

Memories in Verse: the Travels of Ludwig von Anhalt-Köthen (1579-1650)

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‘Travel, in the younger sort, is part of education; in the elder, a part of experience,’ wrote the philosopher and jurist Francis Bacon in his essay ‘Of Travel’ in 1625.

In the 1640s, the aging Duke Ludwig von Anhalt-Köthen embarked on a project to turn the journal that he kept during his journeys as a young man into a long narrative poem in the vernacular German. He completed the first part of the poem, covering his first trip, but did not manage to complete the second part before his death in 1650 at the age of seventy.¹

From antiquity onwards, pilgrims, merchants, explorers, soldiers, diplomats and scholars from different countries within Europe each had their established reasons and patterns for travel. By the middle of the sixteenth century, another type of traveller was increasingly added to their ranks. Young men of high social status were sent away from home for long stays in France, Italy and other countries as part of their educational programmes. At this period, the journeys of these young courtiers and nobles had a strong educational, as well as a moral purpose.

Travel was a privileged manner through which young members

1 Ludwig’s poem was first published in 1716 in Johann Christoph Beckmann, *Accessiones Historiae Anhaltinae* (Zerbst: Zimmermann, 1716).

of the ruling classes could learn about foreign governments, languages and customs, at first hand through lengthy visits to the important cities of neighbouring countries. Young men who returned after long and expensive sojourns and experiences abroad enjoyed social and career advantages over their peers who had stayed at home.

Like its counterparts elsewhere, the German *Kavalierstour* prepared socially privileged, young men for their future positions by providing opportunities to observe and compare different forms of state and government, to create contacts with European noble families, and to visit a foreign university or academy to learn French, Italian or Spanish. It was considered more important for them to gain a wide range of knowledge rather than in-depth learning in any one field of study. Besides languages, appropriate subjects of study in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries included history, genealogy, law, mathematics and architecture, especially geometry and the design of fortifications, and some basic principles of natural science. Other valued accomplishments included dancing, fencing, riding, ball games and hunting.²

Besides the artefacts and objects of interest which they collected during their journeys, sixteenth- and seventeenth-century travellers often also recorded their experiences in written form. They kept journals and wrote letters, and sometimes also published travelogues or poems for wider circulation on their return home.

Wealthy German travellers kept and displayed their collections of objects and artefacts in *Wunderkammer* or *Kunstkammer*, while written texts including travel instructions and travel diaries were preserved in the archives of noble families which, together with books in the family library, were used to plan other tours or instruct younger generations being prepared for their own journeys. *Wunder-* and *Kunstkammer*, archives and libraries all enhanced the prestige and legitimacy of the family.³

2 Winfried Siebers, *Johann Georg Keyssler und die Reisebeschreibung der Frühaufklärung*. (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2009), 84.

3 Jill Bepler, *Travelling and Posterity: the Archive, the Library and the Cabinet*. In Rainer Babel and Werner Paravicini, eds., *Grand Tour: Adeliges Reisen und europäische Kultur vom 14. bis zum 18. Jahrhundert*. (Ostfildern: Jan Thorbecke Verlag, 2005), 193-196.

The funeral sermons (*Leichenpredigten*) of the German nobility of the seventeenth century, a number of which were printed, also provide a rich source of information and demonstrate that the educational and social aspect of travel was highly valued, particularly as a means of learning languages, gaining knowledge of politics and other cities, extending one's social network and generally improving one's character and faith in God through endurance and experience.⁴

Instructive texts on conduct in all aspects of life were widely popular throughout the period, as famously seen, for example, in Baldassare Castiglione's *Il libro del Cortegiano* (1528), Niccolo Machiavelli's *Il libro della arte della guerra* (1521) or Francis Bacon's *Essays or Counsels, Civil and Moral* (1597-1625). A large number of moral and devotional tracts were also published, which laid down precepts and approaches to morality, religion, ethics and behaviour, including the correct way of dying, known as the *ars moriendi*, which evolved into a noted literary tradition.⁵

Similarly, a body of literature about the art of travel, the *ars apodemica*, also developed, especially in German-speaking countries. Apart from the moral and educational aims of travel, these works stipulated the correct methods of recording information while travelling, in line with the general humanist interest in observing, categorizing and compiling empirical information about the world.

Travel was an important and costly element in the education and character formation of young men, which also presented a physical challenge with considerable risks to life and limb and which could stretch over several months or even a few years. Accordingly, the aims and expectations of educational travel were developed and laid out in a formal manner in these written texts. Travel advice had always been provided to those setting out on journeys; however, in the late sixteenth century there was an innovative attempt to create a clear written programme or system to guide travellers on what to observe, how to behave, and how best to profit from a journey.

4 Bepler, *Travelling and Posterity*, 199; Katrin Keller, *Von der Nützlichkeit des Reisens: Bemerkungen zu Erscheinungsbild und Konsequenzen der Kavalierstour am Beispiel kursächsischer Befunde*. In Babel and Paravicini, *Grand Tour*, 429.

5 Nancy Lee Beatty, *The Craft of Dying: a Study in the Literary Tradition of the Ars Moriendi in England*. (New Haven: Yale, 1970).

As noted by Justin Stagl in his detailed study of the theory of travel and the *ars apodemica* from 1550 to 1800, ‘the humanists attempted to generalize and systematize such advice in order to increase the intellectual profit of contemporary enthusiasm for travel. This was in keeping with their striving for educational reform and with Renaissance empiricism. A more regularised manner of travel could avail the *res publica literaria* in two ways: it would help the travellers to become more accomplished, versatile personalities, and it would further human knowledge through better travel reports written by such men.’⁶

In the 1570s, influential and important didactic works on travel were written by German scholars such as Zwinger, Pyrckmair and Turler.⁷ Translations soon appeared in other languages.⁸ These texts attempted to create categories for describing a range of empirical observations made during the journey, such as ‘the name of a city or region, along with its meaning and origin; its history, changing fortunes, and achievements; its topography and physical advantages, particularly with regard to agriculture, fishing and trade; the region’s mountains and fields, its uncultivated meadows, rivers, lakes, forests, swamps, seas, and natural boundaries. If it is a city, the description focuses on three main categories: buildings (cathedrals, churches, bridges, theatres, fortifications, walls, castles, markets, city hall, schools, universities, libraries, treasuries, warehouses, storage barns, harbours, fountains, canals, zoological gardens); people (living and dead, rulers, celebrities, scholars); and institutions, both political and social. All these categories can be further differentiated and divided.’⁹

The authors of travel reports, often titled ‘*relatione*’, were also

6 Justin Stagl, *A History of Curiosity: The Theory of Travel 1550-1800*. (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 1995; 2004).

7 Hilarius Pyrckmair, *Commentariolus de arte apodemica seu vera peregrinandi ratione*. (Ingolstadt: 1577); Hieronymus Turler, *De peregrinatione et agro Neapolitano*. (Strasbourg: 1574); Theodor Zwinger, *Methodus apodemica in eorum gratiam qui cum fructu in quocunque tandem vitae genere peregrinari cupiunt*. (Basel: 1577).

8 Clare Howard, *English Travellers of the Renaissance*. (London: John Lane, 1914), 23.

9 Wolfgang Neuber, *Travel Reports in Early Modern Germany*. In Max Reinhart, ed., *Early Modern German Literature 1350-1700*. (New York: Camden House, 2007), 739.

influenced by the tradition of praise and description of cities (*laudes urbium* and *descriptiones urbium*) derived from the *topos* of classical literature.¹⁰

Two important points relate to language and style. Firstly, many travel reports of the early modern period were not written in Latin but in the vernacular, including English, German, Italian, French, Spanish or Dutch. Secondly, in order to prove authenticity and to avoid any charge that the report was the fanciful result of the overly fertile imagination of the traveller, the authors of travel reports generally adhered to an unadorned and plain style, and presented events in a strict chronological order.

Translations into English of German authors of apodemic works, such as Turler, soon appeared.¹¹ English writers followed suit and published their own works giving travel advice from the 1570s onwards, offering counsel to young travellers on how best to travel in order to serve the Commonwealth and improve their minds, and not to merely satisfy their ‘owne lusts and affections’.¹² Educational travel was seen to have the broader purpose of serving the State, not solely the individual.¹³

Young travellers were advised to fear God as the best way to avoid the temptations and pitfalls of travel. This sentiment is echoed in the opening lines of Ludwig von Anhalt-Köthen’s first poem, where he states that anyone who fears God and respects the Ten Commandments will not stray off the rightful track. Roger Ascham’s popular play *The Scholemaster*, first performed in England in 1570, presented a harsh attack on the negative aspects of travel, particularly to Italy, which reflected growing concerns, fears and prejudices about the corrupting influence of travel on young Protestant Englishmen. Works by authors

10 Neuber, *Travel Reports*, 739; On the use of *laudes urbium* and *laudes descriptiones* in humanist writing see Carl Joachim Classen, *Antike Rhetorik im Zeitalter des Humanismus*. (München, Leipzig: K.G. Saur, 2003).

11 *The Travailer of Jerome Turler*. (London: 1575); Albert Meier, *Certain briefe and special Instructions*. (London: 1589).

12 Thomas Palmer, *An Essay of the Meanes how to make our Trauailles, into forraine Countries, the more profitable and honourable*. (London: 1606).

13 Sara Warneke, *Images of the Educational Traveller in Early Modern England*. (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 1995), 6.

such as Bishop Joseph Hall, later echoed in Laurence Sterne's *A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy* (1768), advised against travel altogether.¹⁴

This is the general background within which Ludwig von Anhalt-Köthen first set out on his own educational journeys at the turn of the seventeenth century. Ludwig was born in Dessau, Germany, in 1579. He was Reformist in faith and received a good education typical for a young man of his high social standing, which culminated in two extended trips abroad. His first journey lasted one and a half years with France as the main destination following a trip through the north-west of Germany, the Low Countries and England. Soon afterwards, he went on a second journey to Italy, which he reached through southern Germany, Switzerland and Tyrol. From Italy he also went on trips to Sicily and Malta. On his way back he travelled through Austria, Hungary and Prague. Ludwig returned to England, France, and the Netherlands in later journeys.¹⁵

Ludwig's first two educational journeys spanned from 1596 to 1602. They began when he was barely seventeen and were completed when he was almost twenty-three years old. He kept a detailed diary,¹⁶ and later drew on these notes to relate his experiences in his two long narrative travel poems, written in German towards the end of his life.

As Ludwig had received a very good education it is highly probable that he was familiar with some of the *ars apodemica* treatises which were popular in Germanic countries at the time, and increasingly also in England, although this does not mean that he followed any particular programme in great detail. Yet he must have set himself some guidelines on what to observe, as when visiting different places he tends to pick out similar items, such as the form of government and religious confession, the health of the economy, main features of the topography, important rivers and bridges, schools and universities, churches, fortifications, fountains, and some striking features of cities.

14 Joseph Hall, *Quo Vadis? A just Censure of Travel as it is commonly undertaken by the gentlemen of our nation*. (London: 1617).

15 Gottlieb Krause, *Ludwig, Fürst zu Anhalt-Cöthen und sein Land*. (Neusalz: 1877-79).

16 Ferdinand Siebigk, *Ludwig Fürst von Anhalt-Köthen*. In *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie*, Band 19 (Leipzig: Duncker & Humboldt, 1884), 476-483.

Justin Stagl makes the apt remark that while books on travel methods did codify general travel patterns and modes of observation, most probably they ‘shared the fate of other works of instruction, for instance cookbooks or books on etiquette, which are usually consulted in special cases rather than used throughout.’¹⁷

After an initial trip through the Netherlands, Ludwig spent just over one month in England during his first journey. He landed at Margate on 22nd June 1596 and travelled by ship up the river Thames to London. He went on excursions to Queen Elizabeth’s court in Greenwich, to the Nonsuch Palace, Hampton Court, Windsor Castle, Oxford University, Cambridge University, and Cobham Hall near Rochester. In London he looked at St Paul’s church, Westminster Cathedral, the London Bridge and the London Tower. He also saw Whitehall Palace, the market at the Great Exchange, Sir Francis Drake’s ship moored on the Thames, and Bridewell correctional facility. On the way to Dover to board a ship to France, he made a final stop and admired the Cathedral in Canterbury.

In his poem he points out that England was ruled by a single monarch, Queen Elizabeth, who was treated with great respect and who had increased the size of the territories under her rule. By contrast, in 1598 on his way to Italy Ludwig spent around one month travelling in the area between Switzerland, southern Germany, and Tirol – through Basel, Lausanne, Geneva, Zürich, Augsburg and across Tyrol to Innsbruck and Trent – an area in which he observed various types of governments and confessions located in close proximity to one another, each of which he notes down.

As examples of noteworthy details that Ludwig describes on his trip to England he relates that there were four playhouses in London at which princes, kings and emperors and their deeds were performed, true to life, and wearing beautiful clothes. His comment on the quality of the costumes indicates that he may have actually watched a play, and concurs with the famous description of a performance of Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar* attended by the Swiss Thomas Platter in London in 1599 – one of the earliest known descriptions of a performance of a play by Shakespeare. Platter noted in his travelogue that the actors were dressed in expensive costumes as English noblemen would often bequeath their

17 Stagl, *A History of Curiosity*, 90

best clothes to their servants, who would then sell them cheaply to actors. Like Platter, in London Ludwig also watched bear-baiting with dogs, and cock-fighting which was a popular betting sport.

In Basel, Switzerland, Ludwig mentions the well-known *dance macabre* series that then existed at the Predigerkloster, as well as the city's art collection – which was one of the earliest known public collections of art. In the market town of Ware near Cambridge, Ludwig liked Theobald's Palace and was impressed by an enormous four-poster oak bed with carved panels which was built around 1590, seemingly as a special incentive for travellers and which became known as the 'Great Bed of Ware'.¹⁸ This bed was mentioned by Shakespeare in *Twelfth Night* in 1602, and provides an early example of the deliberate creation of a 'tourist attraction.' Ware had many inns and 'hostelries' as it lay on a main thoroughfare leading north from London in medieval and Tudor England. It was frequently used by travellers between Cambridge and London, and traditionally had also been used as a stop by pilgrims heading to the shrine of the Virgin Mary in Walsingham in Norfolk. Ludwig's travel poems are filled with such details of everyday life, and merit more attention than they have received so far. They provide a wide-ranging panorama of different places and society in Early Modern Europe.

Ludwig kept journals throughout his voyages, and must have used them when writing his travelogues in verse almost fifty years later. His interest in including such records in the family archive is indicated by the fact that in the 1620s Ludwig's nephew Christian von Anhalt presented him with a copy of his own travelogue of a trip to Denmark, Austria and Italy for the family library.¹⁹

Apart from his journal, Ludwig is likely to have drawn on any literary works which were available to him in the 1640s when he wrote his two travel poems. The blending of personal experiences with material taken from published authorities was common practice, as seen in the travelogue of another German traveller at the time, Paul Hentzner.²⁰

18 This unusual bed is now on display at the Victoria & Albert Museum.

19 Bepler, *Travelling and Posterity*, 193.

20 W.D. Robson-Scott, *Some Notes on Hentzner's Itinerarium*. In *The Modern Language Review* 46, nos. 3-4 (July-Oct 1951), 458-461. Robson-Scott notes that in his descriptions of England, Hentzner relied heavily on Camden's *Britannia*

For example, when Ludwig writes about his visit to Malta in 1598, his descriptions of the history of the Great Siege and the Knights of Malta clearly use historical sources, quite likely relying on the history of the Order of St John written by the Italian Giacomo Bosio.²¹

Notes on religion play an important role throughout the travel poems. In Switzerland, Ludwig notes that Basel, Bern, Zürich and Schaffhausen belong to the Reformed church but nearby Solothurn is strongly Roman Catholic. In Geneva, he records that the Reformation of the city occurred at around the same time as Luther's dispute with the Pope. He records that Fribourg is strongly Papist and that the Jesuits, with their 'deceitful aims', have built a college there. In Lucerne he points out the monastery of the Capuchins, and notes that the city also has a Jesuit college. When passing through the Roman Catholic town of Constance, he recalls that the Protestant martyr John Hus was burnt at the stake in that place. In Tyrol Ludwig recalls how Archduke Ferdinand II of Austria did not allow Protestants to live freely in his lands. He notes that Trent is famous for the agreement of the Council of 1546, which he states was agreed between Roman Catholics alone and so only they are bound to it.

On the other hand, during his trip to England he was interested by stories of how, due to the Catholic Queen Mary, Christian blood was spilt to fight for the true religion until Mary was imprisoned and executed by 'the pious Elizabeth'. Ludwig comments whenever he passes through towns and places of importance to the history and events of the Reformation, such as La Rochelle in western France, which he describes as 'the dear town, that has long nurtured the children of the faith, and which resisted its enemy.'²² Similarly, in Canterbury he notes the important role that the learned people in this town played 'when God's light shone in this country.'

(London: 1586). Hentzner's *Itinerarium Germaniae, Galliae, Angliae, Italiae* was published in Nuremberg in 1612 with subsequent editions in 1617 and 1629. It is quite plausible that Ludwig von Anhalt-Köthen may have known this work when he wrote his own travel poems in the 1640s.

21 Giacomo Bosio, *Dell'Istoria della Religione e Ill.ma Militia di S. Giovanni Gerosolimitano*. (Rome: 1602).

22 'Dis ist die liebe Stadt/ die lange zeit ernehret, die glaubens kinder/ die sich oft hat gewehret, Entgegen ihren feind.'

Young Protestant travellers setting out on their journeys were warned about the dangers of encountering different confessions on their travels.²³ Yet young Protestant men did visit Catholic churches along the way and mix with Catholics, partly in order to satisfy their curiosity and partly for practical reasons. On Christmas day in Malta, for example, Ludwig visited the Capuchin's church and monastery, as well as St John's church which was the Conventual Church of the Knights of the Order of St John, and he dined and enjoyed some dancing with the German Knights of St John at their Auberge in Valletta. During his stay in Malta he was invited for what he describes as an enjoyable and friendly meal at the house of the German Knight Hans Ulrich Raitenau, who was related to the Medici family and to Cardinal Carlo Borromeo of Milan. Raitenau's mother was the niece of Pope Pius IV and his brother was Wolf Dietrich Raitenau, the Catholic Archbishop of Salzburg who in 1588 had expelled all Protestants from Salzburg as part of the Counter-Reformation. Ludwig later spent some time in Naples together with Raitenau and another knight called Ramschwach.

While Ludwig has harsh words for the Pope, who intends to 'rule everywhere,' he relates that the Grand Master of the Order, the Spanish Martin Garzes, was old, peaceful and well-liked - and generally preferred to dine alone. Overall, Ludwig's negative comments against Catholics are mainly directed towards either the Pope or the Jesuits. In Rome, Ludwig saw the Pope as the anti-Christ and judged the Vatican as far too preoccupied with the worldly and the mundane, and not with the state of the soul. The general social conditions that he witnessed in Rome confirmed to him how far the Catholic Church had erred and only served to strengthen his belief in the Reformed faith.

However, this difference in religion did not hinder him from enjoying the cultural aspects of Italy. Like other Protestant travellers, Ludwig was able to distinguish between his admiration for Italian antiquities and humanism, and his criticism of the Catholic Church. As Sara Warneke has observed in relation to English travel at this period, the early modern Protestant, 'unable to continue the popular medieval worship of religious images abroad, transferred his worship to classical

23 Antje Stannek, *Konfessionalisierung des 'Giro d'Italia'?: Protestanten im Italien des 17. Jahrhunderts*. In Babel and Paravicini, *Grand Tour*, 555-568.

relics.²⁴

Ludwig's experiences in Italy had a lasting and tangible cultural influence on him, which he proceeded to spread among his contemporaries in Germany for the rest of his life. Firstly, he rebuilt part of his palace and gardens in an Italian architectural style in the first decade of the seventeenth century, including the decoration of the interior rooms. This building still exists in Köthen today and is known as the *Ludwigsbau*. According to contemporary sources, his entire household was Italian in style.²⁵ Secondly, and more importantly, Ludwig's encounter with the *Accademia della Crusca* in Florence inspired him to found one of the first and most influential intellectual and literary societies in seventeenth-century Germany – the *Fruchtbringende Gesellschaft* (the 'Fruitbearing Society').

Like other travellers at this period, such as John Milton and the *Accademia degli Svogliati* in Florence in 1639²⁶, or John Evelyn and the *Accademia degli Umoristi* in Rome around six years later, Ludwig attended meetings of Italy's prestigious literary academies, in particular the *Accademia della Crusca* during his stay in Florence in 1598. These academies often entertained foreign visitors and also accepted them as members. John Evelyn described his visit to the *Accademia degli Umoristi* in 1645 as follows:

I was invited, after dinner, to the Academy of the Humorists, kept in a spacious hall belonging to Signor Mancini, where the wits of the town meet on certain days to recite poems and debate on several subjects. The first that speaks is called the Lord, and stands in an eminent place, and then the rest of the Virtuosi recite in order. By these ingenious exercises besides the learned discourses, is the purity of the Italian tongue daily improved. This room is hung round

24 Sara Warneke, *Images of the Educational Traveller in Early Modern England*. (Leiden, New York and Köln: Brill, 1994), 2. See also Walter E. Houghton Jr, *The English Virtuoso in the Seventeenth Century (II)*. In *Journal of the History of Ideas* 3 (1942), 190-219.

25 Ferdinand Siebigk, *Ludwig Fürst*, 476-483.

26 Estelle Hahn, *From Academia to Amicitia: Milton's Latin Writings and the Italian Academies*. (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1998).

with devices, or emblems, with mottoes under them. There are several other academies of this nature, bearing like fantastical titles.²⁷

Evelyn later unsuccessfully attempted to set up a literary academy in England on the lines of the Italian academies. Ludwig von Anhalt-Köthen, however, had already successfully implemented a similar idea years earlier in Germany, in 1617, which focused on the improvement of the German vernacular language, some twenty years before the *Academie Francaise* was founded in 1635 in France, and 45 years before the Royal Academy was founded in 1662 in England.

During his stay in Florence in 1598, Ludwig had been accepted as a member of the *Accademia della Crusca* under the name *l'Acceso - 'der Entzündete'* (the 'ignited one'), with the symbol of a burning field of stubble and the motto: 'Burning warns me of my salvation.' He was only the second foreigner accepted into the Academy, after Sebastian Zech.²⁸

An interest in vernacular languages, and in particular in the pure forms of languages and their use as standard written languages, evolved in various European countries in the early seventeenth century. This interest in language sometimes also coincided with an interest in patriotism and political causes. In Protestant countries, the promotion of the vernacular was also linked to 'rejecting Latin as the universal language of Catholicism and of the imperialists'.²⁹ In 1612, the German pedagogue Wolfgang Ratke (1571-1635) proposed that German was to be used as a language for administration and politics, together with French and Italian throughout the Empire. His ideas aroused interest among various educated persons, including Ludwig von Anhalt-Köthen who allowed Ratke to try to implement his ideas on educational reform, which were influenced by Francis Bacon, in schools in Köthen. This venture failed as Ratke was opposed by the clergy, however Ludwig was inspired by Ratke's ideas in the founding of the *Fruchtbringende*

27 William Bray, ed., *The Diary of John Evelyn*. (London: Everyman, 2006), 164.

28 Ball (2008): 401.

29 Joachim Whaley, *Germany and the Holy Roman Empire: Vol I: Maximilian I to the Peace of Westphalia 1493-1648*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 467.

Gesellschaft at Castle Hornstein near Weimar in August 1617, based on the Italian academies that Ludwig had seen during his stay in Florence twenty years earlier.³⁰

The idea of the *Fruchtbringende Gesellschaft* was first conceived at the funeral of Ludwig's sister the Duchess Dorothea Maria of Weimar, who died in the summer of 1617. Family members and friends had gathered to mourn her passing. The conversation turned to the Italian academies, which were described at this gathering as promoting good behaviour, skills and relationships, and the use of the vernacular language. At this occasion, Ludwig resolved to found a similar society, promoting virtuous and moral behaviour, together with the German language as the vehicle to achieve this ideal.³¹

While Ludwig effectively led the Society from 1617 until his death in 1650, the *Fruchtbringende Gesellschaft* was officially founded by Caspar von Teutleben who represented the chair until his death in 1629, when the chairmanship was taken over by Ludwig. Its motto was the utilitarian phrase '*Alles zu Nützen*' (Everything is to be used) and its emblem was the exotic image of a palm tree.

In Malta in 1599 Ludwig had visited the Grand Master's garden where he noticed a beautiful date palm which grew in soil which had purposely been laid in the rocky ground for the tree to grow. In his travel poem, Ludwig describes this palm tree and notes that whatever is put into the earth is what will be reaped. Since Ludwig wrote his poem when the date palm had already been established as the emblem of the

30 Whaley, *Germany and the Holy Roman Empire*, 468.

31 Described in Gustav von Hille, *Der Teutsche Palmbaum* (1647), 8-10: '*Wolermeldete Fürstliche und Adelige Zusammenkunft hatte in vorwesender Traurigkeit/ etlicher Massen besänftiget/ die Erzehlung von den Italiänischen Gesellschafter/ welche zu Anreizung der löblichen Jugend/ zu aller ley hohen Tugenden/ Erhaltung gutes Vertrauens/ Erbauung wolanständiger Sitten/ und den absonderlich zu nützlicher Ausübung jedes Volkes Landsprache/ rühmlich aufgerichtet werden/ und fast in allen Stätten/ durch gantz Italien zu finden sind. [...] Diesem nach ist von den anwesenden hochfürstl. Personen einsinnig geschlossen worden/ der gleichen löbliche Gesellschaft zu beginnen ... Ist also mehr ermeldte Gesellschaft gestiftet/ zu Erhaltung und Fortpflanzung aller Ritterlichen Tugenden/ Aufrichtung und Vermehrung Teutschen wolgemeinten Vertrauens ... und sonderlich dass uns ere bisher/ verlassene/ verachtete/ und in letzten Zügen ligende Teutschinne sich erholend/ ihren ohtleidende Kinder/ Teutsches Geblüts und Gemüts in etwas zu ermuntern*'

Fruchtbringende Gesellschaft for around 30 years, his description of this tree is significant. Ludwig later also takes note of two beautiful date palms in Pozzuolo near Naples.

As in the case of the Italian academies, including the *Accademia della Crusca*, each member of the *Fruchtbringende Gesellschaft* adopted a society name – for example, Ludwig was called ‘*Der Nährende*’ (the Nourisher) and von Teutleben was ‘*Der Mehltreiche*’ (the Flour-rich one). This adoption of a ‘new identity’ was partly a means of minimizing the importance of social rank and hierarchy within the society. The large majority of its members belonged to the German Protestant nobility, while a small number of others were notable poets and scholars, including Martin Opitz, Andreas Gryphius, Philipp von Zesen and Anton Ulrich.

It has been suggested that in its use of an exotic *impresa* (emblem) such as a palm tree, together with the aim of translating other languages into German, the *Fruchtbringende Gesellschaft* ‘cultivated nationality by being and acting supra-nationally,’ and that this supra-national aim into all corners of the Empire is a notable difference between the aims of this German society and the Italian academies.³² This supra-national aim through a focus on the vernacular language and a cultural society is particularly significant in the context of the Thirty Years War whose beginnings were already brewing at the time when the *Fruchtbringende Gesellschaft* was established.

Ute Lotz-Heumann and Matthias Pohlig have noted that all the important German intellectual and literary societies in the seventeenth century were founded in Protestant territories, and that they had ‘a nationalist cultural orientation that brought them into conflict with the Catholic supranational orientation towards Rome.’³³

While most of its members were either Calvinists or Lutherans, the *Fruchtbringende Gesellschaft* avoided confessional politics and conflicts. In 1646, around the time when Ludwig was writing his travel

32 Gabriele Ball, *Alles zu Nützen – The Fruchtbringende Gesellschaft (1617-1680) as a German Renaissance Academy*. In Arjan van Dixhoorn and Susie Speakman Sutch, eds., *The Reach of the Republic of Letters: Literary and Learned Societies in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe*. Vol 2 (Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2008), 399.

33 Ute Lotz-Heumann and Matthias Pohlig, *Confessionalization and Literature in the Empire, 1555-1700*. In *Central European History* 40, no. 1 (March, 2007), 52.

poems, a new candidate member for the society was proposed on the basis of being a good Calvinist. Ludwig took umbrage at this and replied that nobody should be introduced to the Society as a Calvinist, but only as a good Christian. As noted by Lotz-Heumann & Pohlig, ‘this programmatic orientation along idealist Christian, biblical, humanist, and utopian lines had little in common with confessionalizing policy; inner-Protestant conflicts yielded to the unifying tendency.’³⁴ During the Thirty Years’ War, Protestant intellectual circles sought ways to overcome the differences between Calvinists and Lutherans and as a result ‘neither a strong inner-Protestant confessional demarcation nor a far-reaching confessionalization of culture ever took hold in these circles.’³⁵

The *Fruchtbringende Gesellschaft* influenced German literature throughout the seventeenth century. The society published an early German dictionary, handbooks on poetics and style, and many works of criticism. Language and literature came to be viewed as a unifying element in the many principalities and territories of German-speaking countries, especially during the Thirty Years War.

It is pertinent to ask why Duke Ludwig von Anhalt-Köthen decided, in the final years of his life, to devote his energy to commit the travel journals of his youth into verse. While young men might hope to further their careers by publicising their travel, Ludwig was nearing the end of a long and very successful career, and had no promotions or social advantages to be gained. Furthermore, travelogues were not often improved and tidied up for publication by the higher nobility themselves, and this task was usually left to others of a lower rank in their service.

Many of the works produced by the *Fruchtbringende Gesellschaft* were translations into German from authors writing in other languages, including Italian, Latin, Greek and Spanish. Ludwig’s own favourite was Giambattista Gelli, a founding member of the *Accademia Fiorentina* in Italy. Translating other languages into German focused attention on the importance of enriching the vocabulary and purity of the German language, and avoiding the use of foreign loan words.

34 Lotz-Heumann and Pohlig, *Confessionalization*, 53.

35 Ibid. 53.

Ludwig himself emphasised the importance of carrying out translations in order to ‘prove the power of one’s mother tongue’ in every branch of literature.³⁶ The vernacular German was elevated into a language sophisticated enough to be a language of literature, art and philosophy, on a par with Italian, French or Spanish.

It is therefore possible that Ludwig embarked on writing his travel poems, which contain few loan words, in order to put into practice the ideal of writing in, improving and promoting vernacular German, which was one of the lasting aims of the *Fruchtbringende Gesellschaft*. As described above, the promotion of the Italian language, as opposed to Latin, was also one of the aims of the *Accademia della Crusca* and other Italian academies in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

36 Ball, *Alles zu Nützen*, 403.