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Commonplaces, copies, and copiousness

In 1668, Hans Lilienskiold (1650–1703) and his younger brother Jonas embarked on their *Grand Tour* through Europe. When he returned to his hometown Bergen more than three years later, Hans brought with him a trove of notes and drawings, which later was worked into a beautifully ornamented travel diary in two volumes. The diary contains very little of Lilienskiold's personal experiences. Even less does he describe his thoughts and feelings. What dominate the work are lists, tables and inventories, together with drawings. The diligent young man spent much of his time composing overviews of the collections he visited throughout Europe, and processing his notes and arranging them into alphabetical and thematic lists. In doing so he probably followed the advice of his tutor, as well as advice from books with instructions for travellers, in the genre of *ars apodemica* (Stagl 1995). Thus, even if the book reflects what Lilienskiold himself saw and experienced during his travel, it also reflects a specific method for processing knowledge that was common in the period. The *ars apodemica* supplied a tool that made it possible to transform the diverse and perhaps even chaotic experience of travel into systematic knowledge.

In addition to this, the diary indicates that Lilienskiold also made use of another technology probably well known to him from his own earlier studies, that of the commonplace-book. Copying phrases and passages from texts and books of authority, and arranging them under predefined headings in one's own notebooks was an important part of how knowledge was appropriated and processed in early modern Europe. Commonplace-books were not only books, but also a method for organising knowledge and making it one's own, widely taught and generally accepted as both useful and effective (Blair 1992; Moss 1996). This chapter will explore how Lilienskiold used both these technologies in his travel journal, and how the knowledge he gained was processed by means of these specific methods.

I will argue that even if the copies, notes and drawings Lilienskiold brought home were based on an idea about originals – the objects and artworks he had seen in the places he visited – they acquired their more specific meaning from early-modern notions of copiousness or abundance. As pointed out by Terence Cave, the word *copia* was far more frequently used than 'copy' in the early-modern period. The term *copia* was closely tied to principles of imitation and emulation in art as well as in

rhetoric, and referred to the wealth and variety of expressions and arguments that an artist, orator or learned man was supposed to command (Cave 1979). Abundance rather than originality was the cherished value. From this perspective, therefore, the commonplace-book was a means to produce and organise copiousness by means of copies. In this way, two notions of copies and copying practices intersect and interact in Lilienskiold's diary. On the one hand, representational copies in drawing and writing were made to preserve the memory of the original curiosities, treasures and rarities that he had seen on the journey. From this perspective, the copies are clearly secondary to the originals. They are made 'after' the originals, which means both that they are more recent, and that they depend on the originals for their meaning and value. On the other hand, the making of copies was also part of Lilienskiold's efforts to build a collection of knowledge and rhetorical resources for himself to draw on and to fulfil the idea of *copia* in a future career as a civil servant, writer and learned man.

Lilienskiold on tour

Hans (or 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 travel together with his brother in January 1668. The first part of the journey took them to Copenhagen where they arrived after one month of travel. At the university, they were examined by the Dean, Erasmus Bartholin, and inscribed as students. They also met the man who was to be their preceptor during their three and a half years of European travel, Niels Kjeldsen Stub (1637–1721). At the age of 31, he was a well-educated man and an experienced traveller, with two longer stays at European universities and very good language qualifications (Olden-Jørgensen 1996, 84). Before leaving Copenhagen in late May, the company secured introductory letters from the king himself, which were to give them access to people, courts and collections throughout Europe. They then went by post to Hamburg.

The route they followed to Italy conformed well to the established tradition of the *Grand Tour* (Helk 1991). From Hamburg, the Lilienskiold brothers went to Leipzig, arriving in early April. They were inscribed at the university and stayed there nearly a year. In January 1669, the company left for Dresden, where they visited the *Kunstammer* and participated in celebrations of a young prince's birth. In March they began travelling south, going over Wittenberg to Frankfurt and then to Venice, where they arrived in May. Then followed Vicenza and Verona, and later Padua and

Bologna, where the boys again were inscribed at the universities. They did not stay long, however, and after a mere two days in Bologna, the travel continued, and the company continued to Rome, arriving 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 heading back north.

ILLUSTRATION: LILIENSKIOLD 2

The return trip took them over 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 there, probably as students at the university. Next spring took them to London and then back to Brussels and Antwerp – where the travel journal comes to a very abrupt halt. However, it is known that the boys and their preceptor all 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 the state administration and ended as local governors in the Norwegian counties Finnmark and Romsdal, respectively (Brandt 2000). Taking up his post in Finnmark, Lilienskiold moved to Vadsø with his wife Maria and their eleven children in 1687. It was during his fourteen winters in Finnmark that he worked out a series of beautiful manuscripts, copiously ornamented with maps and images, heraldry and allegorical paintings. Among these manuscripts was the travel journal, derived from earlier notes.

At the time, Vadsø with its 200 inhabitants was the largest settlement in Finnmark (Niemi 1993). Despite its lack of any learned institution, it was not totally devoid of an intellectual milieu. Together with the poet and vicar Ludvig Paus (1652–1707), and the bailiff and topographer Niels Tygesen Knag (1661–1737), Lilienskiold was part of a small circle of men with shared interests in history and literature. There are also indications that he continued to buy books that interested him, even if he needed to have them sent the rather long way from Bergen. Life in Vadsø must nonetheless have represented a strong contrast to life in the famous cities, with their historical monuments, rich collections and grand buildings that Lilienskiold had experienced in his youth. The tension between his loyalty to his fatherland in the north and his memories of his experiences in the south can be seen in his works, from his topographic description of Finnmark (called *Speculum boreale*) to his presentation of the history of the Goths and his careful elaboration of the travel journal.

A *Grand Tour* in the style conducted by the Lilienskiold brothers was a significant career investment. Like other young tourists following a similar route, they did not travel for pleasure alone. Education, networks and manners were their aims. In Denmark-Norway, the absolute rule introduced in 1660 had made higher offices in the state administration available to non-nobles. Such posts had formerly been a privilege of the aristocracy. A good education was required, however, and because the university in Copenhagen mostly offered theological studies, ambitious and wealthy families in the twin kingdoms sent their sons abroad. In this they resembled upper-class families in most other northern European countries. Going on a *Grand Tour* had meant seeking an education that was not available at home, and acquiring competences and skills that would be useful for future careers (Helk 1987). The journey itself was shaped by customs and conventions that influenced not only the route, but also the activities. The young travellers were expected to acquaint themselves with the ways of foreign peoples, to polish their manners and to acquire a social or professional network. They were supposed to visit universities, libraries and academies for shorter and longer stays, and everywhere to collect knowledge and information. To facilitate this work, the practices and methods of commonplace-books and the *ars apodemica* – the art of travelling – would come in handy.

The Art of Travelling

The *ars apodemica*, a genre nearly forgotten until researched by the ethnologist Justin Stagl in the 1980s, consisted of manuals in the art of prudent. The genre originated in the late sixteenth century with Albrecht Meyer's *Methodus Apodemica, seu peregrinandi, perlustrandi [que] regiones, urbes et arces ratio* (1588) and Theodor Zwinger's *Methodus apodemica in eorum gratiam* (1594). Its popularity continued well into the eighteenth century, with a large number of more or less specialised publications. These manuals partly resemble 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 programs of note-taking, diary-keeping and the making of lists and tables. The manuals 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 organise 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 manuals 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 patterns that made it all easy to remember and assess, he would also find himself the competent user of effective systems of processing, organising and presenting information.

We do not know whether Lilienskiold or his preceptor Stub actually carried a manual of this kind. It is nonetheless obvious that young Lilienskiold's diary is the outcome of highly methodical and disciplined efforts. It has a very systematic structure. For each distance of travel and for each place visited, the same kind of information is given in the same order. For travel days, each entry contains information about the distance covered. There is relatively little information about roads, inns or stops (and expenses), but upon arrival in a new town or city, the diary always has some words about its location, geography and whether there are fortifications. Churches and castles are also noted. In larger places, with attractions to be visited, the text includes lists of the most important buildings and objects. For churches, the diary enumerates tombs and epitaphs as well as costly and strange objects seen in the treasuries. Visits to libraries produce lists of the most important – or 'curious' – books and in some cases images. At the Royal Library in Copenhagen, which was the first collection visited on the tour, Lilienskiold mentions a Chinese book written on silken paper, a 'Turkish Alcoran', Luther's first bible, an Icelandic bible and finally 'a Finnish bible as well as another Russian book, with several other remarkable scriptures' (Lilienskiold 1916, 8). In large museums or collections, the lists can be very extensive and usually follow the route that was followed by the visitors. In this way they also supply a kind of map of the different rooms and halls. Despite the movement that this structure implies, the spectator is hardly ever made part of the text. Each list or enumeration is introduced with the phrase 'one can see' or 'to be seen', rather than 'we/I have seen'. The lists thus appear as if inventories of the collections visited rather than as the outcome of the author's own visit and personal experience. As we will see, a closer inspection shows this impression to be false.

Collecting knowledge in collections

The notes from Lilienskiold's visit to the *Kunstammer* in Dresden will serve as an example of his note-taking. This was the first large collection he saw. The notes cover several pages in the diary and reflect the impression that the collection's abundance made on the young man (Gullberg 2014). The lists present the rooms of the collection in the order visited. For each room the displays are numbered. The first entries on first list are 1) a bowl made from topaz, 2) a highly decorated glass chalice, and 3) 'several bowls' made from mother-of-pearl and from ostrich eggs, among them some that had been laid by birds actually kept in Dresden (Lilienskiold 1916, 34f). As we see, Lilienskiold's numbers do not correspond directly to single objects in the collection in the way of an inventory. Some of his entries refer to single artefacts, others to more or less arbitrary groups of items displayed on the same table or shelf. The same holds true for the rooms. In the diary some of them are subsumed under one heading or number, while others are presented and numbered individually. In this way, the lists are more than mere reflections of the collections and their arrangement. They refer to a process of selection and ordering carried out by Lilienskiold himself, governed by his own impressions, interests and evaluations.

By making his lists, Lilienskiold constructed a collection of his own. This collection consisted of words and drawings rather than things. The objects that he saw, or rather those he found of particular interest, were transformed or translated into textual objects that were representations or copies of the artefacts, images and books in the original collections. In this work Lilienskiold was selective. He did not transfer or translate every object on display into items in his own collection, but picked and chose among those that must have struck him as most precious, 'curious' or important. In this way, however, his collection grew larger and more comprehensive than any of the single ones he visited. It had true abundance or *copia* – and the diary became a veritable cornucopia of interesting objects. This process of translation also moved the objects from their fixed places in the respective collections – for instance the rooms of the princely collection in Dresden and the Collegio Romano in Rome – to the space of Lilienskiold's notebook. This new space reorganised the objects and integrated them into a fresh totality, that of Lilienskiold's personal collection. The collection he built is copious and well organised. In contrast to the various homes of the material objects, this collection was portable and mobile. Lilienskiold could carry it with him, from place to place in Europe. Finally, it was brought back to Norway

and its northernmost town Vadsø, where the diary was finished when Lilienskiold was the district governor of Finnmark.

ILLUSTRATION: LILIENSKIOLD 1

Books Lilienskiold purchased on his tour came to influence his own later literary and erudite work on northern history and topography. It is not known if he also collected objects. Collecting was quite usual among grand tourists, who often brought souvenirs and mementos, ranging from paintings and (at times) fake antiquities to volcanic stones from Vesuvius or dried plants from a southern soil. Lilienskiold may well have brought home objects he collected. He may also have wished to possess treasures and curiosities equal to those he saw in the European collections he visited, and coming from a quite wealthy family may even have been able to acquire truly valuable and costly objects. In the present context, the point is nonetheless that the diary entries constitute a collection of its own kind and in its own right. This collection was richer and larger than any material collection of Lilienskiold's could possibly have been. The means to achieve this cornucopia was of course the to visits to a great number of physical collections, but very fundamentally also the methods and technologies of the *ars apodemica*. It was the skills he had developed in note-taking, copying and drawing that made it possible for Lilienskiold to construct his large collections. Thanks to these competences, he knew how to collect, process and organise the things he saw, how to transform them into practical collectables and how to structure his own collection of words and representations. The *ars apodemica* helped him construct his cornucopia of copies, and let him return home with this abundance.

The Commonplace-book and the notion of *copia*

Lilienskiold continued to work on his collections. The first volume of the diary ends during the stay in Rome, and the last pages are used for a number of large tables which probably were developed during the winter spent there (1669/70). The tables work as a kind of summary, or inventory, of what has been seen – and collected – so far. Each page is divided into three columns. Most often they are introduced with a common heading in addition to individual ones. The first table thus carries the heading ‘Survey of the ruins of the ancients’ (Antegnelse ofver Ruinerne af de Gamlis). Its three columns are named, respectively, ‘cities and palaces’, ‘temples’ and

‘antique structures’. Each column is organised in alphabetical order, the last one thus beginning with amphitheatres, and going on to aqueducts and arches. It ends with Roman baths – Terme. The subsequent pages of the same table also contain columns named ‘ancient places in Rome’, ‘heathen idols’, ‘statues’ and ‘antiquities’. The last category seems to hold objects that do not fit in elsewhere, and includes, for instance, the Farnese Gardens in the Palatine, signets, and some ancient vases. The heathen idols refer in some cases explicitly to sculpture that Lilienskiold has seen, like the ‘Isis in white marble in Tivoli’. In other cases, entries like ‘Baccus’ or ‘Diana’ makes it more difficult to understand whether the entry refers to specific images (probably), and if so, which ones.

The next large table presents tombs, first subdivided into tombs of popes, apostles and learned men, and then supplemented by the graves of kings, emperors, ‘princely persons’, saints and martyrs, and finally by the two categories ‘uncorrupted bodies’ and ‘mausoleums for heroes’, which break up the table by having a separate heading above the columns. The list of heroes whose tombs Lilienskiold inspected starts with Antenor and ends with the Venetian doge Vital Faliero. From here the tables turn geographical. The next title is ‘epitome of mountains, floods and islands included in this part’, and the three columns are named accordingly. They are followed by peninsulas and lakes, and then by cities. Even these lists follow an alphabetical order rather than a geographical order, which means, for instance, that Florence, Frankfurt and Flensburg become close neighbours, as do also Magdeburg, Mantua and Meisen. From geography the tables move on to ‘Survey of Relics, Sacred Objects and Remarkable Places’, and then to ‘Curiosities, Precious, Inventious, Nature Changed’. In this table, only the last category has a subtitle, which is ‘Monsters’. Both these tables fill several pages. The final table is called ‘Singular Observations’ and is divided in ‘Arte’ and ‘Marte’. Books, manuscripts and libraries fill the first of them, different kinds of weapons the second. As in the former tables, the entries are presented alphabetically.

ILLUSTRATION: LILIENSKIOLD 8

At first glance, the tables and lists may look like an index to the volume. However, they do not contain any direct references to the preceding text. I will argue that it is more relevant to see them as a kind of commonplace-book, or at least as produced by the same methods and the same ideas about knowledge that such books

represent. A commonplace-book is a notebook kept by an individual student or scholar. The tradition changed over time, but can be followed from Mediaeval *florilegia* to nineteenth-century sentimental diaries. Above all the commonplace-book is a part of Renaissance culture. In this period, leading humanists and pedagogical reformers like Erasmus of Rotterdam (1466–1536) and Juan Vives (1493–1549) published highly influential instructions for how to keep commonplace-books and how to use them.

To Erasmus above all, the commonplace-book was a major tool in the achievement of *copia*. A well-filled and efficiently organised book was a storehouse of arguments, examples, speech figures and morsels of knowledge, all to be used by the owner in his own work to compose new texts (Moss 1996, 110). Erasmus also gives very precise instructions about how the entries – or examples – of a well-kept commonplace-book were to be organised:

So, after you have prepared yourself with a sufficient number of headings and have arranged them in whatever order you prefer, and have next divided them one by one into their appropriate sections and have labelled these sections with commonplaces, that is to say short phrases, then, whatever you come across in any author, particularly if it is especially striking, you will be able to note it down immediately in its appropriate place [...] (quoted from Moss 1996, 111).

This description is very close to what Lilienskiold can be seen to have done. He has chosen his headings, arranged them and then divided them into ‘appropriate sections’ with names. The names or labels may not be commonplaces in the term of ‘short phrases’, but they nonetheless represent categories which sprang from and were relevant to patterns of current knowledge. This is perhaps most obvious concerning the curiosities and their three subsections, but even the interest in ‘heathen idols’, antiquities and ancient structures reflects typical early modern knowledge concerns. And most fundamentally, the very idea behind the tables and lists reflects a mentality shaped by the methods of commonplaces.

Early-modern commonplace-books were part of a veritable culture of copying. They were filled with quotes, phrases and passages copied from other texts, preferably of some authority. The books were personal, made by the owner himself, but the information they contained was neither original nor personally created. Neither was their organisation. Even if the choice of actual categories, sections, labels and names could be left to the individual and his reading interests, the whole point

was that the material gathered by reading could be subsumed under ‘commonplaces’ – which were phrases, subjects and topoi of general use and interest. As explored by Ann Moss, the nature of the commonplaces was much discussed: Were they words or things, were they philosophical or moral concepts, were they rhetorical topoi or did they reflect the external physical world? No matter the answer, the commonplace-book was used ‘to provide elementary training in methods of systematic investigation, information storage, and the retrieval of probatory arguments or, perhaps more frequently, authoritative quotations for use in matters of dispute’ (Moss 1996, 125).

Commonplaces and the structure of knowledge

Commonplace-books were an important part of early-modern pedagogy, but also evolved into a more general scholarly practice. The method was learnt at school and then pursued throughout life. Printed ready-mades could be bought, but this practice was regularly criticised during the early-modern period. Producing one’s own commonplace-book was part of being a student and becoming a scholar. The learning outcome was not only the quotes and copies written down; commonplace-books also offered a specific method for processing and organising knowledge according to definite rules and principles. Thereby the books represented a technology of knowledge, based on a specific and well-defined epistemology. They are highly suggestive of how knowledge was to be kept, stored, and used in the early-modern period.

As Ann Moss underscores by a part of her book’s title – ‘the Structuring of Renaissance Thought’ – the commonplace method had profound implications. It was a practical tool to be used in simple ways by young schoolboys, but it could also serve experienced and erudite scholars in their more advanced work. Even more important was that the books shaped not only the information that was copied into them, but also the minds and mentality of their owners (Moss 1996). Travellers were often encouraged to keep commonplace-books to record everything they saw or experienced, thus fusing this method with those of the *ars apodemica*. The humanist and pedagogue Johann Heinrich Alsted (1588–1638), known for his survey of several kinds of commonplace-books, underscored their particular usefulness for travellers (Blair 1992, 542). They could be used for observations and experiences as well as for quotes and texts.

Ann Blair has argued that the commonplace method not only was important within the humanities, but that natural philosophical writers in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries relied equally heavily on books of commonplaces, specifically natural commonplaces (Blair 1992, 542). She takes the *Universae naturae theatrum* (1596) by the French political philosopher Jean Bodin (1530–1596), as her case. In several of his works Bodin refers explicitly to the use of commonplace-books, and in his natural history ‘accumulates “facts” from an indefinitely large and disparate range of sources and treats each fact, whether traditional or of recent origin, bookish or directly observed, as equivalent to every other’ (Blair 1992, 545). The influence of the commonplace method is also suggested by the way Bodin brings together topically unrelated material in adjacent entries, Blair argues. His work ‘moves seamlessly from one topic to the next through the intermediary of themes or less substantive rhetorical devices, pursuing each topic or theme until the copia on that issue is exhausted’ (Blair 1992, 546). One consequence of this method, she also points out, is that quite contradictory explanations and bits of information may live side by side on the pages of the book (Blair 1992, 547). The point was not to build up consistent arguments, but to create a copious collection.

For the young Lilienskiold, the commonplace method worked as a tool to collect experiences and observations. It also helped him organise the material, in the running lists as well as in the large tables on the volume’s last pages. The tables are set up with categories and sub-categories as the commonplace method required, resulting both in copia and in the somewhat (at least to a modern reader) confusing impression of *factoids*, as Blair calls them – ‘tidbits of knowledge divorced from their original context in order to suit the author’s own purposes’ (Blair 1992, 545). As pointed out above, Lilienskiold built up his own collection by transforming things into words. With the tables he also supplied a structure, created by the categorisation he imposed on the material, and by the preference for presenting them alphabetically. Objects, observations and experiences were not only translated into words, but also made to appear as objects or specimens that could be handled and organised according to something as purely external as the alphabet, rather than the spatial, geographical or chronological order in which they had originally occurred. The cornucopia represented by the collections he visited and the land he travelled was copied down and transformed into the cornucopia of his own commonplace-book.

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