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USSY 227 – Ehrlich

Travel Writing on Screen

8 November 2016

Cambridge Companion: The Grand Tour and After

Summary and Notes

* eighteenth century fictional British literature is full of traveling “heroes enmeshed in journey-plots” where every “author of consequence” had a travel-genre book (37)
* “travel’s pervasive appeal may have owed something to a high degree of acceptance which philosophical empiricism had gained in Britain by the end of the seventeenth century” (37)
* “If knowledge is rooted in experience and nowhere else, travel instantly gains in importance and desirability. Following the great Renaissance age of colonial exploration and expansion, an articulated, systematic empiricism made traveling about the world and seeing the new and different ‘something like an obligation for the person conscientious about developing the mind and accumulating knowledge’” (37)
* many books recount the experiences of European travel between 1660 and 1840, much of the relevant literature is published in private manuscript correspondence or in arguments about travels importance rather than a “travelogue” (38)
* the essay will focus on the Grand Tour but points out that many other travels existed
* this essay emphasizes “the framework of expectations and assumptions within which travel writing about Europe was produced between 1660 and 1840” (38)
* the essay aims to answer the question -> “what happened to the ideals and purposes associated with travel in Europe when they became … scandalously accessible to wider and wider swathes of the British population?” (38)
* the Grand Tour was an ideological exercise. Was purposed to finalize the education of young men of the ruling class by exposing them to “the treasured artifacts and ennobling society of the continent” (38)
* the Grand Tour was started usually after completion of university and lasted around 5 years
* the most important destinations along the Grand Tour were Paris and Italy (Rome, Florence, Venice)
* Paris was thought to be the origin and best example of refined manners and gracious behavior necessary to civilized men
* Italy was thought to be a paradise for Northern Europeans, but also the home of classical civilization in both Roman and Renaissance manifestations
* “The British visitor would not be so heedless, but would take up the imperial banner from his fallen forerunner” (40)
* The Seven Years War temporarily interrupted British tourism abroad. But upon its conclusion, the practice quickly restarted with vigor
* critics soon began to call into question the Grand Tour. Young men travelers seemed to be more intrigued by drinking, gaming, and whoring as opposed to academics and enlightenment
* young British men’s actions defamed British Travelers and developed bad stereotypes
* some writers argued “the typical young man ‘commonly comes home more conceited, more unprincipled, more dissipated, and more incapable of any serious application … than he could well have become in so short a time had he lived at home” (42)
* European travel was again disrupted by warring nations (Britain and France). The French Revolution and tense British and France relations hindered European travel for over 20 years. To fill this gap, domestic travel saw an intense rise in popularity
* a drastic shift in desired destination and landscape arose: “fertile, gentle landscapes” were traded in favor of “mist, mountains, and waterfalls” (43)
* rationalist ideas about aesthetics experience were being challenged by characterizing opposing experiences of beauty and sublimity as “complementary forms of sub-rational sensation” (45)
* “Aesthetic experience was not about making intellectual judgements, but a matter of basic human instincts: the gentle curves, the soft and unthreatening contours Burke found in beauty appealed, he thought, to the male sexual desire that drove the species to reproduce itself” (45)
* some intellectuals treated the picturesque as a “practical matter for increasing the enjoyment of travelers, not as a topic for abstract philosophizing” (45)
* aestheticized approach to travel writing was appreciated by those stuck in the UK
* the picturesque was opposed and contested by female travel writers
* female travel writers had a focus on the everyday and rejected self-dramatization
* “a cultural practice once identified with the privileged appears transformed at once into an activity scandalously accessible to a de-individualized, metaphorically liquid mass” (47)
* an estimated 100,000 people a year were using railways for travel by 1840
* many people viewed a trans-Continental railway system as a utopian dream in the nineteenth century
* “the enthusiasts of the picturesque were engaged in a dangerously self-contradictory effort” (48)
* mass tourism increased pollution which destroyed the natural beauty that many dreamed of seeing
* rebellious phase: anti-tourism begins to accumulate an increase in support

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***Summary***

James Buzard’s essay *The Grand Tour and After (1660-1840)* analyzes British tourism abroad in terms of the Grand Tour, an ideological exercise which was purposed to finalize the education of young men of the ruling class by exposing them to “the treasured artifacts and ennobling society of the continent” during a five-year-long journey across Europe (38). The essay emphasizes “the framework of expectations and assumptions within which travel writing about Europe was produced between 1660 and 1840” as means to answer the question, “what happened to the ideals and purposes associated with travel in Europe when they became … scandalously accessible to wider and wider swathes of the British population?” (38). Eighteenth century fictional British literature is full of traveling “heroes enmeshed in journey-plots,” while a rise in capturing the aesthetic beauty, or the picturesque, of both distant and domestics landscapes began to dominate the travel writing genre. Buzard argues that tension between countries could not suppress travel, instead sparking even greater desire to travel domestically or abroad after international tension eased. As means of travel became more prevalent, an age of mass tourism arose, which allowed “enthusiasts of the picturesque … [to engage] in a dangerously self-contradictory effort” that saw destruction of the environment (48).

***Quotes***

“If knowledge is rooted in experience and nowhere else, travel instantly gains in importance and desirability. Following the great Renaissance age of colonial exploration and expansion, an articulated, systematic empiricism made traveling about the world and seeing the new and different ‘something like an obligation for the person conscientious about developing the mind and accumulating knowledge’” (37).

“The British visitor would not be so heedless, but would take up the imperial banner from his fallen forerunner” (40).

“Aesthetic experience was not about making intellectual judgements, but a matter of basic human instincts: the gentle curves, the soft and unthreatening contours Burke found in beauty appealed, he thought, to the male sexual desire that drove the species to reproduce itself” (45).

“Enthusiasts of the picturesque were engaged in a dangerously self-contradictory effort” (48).

***Questions***

The essay only notes of male travels that embarked on the Grand Tour. However, the class has been made aware of several female travel writers. Did females embark on the Grand Tour and how does their reflection on the journey contrast with that of male travelers? And if so, did female travel writers continue the theme of rejecting self-dramatization in favor of “the everyday?”

Tense relations between countries do not dissolve overnight, and probably last longer between country’s citizens than governments. How were British travelers treated in their host countries after periods of English – French war? The reading says many British noblemen conducted themselves dishonorably. Did French society make an example of disrespectful foreigners beyond simply criticizing the Grand Tour and developing stereotypes?