghers, who seeing a stranger that seems to be of some Quality, will invite him to their Houses, where he is Lodg'd and Treated as splendidly as the Place and Season will permit. /.../<sup>17</sup>

It is, of course, possible that all of these accounts were influenced by the same source, the original of which may no longer be extant. For our purposes, what is important is the fact that all three accounts communicate the same idea: travel in Poland was very difficult where lodging was concerned. Such a situation would definitely discourage a potential Grand Tour.

Many of the accounts do not include lengthy, detailed passages on conditions of travel. Heidrich Wolf of Zurich describes what he considers the unusual manner of dining among the people of Poland-Lithuania, but it is impossible to find mention of either lodging or travel conditions<sup>18</sup>. John Peyton's<sup>19</sup> and Bernard O'Connor's<sup>20</sup> works describe Poland-Lithuania, its history, structure, form of government, and society, but do not go into detail on modes and challenges of travel. However, there is an interesting passage in Charles Ogier's account from his mission to Poland in 1635-36<sup>21</sup>. On 22 June, he describes a night of the French delegation in the north of the country, stating that they were forced to sleep on bare benches, without any straw, because in Poland and Prussia beds were not provided to travellers. Rather, travellers were expected either to carry their own bedding or to lie on the ground<sup>22</sup>. The following night, he slept on straw in a cart, as he could not even find a barn<sup>23</sup>. On 5 July, Ogier was fortunate enough to enjoy the hospitality of a Polish noble, local Voivode Paweł Działyński, who allowed him to use his personal cushions to sleep, while all the others in his party slept on straw<sup>24</sup>.

<sup>17</sup> *A New Account of Poland and Lithuania Describing their Governments, Palatines, Provinces, Religion, Language, Habits, Festivals, Marriages, Funerals, Climate, Rivers, Salt Mines and other Rarities. Their Forces, Coins, Revenues, General and Particular Diets, Priviledges of their Nobility, Interregnum, and Ceremonies in the Election of their New King* (London, 1702), 11. A slightly shorter version of the same account was printed four years earlier. To my knowledge, only one copy of each has been found and both are held in the Czartoryski Library in Kraków, Poland. The author remains unknown.

<sup>18</sup> Heinrich Wolf, *Peregrinationes sive peregrinatium Heinrichi Wolphii tigurini brevis et compendiaria description* (Warszawa: Zamek Królewski w Warszawie, 1996), *passim*.

<sup>19</sup> John Peyton, *Relation of the state of Polonia and the United Provinces of that Crown anno 1598* (Rome: Institutum Historicum Polonicum, 1965).

<sup>20</sup> Bernard O'Connor, *The History of Poland* (London, 1698), 2 vols.

<sup>21</sup> Charles Ogier (in Polish Karol) was a secretary to the French ambassador during the peace negotiations between Poland-Lithuania and Sweden.

<sup>22</sup> Karol Ogier, *Dziennik podróży do Polski* (Gdańsk: Biblioteka Miejska i Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Nauki i Sztuki, 1950), vol. 1, 84, the account was originally written in Latin and the 1950 edition is a two language edition: Latin and Polish. The relevant passage reads: *Lectos illic nullos invenimus, decubuimus super scamna, nam in Polonia ac Prussia nulli peregrinatiobuslecti dantur in diversoriis. Oportet suos ferre vel humi incere, nec nisi difficulter palea emi aut inveniri potest.*

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 90.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 112.

Outside Toruń, quite an important medium sized city in the seventeenth century, Ogier and his ambassador entered a place designated for they overnight rest. His description is as follows: “we entered something, which I have no idea whether it was a bath or a barn, as animals fought for place with people. On the floor there lay six voivode’s servants, as if slaughtered, while on the other side one could find a peasant – house owner, with his wife, children and servants among straw and bed linings/.../ in the corner lay a sick woman in puerperium, while everywhere you could find dogs, geese, piglets and chicken”<sup>25</sup>.

It is important to note that Ogier’s experience may be more indicative of his own status as a relatively minor official in the French embassy to Poland, rather than being a comprehensive reflection of all the challenges and difficulties travelers to the country faced. Nevertheless, his account accords with the larger picture developing of seventeenth-century travel in Poland.

In 1653, Patrick Gordon, a Scottish migrant looking for work and opportunity in Poland-Lithuania, wrote the following account of a night he spent close to Elbląg: “I asked on[e] of the maids where I should ly, and she laughing, went and fetched me a bundle of fresh straw, and told me I might ly in an empty waggon in the place where the waggons and horses were; to the which I went, and makeing my straw bed, I laid my cloake one half under and the other above me, with my coat and portmantle under my head; and so, being exceedingly wearyed, I laid me downe. But by and by came the maid, and reaching me a pillow, began to laugh downright, then jumped away in such hast as if she had been afrayed of some infection”<sup>26</sup>. It should be borne in mind that Gordon, who eventually reached the rank of general in the army of the Russian Tsar, but was not yet a soldier, was fortunate to sleep in a cart, rather than on a dirt floor, with some fresh straw and a pillow provided.

The situation did not change over the following hundred years. Many of these travel obstacles and difficulties are confirmed by eighteenth-century British diplomats. Although in general they found Polish-Lithuanian roads to be acceptable, the lack and quality of inns was demanding. In her study of these accounts, Barbara Krysztopa-Czupryńska quotes British Resident George Woodward, who wrote the following in his diary: “I had a pretty good journey hither the weather being very fine and the nights short which was a comfort, for there is not an inn in Poland, that I have yet seen, fit to lodge a dog, I’ll only compare them to the worst in Westphalia”<sup>27</sup>. As this suggests, some diplomats decided to

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 143-145, in original the passage is as follows: “intravimus, nescio an hypocaustum an stabulum dicam, nam mixtae ibi hominibus pecudes de loci possessione contedepant. Sex inde palatini satellites humi iacebant interfectorum in mortem, rusticus hinc domus unquilius cum uxore, liberis, ancillis, palea plumquae involuti erant in scammis, quae circa parietes diposita sunt /.../ Parte alia ad angulum furni aegrotabat mulier puerpera; canis passim, anseres, porculi pullique sparsi”.

<sup>26</sup> Patrick Gordon, *The Diary of Patrick Gordon of Auchleuchries*, ed. Dmitri Fedosov (Aberdeen: The AHRC Centre for Irish and Scottish Studies, 2009), vol 1, 12.

<sup>27</sup> Barbara Krysztopa-Czupryńska, ‘Dyplomaci brytyjscy w podróżach przez ziemie Rzeczypospolitej w pierwszej połowie XVIII w. – warunki peregrynacji’, *Via viatores quaerit: mobilność społeczna w dziejach*

travel by night without stopping in the very bad conditions, rather than risk the vagaries of an overnight stay. Still other considerations that influenced diplomats' decisions were the questions of security and the relative safety of travel<sup>28</sup>.

The lodging conditions for travellers did not improve – if there was change it would probably be for the worse. In 1784, English pastor William Coxe passed through Poland on his way to Russia. His group encountered similar problems as travellers a century earlier:

Without having travelled it, I could hardly have conceived so comfortless a region: a forlorn stillness and solitude prevailed almost through the whole extent, with few symptoms of an inhabited, and still less of a civilized country. Though in the high road, which united Cracow and Warsaw, in the course of 258 English miles, we met in our progress only two carriages and about a dozen carts. The country was equally thin of human habitations: a few straggling villages, all built of wood, succeeded one another at long intervals, whose miserable appearances corresponded to the wretchedness of the country around them. In these assemblages of huts, the only places of reception for travellers were hovels, belonging to Jews, totally destitute of furniture and every species of accommodation. We could seldom procure any other room but that in which the family lived; in the article of provision eggs and milk were our greatest luxuries, and could not always be obtained; our only bed was straw thrown upon the ground, and we thought ourselves happy when we could procure it clean. Even we, who were by no means delicate, and who had long been accustomed to put up with all inconveniences, found ourselves distressed in this land of desolation<sup>29</sup>.

Coxe's account recalls that of de Hauteville above, who suggested a foreigner commuting through Poland "ought to furnish himself with a Calash drawn by Two Horses, a Bed made of a Thin Quilt, a Small Feather-bed, a Pair of Sheets, a Bolster, a Coverlet, and an empty Straw-bed to wrap about the rest of the Clothes".<sup>30</sup> Robert South, de Hauteville's near-contemporary mentioned earlier, suggested exactly the same mode of travel<sup>31</sup>. We find descriptions suggesting that Poles were capable of sleeping on the ground and warming themselves by lying close to their horses. Some authors indicate that travel in winter is more difficult due to low temperatures and snow.

The relative ease or difficulty of journeying in Poland-Lithuania varied significantly based on the season. Winter's low temperatures and inclement weather, for example, tended

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*krajów Grupy Wyszehradzkiej*, ed. Agnieszka Teterycz-Puzio, Lech Kościelak, Ewa Łączyńska (Słupsk: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Akademii Pomorskiej, 2016), 297.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 297-298.

<sup>29</sup> William Coxe, *Travels into Poland, Russia, Sweden, and Denmark. Interspersed with historical relations and political inquiries* (London, 1784), 201-202.

<sup>30</sup> Le Sieur de Hauteville [Gaspar de Tende], *An Account of Poland*, *op. cit.*, 209.

<sup>31</sup> South, *Posthumous Works*, *op. cit.*, 102.

to make travel more difficult. Such challenges were familiar to those in the country, where there was also little knowledge of the nature of travel in the West. This lack of understanding resulted in rather unusual travel advice for young Polish-Lithuanian Grand Tourers bound for Italy and France. For example, the Polish-Lithuanian magnate Krzysztof Radziwill dispatched a letter to his son advising he take with him a beaver quilt and folded bed on his tour. While such trappings were hardly appropriate for itinerary stops in the West, difficult conditions and poor (or absent) accommodations in Poland made them necessary.

Poland's underdeveloped transportation system further complicated matters, as de Hauteville observed: "There is no Travelling by Post in Poland, tho' there are Posts for carrying Letters and Pacquets /.../"<sup>32</sup>. In other words, travellers had at least to have their own horses and often even their own coach to help facilitate travel.

Indeed, the transportation infrastructure left much to be desired. Roads and dining en route could be a nightmare, depending upon the region and time of year. Whereas Poland-Lithuania remained rather calm in the sixteenth century, various wars, campaigns, and occupations impacted its territories from the 1620s until its partitioning at the end of the eighteenth century. These left vast territories uninhabited, lacking any surviving edifices, inns, or even water wells. Here, again, the travel accounts are revealing, bearing in mind that authors described specific routes at specific times, and that their observations cannot be generalized and applied neither to the regions through which they did not travel nor to different time periods..

As William Coxe reported in the late eighteenth century:

Though in most countries we made a point of suspending our journey during the night, in order that no scene might escape our observation; yet we here even preferred continuing our routs without intermission to the penance we endured in these receptacles of filth and penury: and we have reason to believe that the darkness of the night deprived us of nothing but the sight of gloomy forests, indifferent crops of corn, and objects of human misery.

The road bore as few marks of human industry as the country which it intersects. It was best where it was sandy; in other parts it was scarcely passable; and in the marshy grounds, where some labour was absolutely necessary to make it support carriages, it was raised with sticks and boughs of trees thrown promiscuously upon the surface, or formed by trunks of trees laid crossways.

After the tedious journey we at length approached Warsaw; but the roads being neither more passable, nor the country better cultivated, and the suburbs chiefly consisting of the same wooden hovels which compose the villages, we had no suspicion of being near the capital of Poland until we arrived at its gates.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Le Sieur de Hauteville [Gaspar de Tende], *An Account of Poland*, *op. cit.*, 209.

<sup>33</sup> Coxe, *Travels into Poland, Russia, Sweden, and Denmark*, *op. cit.*, 180.

This appears to be “routine” travel in times of relative peace. A different account from the same period is more shocking:

From Rava to Sirad is one hundred miles; in which track of country, though it evidently has all been cultivated, we saw but three villages inhabited; all the rest burnt, and the people gone: the inhabitants of these yet venture to till a small quantity of land: we saw a little wheat, and several ploughs turning in barley; but who will reap it, the seedsmen little know. It is astonishing that the country from Dantzick to Warsaw should escape so well, while this has suffered so severely. I there saw many devastations; but they are nothing, compared with the condition of these territories. Sirad was in arms both within and without the walls; we therefore made a detour to the left, and passed it. From there to the boundary with Silesia is about forty miles; all of which is one continued scene of ruin. This is a journey of near two hundred miles; and a more melancholy one can scarcely be travelled. Moderately speaking, I do not believe there are five thousand souls left in the whole country/.../34

An Italian party travelling through south Poland towards Warsaw experienced similar challenges at the end of the seventeenth century. Here, we turn to the travel diary of Giovan Battista Fagioli<sup>35</sup>, a Florentine poet and comedy writer who travelled to Poland as a secretary of the papal nuncio, Andrea Santacroce<sup>36</sup>. Even if we take into account that Fagioli was being ironic and rather critical of his surroundings, parts of his diary read like a horror story. In June 1690, the party reached Polish territory, and we pick up their itinerary between the Austrian Silesia and Warsaw.

On Saturday the 17<sup>th</sup>, they ate in Psary in a ‘hideous karczma’, where there was nothing except bad beer. They slept in Kamienica, where the nuncio slept in a barn while most of his companions lay directly on clay ground<sup>37</sup>.

On Monday the 19<sup>th</sup>, they dined in Borowno, a ‘ruined town’, with no food or drink to be offered (purchased) in it. The nuncio slept in a cowshed with horses. All the members of the party, including Santacroce, experienced a painful stomach-ache<sup>38</sup>.

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<sup>34</sup> Joseph Marshall, *Travels through Holland, Flanders, Germany, Denmark, Sweden, Lapland, Russia, The Ukraine, and Poland in the Years 1768, 1769, and 1770. In which is particularly Minuted, The Present State of Those Countries, respecting their Agriculture, Population, Manufactures, Commerce, The Arts, and Useful Undertakings* (London, 1772), vol. 3, 264-265.

<sup>35</sup> Giovan Battista Fagioli, *Diariusz podróży do Polski (1690-1691)* (Warszawa: Muzeum Pałacu Króla Jana III w Wilanowie, 2017).

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 82.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 83.

On Wednesday the 21<sup>st</sup>, they stopped in a place whose name the author was unable to discover. Fagioli simply referred to it as the ‘cursed village’, where there was no clean water to be had<sup>39</sup>.

Fagioli’s account describes many similar experiences during the trip to Warsaw, from a lack of potable water to a dearth of victuals and other commodities. At the same time, however, more fortunate travellers experienced the hospitality of several monasteries and nobles’ homes, where they enjoyed very good meals and partook of the generosity of their hosts.

Recalling the problem expressed in the title of this essay, would it be possible to imagine a young English gentleman on a Grand Tour in Poland-Lithuania, even if it was *en route* to Italy?

Setting aside the rather meagre cultural outlets and expressions—including a lack of cosmopolitan urban centers, little noteworthy architecture or *objets d’art*—available to satisfy visitors’ curiosity and educational interests in Poland-Lithuania, it is difficult to imagine an inexperienced young Englishman (or, for that matter, a group of them) coping with the difficult and sometimes outright dangerous travel conditions in the large, Central European state. The poor condition of the transportation infrastructure and accommodations on offer, a main feature of which seems to have been inns that functioned as dive bars rather than shelters for overnight stays, were well-known and, doubtless, did little to encourage travellers’ interest in spending a few weeks’ of an extended Grand Tour in the country. The second quote which appears at the beginning of this essay, taken from Rudolph Erich Raspe’s *Adventures of Baron Munchausen*, speaks to the very essence of the matter: the roads were generally so impassable their coverage in ice actually *ensured* sounder and safer passage.

Thus, it is reasonable to conclude that, even should there have been notable sites in Poland-Lithuania which fit into the overall Grand Tour itinerary and ethos, such conditions prevail so as to make a journey unthinkable and unfeasible for young English grand tourers.

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<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 84.

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