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On foot across Europe – a picture of a multicultural continent
in the work of J. G. Seume* *Spaziergang nach Syrakus
im Jahre 1802 (A Stroll to Syracuse in 1802)*

Pieszko przez Europę – obraz wielokulturowego kontynentu w dziele J. G. Seumego *Spaziergang nach Syrakus im Jahre 1802 (Spacer do Syrakuz w roku 1802)*

SUMMARY

Writer and traveller Johann Gottfried Seume, a Saxon with a Prussian passport, was one of the few precursors of an objective presentation of various cultural regions in Europe in the early nineteenth century. His 250-day journey covered areas of Saxony, a large part of the Balkans, Italy, France, the Rhine country.

J. G. Seume gives a specific characteristics of the regions visited, leaving the background descriptions of nature, customs and traditions, focusing all his attention on the man, under the conditions of his existence, his placement in a specific reality. Seume avoids any evaluation, showing step by step – as it turns out – already firmly cosmopolitan Europe. The work was very popular in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, up to 30 editions of the high volume and it is to this day an interesting contribution to the image of multicultural continent.

Keywords: cultural areas in Europe, traveller-writer, cosmopolitan Europe

Seume writes his book in the time when Europe is undergoing dramatic upheavals. The author begins his hike on December 9, 1801 in Dresden. Its route leads through Budin, Prague, Znaym, Vienna, Schottwien, Mürzhofen, Graz¹,

* Johann Gottfried Seume was born on January 29, 1763 in Poserna near Weißenfels in a wealthy peasant family, which gradually became impoverished. In 1777 – thanks to financial support from count Wilhelm v. Hohental – Seume starts his university education. In 1781 he is kidnapped by recruiters from Hesse and sold as a soldier to the British Army – he stays with them, in America, but not only, until his desertion in 1787. Until 1792 Seume continues his studies (law, philosophy, philology, and history) followed by a postdoctoral degree. Seume joins the Russian

Ljubljana (Laibach), Prewald. Next on January 23 Seume enters Trieste, then visits Venice, Bologna, and on March 3 he arrives in Rome. From this point the author heads towards Terracina and then to Naples where he is forced to travel by sea to Palermo, Agrigento and Syracuse. On his way he visits Catania, Messina and back through Palermo he returns to Naples visiting Capri (April 21). The traveller once again reaches Rome, where he stops hiking and begins to use various means of transport reaching Milan and Zurich (June 24), then Paris and Frankfurt just to arrive at his final destination: Leipzig. In 250 days he makes more than 800 Saxon miles, excluding those sections of his tour where he used various vehicles.

Seume, unlike his predecessors², does not make attempts at describing nature, customs and habits nor peculiarities of any kind in a traditional way. He notes that both personality of a writer, as an objective factor, and the differences in reality reception – in the classification of what is likeable and what is not – as a subjective factor have a role which should not be underestimated: “I am aware that I am more eager to see good and I enjoy it than to be outraged by evil: but joy is calm and irritation is loud” (SnS, 8). Hence, the intention of the traveller is to present both bright and dark sides of reality, however, not criticising the phenomena and people in general, but taking them individually. His manner of perceiving reality is rather pessimistic: “To remain reasonable one must always expect the worst and think of the worst; what is to happen, it will” (SnS, 389). A traveller does not expect a recognition, he only wishes to present what in his cool, rational perspective seems to be worth describing (cf. SnS, 12). This way a great picture of nineteenth-century Europe’s reality is created – a detailed analysis which goes beyond this article. Thus, the article presents only fragments of that reality, so the traveller’s method was adopted here (cf. SnS, 158).

Army where he becomes general Igelström’s *aide-de-camp* in Warsaw. In 1794 he is almost killed during an uprising and he is taken prisoner by the Polish Army. In 1795 he goes to Leipzig. From 1795 to 1801 he takes up odd jobs, but he does not last long in any of them and publishes some small literary works. He begins the trip described in the present work consisting of letters to a friend. It gives him popularity immediately after the book appeared in the publishing house Hartknoch in 1803. In 1805 he commences his next trip across Poland, Russia, Finland, Sweden and Denmark. Seume describes this journey in the book *Mein Sommer 1805 (My Summer 1805)* published in 1806. In 1808 Seume’s kidney disease evolves; he dies on June 13, 1810 in Cieplice. According to: <http://www.seume.de/Sites/JGSeume/Leben.htm>.

Every translation in the text is by the author of this article. Quotations come from a facsimile of an 1811 third edition of *Spaziergang nach Syrakus im Jahre 1802*, Eichborn Verlag, Frankfurt am Main, 1991. An abbreviation of a title “SnS” is affixed to each quotation.

¹ Seume leaves Vienna – where he arrived with a friend Schnorr – at ten o’clock a.m. on December 10, whereas he reaches Graz on December 14 at noon, which means he covered a distance of 5 Silesian miles a day on average, i.e. about 33 km. Saxon mile is 15/17 of a German mile and that is 7.5 km. (cf. SnS, 55, 58).

² E.g. F. L. Graf zu Stolberg (1750–1819): *Reise in Deutschland, der Schweiz, Italien und Sizilien (A Trip to Germany, Switzerland, Italy and Sicily)*, Königsberg–Leipzig 1794.

At the very beginning of the journey the traveller – a born Saxon holding a Prussian passport – gives a devastating, but not necessarily objective opinion of his fellow countrymen in the streets of Dresden: “One meets gloomy, unhappy faces devoid of human features, every five minutes encountering a man deserving a public punishment or one that is willing to punish somebody himself” (SnS, 18). Nevertheless, after returning from his journey Seume noticed in those faces some more human features, and the previous relentlessness subsided (cf. SnS, 25).

Obviously, not only the facial expression is of significance to a traveller, but also the inhabitants’ behaviour. Prague residents are friendly towards newcomers, even the police “not as in other countries, is nothing but courtesy” (SnS, 27). The inhabitants of Graz are friendly and convivial towards their guests, and yet they speak better German than Viennese (cf. SnS, 61). Similarly Neapolitans and Hessians are well-disposed towards their own kind and strangers (cf. SnS, 283). The latter are friendly even though they have this specific belligerent attitude: “Hessians think they must be everywhere where is any fight” (SnS, 386–387). Even the local nobility receives Seume’s high appraisal, because they are not rich and they remain independent of the court (cf. SnS, 386). Venetians receive almost a good opinion where only excess of obtrusive girls – “Aphrodite Pandemos”³ servants” are annoying (cf. SnS, 91). However, there are examples of another reality presented in this literary work which enliven the story and make it more objective. In the village St. Oswald in Lower Austria, an innkeeper allows Seume to have a meal, but does not allow him to stay overnight, although Seume has all the necessary documents, and throws the traveller out threatening to resort to violence (cf. SnS, 65–66). One must note that the other innkeepers visited by the traveller are affable, though it is rather courtesy “for cash”, as in Prewald (cf. SnS, 75) or Udine (cf. SnS, 82). The writer observed some inglorious exceptions in places so distant from each other as Czech Budin (cf. SnS, 26) and Italian Ancona (cf. SnS, 117). The above mentioned phenomenon proves conclusively that even without the existence of mass-media, similar customs are present in remote places, the conclusion being that there are some immanent characteristic features throughout the entire Europe.

The travelling writer follows one rule in his descriptions – which I mentioned above: negative opinions never relate to nations or regions but to individual people. Only the theft of golden Russian coins, a gift from Catherine II for Pius VI was done by “the French”⁴ (cf. SnS, 358). However, when praising something or somebody the author always gives his approval to the whole local or national community.

³ The goddess of venal love.

⁴ The situation in Rome mentioned by Seume appears to be even more complicated: an individual inhabitant of the city and the community of residents are two completely different realities (cf. SnS, 305).

When in Northern Italy Seume notices a negative attitude towards himself, clearly based on national prejudices. When he feels an unfavourable attitude of clerks, he explains such hostility as a result of historical burdens – as in Udine – or he states that disfavour comes from the “bureaucracy mood” – as in Venice (cf. SnS, 85, 95).

Seume does not connect the inhabitants’ *conditio humana* with the condition of economic development in certain areas, although he is sometimes irritated by really drastic situations, as in Znaym, where “we were put up for the night on bundles of hay together with Jews, and we were even more crowded than during the British transport to Colombia” (SnS, 32). In another case the annoyance comes from such objectively unimportant details as a fast imposed by the hosts in Dijon (cf. SnS, 373). One should be informed that in times of Seume’s journey the Southern areas are not always poorer than the Northern regions. The traveller notices that the entire area of the Czech lands is a poor region, the cause of which he seeks in the feudal economic system, but afterwards he describes different Italian cities where in municipal republics he finds the same poverty (cf. SnS, 101). One is tempted to note that not even Napoleonic wars caused such a crisis in the most blessed parts of Europe as – not connected with wars or social systems – the people’s administration abilities did. In Venice and Ancona the author encounters “a real plague of beggars” (cf. SnS, 128, 136). The traveller dares to remark that not only economic system is responsible for poverty in some region but also the lifestyle of its inhabitants. In Ancona, despite the disastrous situation there seemed to be a continuous holiday and the starving people hurled sweets at each other (cf. SnS, 117–118). The city council supports its residents in their affection for luxury by not paying for city guests sent to various places of accommodation (cf. SnS, 110). Similar traditions are wide-spread what writer connects to a weak intensity of work, as for instance in the area of Rome (cf. SnS, 128, 136). Whereas in Naples the plague of wastefulness of the rich classes became their philosophy of life and is the reason of social disintegration (cf. SnS, 159). Another dangerous lifestyle is observed in Sicily where wrong governing resulted in lottery becoming “a public plague” (SnS, 191).

In Agrigento and the vicinity on the Southern coast of Sicily, where Seume cannot see any intensive work of human hands, poverty and inflated prices are common: “there is a shortage of not only bread but also pasta” (SnS, 176). The traveller sometimes gives the reasons of such a state of affairs, as he does in Naples – where the local government stopped all the local workshops for the benefits of a foreign industry (cf. SnS, 345). In Syracuse the local authorities do not take care of anything anymore⁵ and the entire town appears to the travelling writer as

⁵ At the same time the writer notes that there was a clear attempt to oppose the economic collapse in this city because sea salt started being extracted on a grand industrial scale (cf. SnS, 197).

a ruined and abandoned place (cf. SnS, 206, 219). At times local authorities do something for show, like in Messina: “On the extensive outskirts of Messina I encountered a few perfectly-made wells with some bombastic Latin inscriptions fairly announcing the great benefit of the well. What a shame they did not contain any water” (SnS, 245). However, it would be a mistake to think that Seume encountered such situations just in Italy, because he describes identical devastations in Mainz and the vicinity, where the local revolution together with French occupation also wrought havoc and the ongoing “money extortion” by the authorities makes it impossible to rebuild the area (cf. SnS, 381–382).

Seume says that economic relations in Modena are “good and cheap” (SnS, 322) and the atmosphere is friendly despite the latest social upheavals, similarly as in French Dijon. However, comparing to Italian cities which teem with life, Dijon looks deserted where low cost of living and prosperity do not compensate the gloomy mood (cf. SnS, 352–353). Unexpectedly to most of the readers the level of life in Trieste or Venice is comparable to the level of life in Frankfurt am Main, one of the richest cities in Europe of those times (cf. SnS, 100, 385). The economic relations in the Land are comparable to Courland and Livonia under the reign of Russian emperor because of their fast development (cf. SnS, 67). However, nowhere during his whole journey can Seume observe such prosperity as in Saxon regions of Gotha and Altenburg (cf. SnS, 388). In his literary work a thesis is proposed that cities have a bad influence on the surrounding rural regions – in the same way that the author’s contemporary nobility does both in the Czech lands and in Italy (cf. SnS, 29, 347).

An important remark about the roads that the writer follows after crossing the border of Czech Lands and Moravia and Austria is that the condition of those roads significantly deteriorates (cf. SnS, 34). The author notices even more hopeless road condition in Italy where the fees allotted for their maintenance disappear without trace (cf. SnS, 103, 134). Seume describes also the most detrimental phenomenon of European roads in those times: “one can prove in a mathematically exact way that a custom of driving ‘in the tracks’, especially in the case of heavy vehicles, must lead to the damage of the best and most solid road surface in a short time” (SnS, 135). As one may observe, the problem of the ruts has existed for two hundred years now and it is not a modern matter.

The traveller’s comments also refer to finances in which he notices the last strongholds of stability, such as Znaym or some France where golden coins circulate. In other places they use only metal coins or bank notes of little value (cf. SnS, 35, 353).

The economic situation is presented by the writer through the area of administration and public order. One should notice that even places where the situation was entirely controlled by the army which was not conducting any warfare, like

in Breisgau, the French still “kidnap women passing by, carry them to the forest and treat them in a humiliating manner” (SnS, 350), as the traveller notes gracefully. Generally, except for the French, customs officers are quite strict during border checks (cf. SnS, 35, 100). In Italy a bureaucratic control is preferred where regular citizens are forced to pay extraordinary taxes for the government, and the criminals are not disturbed (cf. SnS, 263, 285). The political police of the Austrian Empire effectively control public opinion (cf. SnS, 43) and they even are able to keep a tight rein on the army which is disintegrating after the defeat in the Napoleonic wars (cf. SnS, 45). However, nothing more in the sphere of public order appears to concern them.

Seume believes that almost everywhere the condition of public safety is in the state of such disrepair that an average citizen cannot count on their life and property being effectively protected. There are gangs in the area of Prague (cf. SnS, 30), near Pressburg (Bratislava) some are killed during a robbery (cf. SnS, 53), in Udno Germans are being killed (cf. SnS, 83), in the vicinity of Rome and Naples murderers and robbers wander around (cf. SnS, 137, 156, 297, 345), almost coddled by the authorities⁶, in the area between Palermo and Syracuse the situation at sea is controlled by pirates (cf. SnS, 169), in Syracuse the situation is similar, although Sicilians kill one another (cf. SnS, 187, 266). It does not mean, however, that situation in the South is worse than situation in the North. In Milan even soldiers cannot be certain of their safety (cf. SnS, 310), in the area of Bologna there is a great number of plunderers (cf. SnS, 322), whereas Calabria is in a complete anarchy. Seume explains this situation laconically: “The nation starves and it dies or it curses and robs, depending if it has more energy or more pious patience” (cf. SnS, 346).

Bad adventures do not happen to the traveller. Only in Sicily he was mugged (cf. SnS, 293–294), but it did not really affect Seume. The writer’s explanation is short but apt: “I always think that my poor appearance saved me, whereas possessing a watch and gold would have provided me with a broken neck” (SnS, 192). The above quotation allows to believe that people who possess nothing or at least are not resisting have more chances of surviving these days. “I travelled to Rome with an officer who was robbed seventeen times and he owed his life to the fact that he refrained from resisting the highwaymen” (SnS, 343). Most of the inhabitants of Lower Italy and Parma are armed because they do not trust neither the judiciary nor the police (cf. SnS, 191, 324). In Itria indiscriminate lynching take place. Permanent protection of citizens is absent in many places. Both in the area

⁶ As a result of a royal pardon crowds of offenders were released (cf. SnS, 284). Seume also adds when speaking about the situation in Rome: “Cardinals are suspected of a disgraceful act of supporting criminals. He is in favour of disclosing all the criminals’ names and circumstances of their exporting out of the city in cardinals’ carriages in order to avoid dangers” (SnS, 297).

of Rome and Naples Seume observes some wordly remains of executed criminals put on display as a warning for others (cf. SnS, 119, 123, 154). However, in the writer's opinion these are only manifestations of inconsistent penal policy because short periods of strict punishing are followed by long periods of idleness. All of the above Seume considers as results of excessive tolerance for crime while the judiciary – like in Naples – is not concerned about criminals (cf. SnS, 345), consequently the police in Palermo remain indifferent to the fact that somebody is stabbed to death in broad daylight right next to the police station whose staff "behaves as if they had nothing to do with it" (SnS, 266).

Seume notices more serious causes of crime and he believes they lie in governments' acting, he also gives two important examples of such which prevent the development of crime from stopping. Firstly, these are civil servants getting rich: "Anybody who gets rich while working in the civil service cannot be a person of a noble character. Every state rewards its servants only as much as it is necessary for decent living and putting some money asides for the rainy day; at the same time it should makes it impossible to become rich in a noble manner" (SnS, 347). Secondly, there are exceptions in legal regulations for civil servants and all kinds of privileges for civil servants lead the state towards despotism and lawlessness⁷ (cf. SnS, 365, 366). And disappearance of justice means disappearance of freedom (cf. SnS, 358).

The traveller is basically a supporter of a brutal penal policy, he even supports severe punishments for people avoiding any work: "who refuses to work, should not eat, as old Sirach says; I consider this remark quite reasonable, even if it were a death sentence for me" (SnS, 230). The writer praises Naples for severe treatment of criminals and offenders: "Everybody should receive what they deserve. Dispair of villains is a benefit for the whole world" (SnS, 278). Logically, the final solution of a problem is hanging the criminals, it is also a compensation for victims, what in the opinion of the travelling writer should improve the condition of public safety (cf. SnS, 322).

The traveller is not consistent in his opinions because twice – in Naples and at the end of his journey, in Germany – he protests against excessive tendency of governments towards "unjustified severity and predilection for hanging the criminals" (SnS, 311, 319).

Seume assigns the same importance to such areas of public life as religious matters and theatre as he does to the condition of public safety. The opinion of the

⁷ "If you are seeking justice in legal acts you are plainly wrong; legal acts should be rooted in justice, however, they are frequently its opposite. By looking at our institutions you can conclude: the more legal acts, the less justice..." (SnS, 57), or you can form an even more drastic conclusion "the law often contradicts justice" (SnS, 19).

writer about Christian religion is as radical⁸ as in the case of dealing of criminals. In Ancona he has the need of destroying an orthodox guide (cf. SnS, 113), he gives an idea of turning a part of a cloister into a pigsty (cf. SnS, 183), he describes monks as "pubic lice" and other "vermin" (SnS, 225) and he supports the destruction of one of the cloisters (cf. SnS, 231). He agrees to a compromise only where he can see the material side of the Church's actions. Seume agrees to forgive the Pope that "he is a pope" because he built a water supply system in Rimini (SnS, 112). He also agrees not to blame the monks for "being monks" because their activity in agricultural administration enlivens the entire region between Ancona and Macerata⁹ (cf. SnS, 121).

Catholicism is, in Seume's opinion, a negative phenomenon, as every "manifestation of excessive religiousness", which he illustrates with a Czech example (cf. SnS, 24, 29). Only "the moderate and friendly" forms of catholicism that the author encounters in Moravia and Lucerna are acceptable (cf. SnS, 33, 340), whereas in France all of the religious issues are classified as some fashion phenomenon (cf. SnS, 318), which does not exclude neophytic attitude because "the members of the French Raskol movement do not allow mixed marriages" (SnS, 373).

The theatre, mentioned above, was the traveller's separate area of interest. In Vienna Seume observes that the Viennese are fond of a marionette theatre and any kind of primitive entertainment (cf. SnS, 42). The theatre in Trieste is perceived by the writer as a kind of a place between a social gathering spot and a market. Actors only create the setting for the events (cf. SnS, 80). The theatre in Bologna is different from other theatres because it presents "the lousiest tomfoolery, and an intermezzo is filled with a group of ham actors dancing to a cacophony of sounds" (SnS, 105). The atmosphere of the Ancona theatre is presented even more eloquently where the audience smokes and drinks during the performances (cf. SnS, 116). Out of all theatres only Warsaw pantomime merits a positive mark because "the great ballet dancer Poniatowski" performs there (SnS, 327).

The traveller does not avoid simple entertainment when for instance he visits Sinigaglia (Senigallia) where he watches bull and dog fights and he finds it interesting (cf. SnS, 114). Brutality of those shows does not negatively affect the writer's feelings.¹⁰

⁸ Seume's own opinion about religious issues may be illustrated with his Judas's description who is for the writer not a villain, but an inconsiderate, imprudent man because a villain would not have committed a suicide (cf. SnS, 326).

⁹ 70.3 km distance from Ancona.

¹⁰ Seume seems to be a man of a specific outlook on life. In Naples and Syracuse he visits places of interment and he refers to mortal remains as "Kadaver" which may mean both „dead body" and "carcass". (SnS, 218), whereas in some chapel in Palermo Seume is one of those who, not finding enough space for scratching out his name, leaves a signature on St. Rosalia's nose (cf. SnS, 259). Moreover, the writer is unaffected by the fact that during the revolution in Milan a cloister

Excessively lax morality is criticized only in two cases. The first one refers to a custom of fulfilling social needs of well born Neapolitan wives whose husbands agree for a “friend of the house”, so-called *cicisbeo* (cf. SnS, 159). In the second case Sicilian monks procure “even the most inapproachable women” (SnS, 215), whereas Seume strongly condemns the multitude of sculptures in public places of Germany and Italy (cf. SnS, 316).

Subjective presentation of reality is indicative of Seume’s personality, extremely complex and full of contradictions. Interestingly enough, while he draws attention to particular phenomena, he totally disregards the others. Seume is more than pleased to see the ruins of castles along Mürz and Murr (cf. SnS, 61), his sharp eyes noticing censorship in cloister library in Catania (cf. SnS, 229). He describes public access library collections in Paris as a phenomenon out of fashion world (cf. SnS, 376), while at the same time he calls it a “mecca of scholars”¹¹ (SnS, 378).

Worth mentioning is a phenomenon of multi-linguism and mobility of inhabitants of Europe. Everywhere during his journey from the very beginning to Messina he meets numerous foreigners (cf. SnS, 79, 214, 250, 290). There is no problem to communicate in two or three languages in Ancona, Terracina, Syracuse and near Zurich (cf. SnS, 108, 143, 192, 333). Seume encounters advocates of *lingua franca*, e.g. cardinal Borgia who praises Latin “that binds nations” (cf. SnS, 374).

The picture of the journey would not be complete without mentioning the historical background of the entire hike. Both revolution and the first stages of the Napoleonic and revolutionary wars are a thing of the past in Seume’s opinion (cf. SnS, 374).

The reminiscences of events are firmly lodged in the mentality of local communities which causes situations that the traveller describes: “That is how it happens in times of revolution – for the same thing in one place you will be admired and in the other offended; you may consider yourself lucky if nothing worse happens to you” (SnS, 111).

The first period of Napoleonic wars affected the reality rather positively¹². Seume observes war devastations only in Itria (cf. SnS, 148), whereas inhabitants of Trieste or Frankfurt yearn for a war (SnS, 79, 384), hoping for great benefits coming from supplying the warring parties.

refectory where Leonardo da Vinci’s “The Last Supper” was exhibited in was turned into a stable (cf. SnS, 326).

¹¹ At the same time, thanks to his sense of perception we learn that “freedom is relatively more limited here [in Paris] than in Vienna” (SnS, 372). And it allows to doubt in later suggested by Seume pattern according to which Paris is called a capital of science and Rome – a capital of arts (cf. SnS, 310).

¹² Collective memory preserved the damage resulting from the war of succession of Bavarian throne (1778–1779), when the Saxon army burnt all of the vine sticks in Budin (cf. SnS, 25).

The traveller mentions encountering Poles who serve probably in all of the European armies. They sometimes look quite exotic but always with a tendency for “internationalization” (SnS, 22). Seume mentions some Polish non-commissioned officer who is pleased to see again a Prussian passport that is close to his heart (*sic!*) (cf. SnS, 322). Some other time one can find the description of Polish officers in uniforms which were still acceptable during public events in Saxon times (SnS, 329). According to Seume, a Polish soldier deserves admiration and respect *en masse* because of his soldierly virtues. As if to emphasize the above he mentions an unpleasant exception of some cadet whom he encountered in Milan: the cadet had promoted himself to the rank of captain and he spoke German with the traveller (cf. SnS, 320).

Seume does not meet Polish civilians, whereas in Milan he observes Polish hetteras whose style and artistry of dressing he admires as “an art which Polish women could teach even Parisians” (SnS, 315).

There are surprisingly few descriptions of curiosities of any kind in Seume’s work, and these usually are quite frequently enumerated. Only the most thrilling ones were mentioned by the author, e.g. bear hunting in the vicinity of Graz, where in 1800 twelve of them were shot (cf. SnS, 61). Or even more amazing story from Prewald (Prevallo) about “a peasant who shot a crocodile” (SnS, 74), and referring to this story, Seume mentions an important for every traveller fact about the quality of water in the rivers because that is what he drinks on his way from Trieste to Venice (cf. SnS, 85).

One may draw an important conclusion about the condition of cities those days from an act of felling all of the trees in the streets of Venice (cf. SnS, 90). If that made such a profound impression on Seume that he decided to include it in his work, we can venture the statement that trees were the part of a typical landscape of the nineteenth-century European city. Their lack, however, was more than conspicuous. When the traveller witnesses the destruction of environment in Sicily he states: “People are mean betrayers of the beautiful nature” (SnS, 254).

The aim of this humble paper was to present Europe of the beginning of the nineteenth century as seen by the traveller with a liberal outlook as a whole and not consisting of separate worlds where perception of the German traveller and other nations is rather far from mutual aversion, but at the same time it is devoid of excessive interest in others. Seume was treated rather as a newcomer, though from the same world and the same culture. *A Stroll to Syracuse* differs from all other books of that period which describe travels to Italy. “Seume’s depiction is totally devoid of pompousness, unnecessary phrases and completely non-romantic”, said G. Forster¹³

¹³ G. Forster, *Empfindsame Weltumseglung*, in: Paul, Johannes: *Abenteuerliche Lebensreise – Sieben biographische Essays*, Wilhelm Köhler Verlag, Minden 1954, p. 67–112; quoted after the website: http://www.die-leselust.de/buch/seume_johann_spaziergang.htm, p.12

In the nineteenth century the work was published fifteen times, in the twentieth century there were fifteen more editions, though some of them were in the abridged version. In 2001¹⁴ *A Stroll to Syracuse* was published in the pocket edition. There were people who followed in Seume's footsteps or attempted to cover a similar route in Europe. A known proponent of the art of survival, Rüdiger Nehberg, managed to accomplish that in 1981. However, his trip from Hamburg to Oberstdorf was not committed to writing in the form of memoirs despite the presence of television cameras. During his trip Rüdiger Nehberg ate only what he was able to find on his way, he neither bought nor begged for food.¹⁵ Friedrich Christian Delius undertook to perform a similar feat although on a larger scale – from Rostock to Syracuse¹⁶, and Wolfgang Bücher from Berlin to Moscow.¹⁷

When I was finishing my paper on March 26, I decided to google the name J. G. Seume. The search yielded 872 hits, however when I narrowed down my search only to Polish websites, it showed no results.

STRESZCZENIE

Pisarz i podróżnik Johann Gottfried Seume, Sas z pruskim paszportem, był jednym z niewielu prekursorów prób bardzo rzeczowego, możliwie obiektywnego przedstawienia różnych obszarów kulturowych w Europie na początku XIX wieku. Jego 250-dniowa podróż objęła tereny Saksonii, znacznej części Bałkanów, Włoch, Francji, państw nadreńskich.

Podróżnik-pisarz daje specyficzną charakterystykę odwiedzanych krain, zostawiając na drugim planie opisy przyrody, zwyczajów i obyczajów, skupiając całą swoją uwagę na człowieku, na warunkach jego bytowania, na jego umiejscowieniu w konkretnej rzeczywistości. J. G. Seume unika wszelkiego wartościowania, przedstawiając krok po kroku – jak się okazuje – już wtedy mocno kosmopolityczną i mimo granic administracyjnych będącą pewną kulturową całością – Europę.

Dzieło pisarza było bardzo popularne w XIX i XX wieku, osiągając 30 wydań o dużych nakładach i stanowi do dziś ciekawy kulturoznawczy przyczynek do obrazu wielokulturowego kontynentu.

Słowa kluczowe: obszary kulturowe w Europie, podróżnik-pisarz, kosmopolityczna Europa

¹⁴ <http://www.amazon.de/Spaziergang-nach-Syrakuz-Jahre-1802/dp/product-des-cription/3423123788>

¹⁵ <http://www.lesekost.de/Klassik/HHLKL13.htm>

¹⁶ F. C. Delius, *Der Spaziergang von Rostock nach Syrakus*. Reinbek, Rowohlt, 1998.

¹⁷ W. Bücher, *Berlin–Moskau*. Reinbek, Rowohlt, 2003.

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