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Introduction

WHEN IN 1766 James Harris asked for advice from his father's friends as to where he should go on his Grand Tour, they were divided. For some, the licentiousness and dissipation of the south should be avoided at all costs; for others, Germany, Poland, and the rest of northern Europe were almost barbarous country, difficult to access, and of little relevance on return. On the contrary, countered the former: because northern territories lay off the beaten track, more might be learnt from them, especially through contact with men of real business and achievement, of whom few existed in the south. Harris was persuaded to tour the north.[1]

This book is about why he and other young compatriots setting out on their travels in the late seventeenth, eighteenth, and early nineteenth centuries chose to focus on Europe north of the Alps. In following their trajectories, an alternative reading of the scope and purpose of the Grand Tour emerges to that centred on Italy, the main purpose of which was to take in Roman antiquities and acquire taste in the polite arts. Whereas the latter was based, at best, on an ideology that revered the classics, travel through northern countries was a more modern and practical business, intended to equip young men with knowledge which would be of active use in their future careers.

Why should there have been any need for further education after years of study in English schools and universities? In short, because the education received there was so limited and frequently so poor that by the eighteenth century its inability to equip a young person with the tools for succeeding in the world was widely recognised. Public schools, still dominated by the model established in the sixteenth century, followed a curriculum the main purpose of which was to instil a reasonable command of spoken and written Latin, initially through set texts learnt by heart and repeated verbatim. In the

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seventeenth century, Greek was introduced at some schools and the range of classical authors covered grew with time. But they no longer inspired the excitement they held for Renaissance society, nor seemed relevant to contemporary needs. Nevertheless, Latin and Greek were the only subjects officially studied until well into the nineteenth century and the course of mastering them supposedly trained the mind in a generalised way. Subjects of utility or practical application were viewed with suspicion, and even the usual 'extras'—French, drawing, dancing, mathematics—were learnt outside the classroom and paid for separately.

As it evolved, an education devoted to the classics distanced students from engagement with modernity while conferring on them membership of an exclusive club, differentiated from the rest of society and valued mainly for its non-vocational nature. It was not intended to be character forming or relevant to contemporary life. It had no morally elevating effect on behaviour in schools, where discipline was usually abysmal.[2] These unfortunate effects were reinforced at university. Oxford and Cambridge failed to encourage studious application among those who were not of a classicist bent. The prime purpose of the duopoly was the education of Anglican clergymen, and they were not particularly good at that.[3] Cushioned by a comfortable if celibate college environment, the fellows largely comprised men biding their time for a suitable living to crop up. Although Cambridge's professorial chairs expanded from seven to twenty-one in the period 1660–1800, most incumbents treated their posts as sinecures. Their research record was meagre and teaching was done by college tutors of varying calibre and conscientiousness who constituted only a small fraction of the fellowship. Serious students with sufficient funds usually employed private tutors. Obligatory residence in Oxford and Cambridge meant that students had to pay for accommodation on top of tuition fees, which put them beyond the reach of middle-class boys who were not supported by scholarships or exhibitions.

While classics still dominated the Oxford curriculum, at Cambridge the mathematical sciences—confined mainly to Newtonian geometry—were preeminent, backed after 1753 by competitive examination and the classification of students.[4] Vocational qualifications in law and medicine formed only a small proportion of the degrees awarded at both universities. Civil law grounded on the codified Roman *Corpus Juris Civilis* ceased to be of relevance to the practice of English common law, which was largely based on precedent and picked up either on apprenticeships or, for barristers, at the Inns of Court. As for medicine, observation and experimentation were superseding dependence on

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classical authorities. London boasted two permanent anatomical theatres—that of the Barber-Surgeons (completed in 1638) and the College of Physicians (1674)—and enjoyed access to a readier supply of corpses for dissection than the universities. In Oxford, the Ashmolean Museum basement was used for anatomical dissections from 1683, with dead bodies supplied by the county prison, but they were never sufficient to serve teaching needs and readers in the nearby Bodleian Library objected to the smell.[5]

Despite enjoying something of a flowering in the first half of the seventeenth century, Oxford and Cambridge were scarcely hives of intellectual activity and by the eighteenth century, the formal curriculum was virtually moribund. Not surprisingly, for much of the century enrolment declined.[6] At Oxford, the average annual intake of around 316 freshmen in the first decade of the century had slumped to 182 by the 1750s, rising to 245 in the last decade. At Cambridge, the average annual intake of around 250 at the start of the century had sunk to 116 in the 1760s, rising to 162 in the 1790s.[7] Nevertheless, nearly half the number of eighteenth-century MPs attended either Oxford or Cambridge, as did all eighteenth-century prime ministers, apart from the 4th duke of Devonshire and the 3rd earl of Bute. Besides fulfilling their traditional role as seminaries for the Church of England, the two universities became more socially exclusive, acting as 'finishing-schools for the sons of the governing classes.'[8] That is how they were regarded, at best, by those who recalled the experience in retrospect. And while they valued the importance of the friendships formed there, they deprecated the amusements they had enjoyed together—drunkenness, fornication, gambling—resulting in debt and general moral turpitude.

Edward Gibbon famously thought the fourteen months he spent at Magdalen College, Oxford between 1752 and 1753 'the most idle and unprofitable' of his whole life. Although he considered himself 'not devoid of capacity or application' which could have led to 'useful and agreeable studies' under the guidance of 'skilful and diligent professors', he found that the majority of his tutors had given up any pretence of teaching.[9] After Winchester College and six months in London, James Harris went up to Merton College, Oxford in 1763 where, by his own account, he spent two years wasting time, failing to go to lectures or attend to college rules, and barely seeing his tutor. Instead, he mixed with other 'very pleasant, but very idle fellows' imitating High Life in London, 'to the great annoyance of our finances.' Looking back, he was amazed how many of his friends turned out creditably, enjoying political careers of varying degrees of distinction.[10] As a Cambridge undergraduate in 1774, Philip

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Yorke gave an ingenuous account to his uncle, the 2nd earl of Hardwicke, of his first visit to the races, although he was promptly slapped down: 'As you have satisfied your curiosity about Newmarket, I presume you will not be in haste to make another excursion there. The mischief done by gaming at that place is more than a balance for the service it is of in the breed of horses. I am sorry to hear that some of the young men at the University keep racers, a thing never practical in my time.'[11] John Henry Petty, Lord Wycombe, privately educated until he matriculated at Christ Church, Oxford in 1783, was damning about his two years there: 'However venerable any place may be, a place where learning is in little estimation, where men read nothing but the Latin and the Greek and those most sparingly, a place in which the same ideas are inculcated, which would have been inculcated a century or more ago, cannot be deemed a very eligible place of education.'[12]

It is too extreme to dismiss students' intellectual experience as wholly negative. The emphasis in the curriculum on expressing thoughts in Latin and translating from colloquial English into Latin proved surprisingly useful when they ventured abroad and found that Latin was a *lingua franca*, employed not only by university lecturers but on the road by post-house masters and even ostlers. It also provided a grammatical basis for learning modern languages. Furthermore, some courses of lectures outside the curriculum, for which permission to attend had to be sought from college tutors, were popular with undergraduates. Those given on experimental science in the second half of the eighteenth century whetted their appetite for further investigation. Lord Hardwicke was pleased to learn that Philip Yorke was enjoying his Cambridge course of experimental lectures: 'They contribute to open the mind, and to furnish it with constant funds of rational improvement. You will . . . have enjoyed the benefit of a more *liberal*, because a more enlarged *plan* of study, than I did.'[13]

Nevertheless, teaching was more ambitious at the leading Dissenting academies, founded to cater for non-Anglicans who were barred from studying at Oxford and Cambridge. Subjects extended to modern languages, modern history, geography, and the natural and experimental sciences.[14] The four Scottish universities—Edinburgh, Glasgow, St Andrew's, and Aberdeen—took students at a younger age (from fourteen or fifteen) and provided a broader education, while their established professorial posts encouraged research in single disciplines, fostering a student following and mentorship. The cost of a university education in Scotland was considerably less than at Oxford or Cambridge as residency was not compulsory and many undergraduates lived at

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home. In Glasgow and Edinburgh, they had access to major hospitals and law courts, boosting the study of medicine and law, which in England was mainly undertaken outside the universities. Overall, enrolment at Scottish universities increased from about one thousand in 1700 to 2,700 in 1800.[15]

Some navigated the systems north and south of the border by adopting a mix and match approach. Having left Eton College under a cloud, William Windham spent a year at Glasgow University before progressing to University College, Oxford and gaining a degree in 1771. Robert Arbuthnot of Haddo sought every means possible to improve the prospects of his eldest son and namesake. After the boy had spent time at Glasgow University, in 1776 his father debated with his friend and fellow Scot, Sir Robert Murray Keith, whether to send him to Oxford or the Dissenting academy in Warrington: 'There is something showy and splendid in the idea of an Oxford education, yet there are some disadvantages attend it which alarm me a good deal, besides the enormous expense of it, even supposing I succeed in procuring the exhibition, whereas the charge of the education at Warrington is very moderate, and I have heard an excellent character of the masters.'[16] A few months later he had decided against the university, as he told Keith: 'the truth is, the little attention which I am assured is paid to the students by the Oxford professors, the dissipation naturally attendant on that inattention, and the vast expense of living there, all determined me not to send my son to Oxford.'[17]

Others were so disturbed by the reputation of English universities that they sent their charges abroad as teenagers, straight from school, a practice roundly condemned by Adam Smith as absurd. Although they might acquire a superficial knowledge of one or two foreign languages, these youths usually returned home 'more conceited, more unprincipled, more dissipated and more incapable of any serious application either to study or to business.' Removed from the 'inspection and control' of their parents and relations, Smith asserted, every useful habit they might have acquired during the earlier parts of their education was either weakened or effaced.[18] Yet by the 1770s, the ideal of sticking to a course of 'solid study' at home appeared 'chimerical', given 'the total relaxation of discipline, and the general prevalence of dissipation.' Accordingly, the compromise proposed in 1771 by General John Burgoyne to his sister-in-law, Lady Mary Stanley, regarding the education of her nephew, Lord (Edward Smith-) Stanley, who was then at Trinity College, Cambridge, 'blended together the two parts of Education, keeping the attendance at the university, such as it is, as the first object, but intermixing in the times of vacation the observations, the academical exercises, the refinements in arts and in manners

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to be met with in good company abroad, rather than sending them in a four years exile all at one time from their country and thereby probably eradicating from their minds every thing they had before attained advantageous to an English Education.'[19] Nevertheless, as we shall see, some parents and guardians resolved that further education for their charges abroad, combining social refinement with study at a continental university staffed by diligent, learned professors was a worthwhile attainment in its own right.

If they attended an English or Scottish university, young men would normally be only around twenty when they emerged with or without a degree, under the legal age of majority, unlikely to control their own money and too young to marry without the consent of parents or guardians. To forestall the fate of becoming an 'idle lounger' at home or succumbing to the fleshpots of the metropolis, many parents considered it a safer option to send their charges abroad. A well-rounded education was assumed to involve the acquisition of social skills. Through an interlude of continental travel, young men could gain a knowledge of the world by exposure to different societies and an enlarged cosmopolitan acquaintance with people of note, especially in court and aristocratic circles, provided they were reasonably fluent in French, which was a *sine qua non* of entrée. At their most superficial, such excursions could endow a young man with a little polish, the genteel accomplishments of polite bearing, conversation, and behaviour, as well as contacts and friendships which might prove useful later in life. Proficiency gained in dancing, fencing, and riding helped smooth out the gawkiness of youth. In other words, they learnt the basics of self-staging and performance for their future roles in the national theatre.[20] Largely unspoken was the fundamental assumption shared by the well-born with their continental peers: that social status was based on birth (meaning both family and lineage), land on a scale sufficient to be described as an estate, accompanied by commensurate responsibilities and sporting rituals, and leadership derived from strength of character rather than intellectual ability. Ready access to imperial, royal, and aristocratic society abroad was a right, serving to validate rank and leadership at home.

Following the Restoration, the Stuart court resumed its default position of deferring to France for its standards of taste, fashions, and manners. If Paris's reputation for expense and dissipation was a deterrent for some parents, their offspring could perfect a grasp of the language at cities along the Loire, where

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the best French was reputedly spoken.[21] But by the 1690s the lustre of Louis XIV's court at Versailles had tarnished through his ruinous military campaigns. Although Paris remained a draw and the climate of the south attracted winter visitors, France was to be at war with Britain for nearly half the period from 1688 to 1815, scarcely a winning strategy for promoting the country's cultural appeal to its main rival. As Philip Yorke told his uncle in June 1779, explaining why he would not be returning to England by the quickest route through Strasbourg and Nancy: 'I look upon it as very inconsistent with patriotism to spend one's money in an enemy's country in time of war.'[22]

Italy did not suffer from this disadvantage, the military capability of Italian states, more bent on trade than armed conflict, being negligible from a British viewpoint. Neither did the parental nightmare of an offspring's conversion to Catholicism or Jacobitism, given the presence of the exiled Stuart court in Rome, serve as much of a deterrent; even the pope accepted the Hanoverian succession after the death of the Old Pretender in 1766. Classical curiosity trumped confessional jeopardy: acquiring an informed familiarity with the sites of antiquity and sources of taste was a natural next step arising from studies at school and university. Grand Tours to Italy blossomed, as Sir Brinsley Ford discovered when, around 1950, he began to compile material relating to the phenomenon. He described his obsession as 'a snowball which has smothered me and of course one never comes to the end of the subject.' When John Ingamells published his and Ford's work in 1997, it covered some six thousand British and Irish travellers, and was by no means definitive.[23] Lavish exhibitions featuring the paintings, antiquities, and decorative arts brought back to Britain to adorn stately homes further boosted the image of the Grand Tour as primarily an Italy-based phenomenon.[24] Pompeo Batoni portraits which depicted the sitters fronting or draped over choice pieces of Roman antiquity reinforced the message.[25] Most recently, Giovanna Ceserani's magical open access resource, *A World Made by Travel: The Digital Grand Tour* (Stanford, 2024), has brought together the latest data on eighteenth-century travellers to Italy, combining visual and documentary evidence in an interactive form and extending the geographical scope beyond the usual centres of Venice, Florence, Rome, and Naples.

This canonical version of the Grand Tour, focused on the lure of Italy for the British elite, has been challenged, qualified, and expanded in many useful ways. Scholars from other countries have pointed out that the Grand Tour was a rite of passage for young noblemen across Europe, not just the British.[26] The assumption that such journeys were the preserve of upper-class youth has

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been modified by demonstrations that it was never exclusively so and that even they were accompanied by support groups of tutors and servants.[27] The age range was more varied, extending to older men and families, as was the social background of travellers, with tours undertaken by wealthier members of the gentrified professions—law, medicine, and the clergy—military men, merchants, and entrepreneurs, a trend which grew from the 1780s onwards.[28] Increasingly, the presence of women has been acknowledged and investigated.[29] More fundamentally, it has become clear that the stereotypical content of the Grand Tour, elevated by the study of antiquity and art, alleviated by the recreational pursuits of shopping, sex, and general sociability, was never the whole story.

The educational goals of parents could be more ambitious, and the rewards of Italy were sometimes prefaced by short periods of study at continental colleges and universities along the way, almost always in northern Europe. From the mid-seventeenth century, Italy was no longer in the forefront of providing these facilities, British travellers rarely settling subsequently at the renowned universities of Bologna and Padua. Only fifteen English and nine Irish attended the four Italian colleges for nobles—Parma, Modena, Bologna, and Siena—between 1660 and 1780.[30] The Accademia Reale founded in Turin in 1678 which offered a broad curriculum to young gentlemen from across Europe, including Protestants, destined for careers in the army or diplomacy, was a partial exception.[31] On succeeding his father as Grand Duke of Tuscany in 1765, Peter Leopold pursued enlightened policies including opening to the public the Biblioteca Laurenziana, the private library of the Medicis in Florence (which had been open to scholars since its foundation in 1571), and founding the Reale Museo di Fisica e Storia Naturale, comprising the Medici scientific and natural history collections, in 1775. But it is a moot point whether eighteenth-century British visitors made use of these resources while enjoying the city's order and cleanliness, art and sociability.[32]

Significantly, Peter Leopold was a Habsburg prince, a younger brother of the reforming Emperor Joseph II, whom he would succeed in 1790. An enlightened modern outlook on education was more prevalent in northern Europe. John Locke's writings had a widespread influence, including his recommendation that young people should acquire practical and critical thinking skills in order to grow into rational adults.[33] Besides fostering more exploratory forms of learning, a tour might promote the acquisition of specific kinds of knowledge relating to medicine, civil law, contemporary politics, modern history, applied mathematics, natural and experimental philosophy,

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technical knowhow, and mercantile exchange. It could serve as 'a kind of apprenticeship'[34] through which young men attached themselves to and benefited from masters of international repute, whether in diplomatic, academic, or business circles. By so doing it resembled the travels which journeymen were obliged to make, particularly in the northern countries of continental Europe (*Wanderjahre, Gesellenwanderungen*), to acquire further knowledge of their trades before taking examinations and submitting work to the guild that would subsequently admit them as masters.[35] Prior to the increasingly prescriptive, formalised educational structures adopted in the nineteenth century, it was a distinctive approach to learning which combined a vocational element with the freedom to roam and find out for oneself, thereby achieving a rounded maturity.

I first became aware of this alternative Grand Tour when I came across a journal deposited as part of the Boulton and Watt archive in Birmingham Central Library. It was a handsome octavo notebook, bound in calf with a gold tooled spine and marbled endpapers, which James Watt junior kept on two journeys he made in July and August 1787 to the Erzgebirge (Ore Mountains) in Saxony and Bohemia.[36] I happened to know the area from my own travels round the mining towns of central Europe while researching my book, *The Arts of Industry in the Age of Enlightenment*, and the idea of following earlier generations of travellers to these regions intrigued me. The project grew, as did its geographical parameters, when I found more travel correspondence and journals deposited in British and American libraries and archives.

My research was of necessity dependent on the random survival of the material itself. Some tours were published at the time, acquiring the status of guides for others. But many lay untouched from the day they had been bundled up with larger collections of private papers, considered as juvenilia or as minor appendices to estate records. More had long since been lost or partially destroyed in sweeps of inefficiency or efficiency. My sample was not intended to be comprehensive, simply suggestive of the rich range of possibilities. Nor could it amount to a quantitatively based survey—although this has been attempted in relation to specific universities, social groups, and periods of time, not to mention Ceserani's online resource[37]—for there were many variables among the young travellers who interested me. By tracing their wide range of motivations and discovering what they achieved, I became increasingly aware

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that the Northern Grand Tour was not simply a by-product of the Grand Tour to France and Italy but was a worthwhile undertaking in its own right.

Some of their journeys took several years, others a few months. Some extended to Italy and the Mediterranean, others were located exclusively north of the Alps. The mean age on setting out was around twenty. Some were callow teenagers while others were in their twenties, more experienced and had already made tours, at least round Britain and sometimes to France and Italy. Although the noble *Kavalierstour* has long served as the Grand Tour template, it seemed too inflexible a concept to take in the nuanced range of British social class. A possibly surprising number of young aristocrats being groomed for high political or diplomatic office put in years of serious study at continental universities. Young men of the middling sort like Watt not only pursued fields relevant to their future trades and professions, but also consciously acquired the social skills that would make them acceptable in polite society and subsequently help with promoting their business. Once on the road, they found, it was often assumed that every Englishman was a 'milord', to be treated or fleeced accordingly. At the minor courts, lacking a dedicated British minister to act as social filter, the visit of any faintly respectable young 'stranger' seems to have come as welcome relief to the monotonous round of hunting, dining, and playing cards.

The geographical reach of the book could not be determined by modern national boundaries. This was an age when the territory through which these travellers passed was intensely fragmented. Borders were ill-defined, maps bore only an approximate relationship to physical reality, and decent roads were few and far between. They were not moving through nation states as understood today, but territory controlled by overlapping and interlocking networks of ruling families and dynasties. The cultural and political construction of Europe itself was unstable, with no consensus as to its external geographical boundaries, especially on the eastern margins with their diversity of language, ethnicity, and religion. Although the papal nuncio to Poland in 1783 referred to Poland and Russia as 'northern countries', it has been argued that they were first dubbed 'Eastern Europe' in the Enlightenment—a transitional zone with shifting borders and a residual 'otherness' as the Ottoman Empire receded. The use of the term diminished following the collapse of the Iron Curtain in 1989 when Poland, Hungary, and what then constituted Czechoslovakia reinforced their identity as part of 'Central Europe', roughly comprising territory that had made up Habsburg dominions and the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth.[38] The book follows this

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definition, with excursions into Russia and longer tours to the far north of Scandinavia.

Whatever fantasies its elite might have harboured of becoming the new Rome, Britain was indisputably part of northern Europe. Like much of the territory, it was firmly Protestant. From 1688, its monarchy was secured through the import of northern Protestant princes, first from the Dutch house of Orange and then in 1714, from Hanover, underpinned subsequently by marriage alliances with virtually every other German Protestant princely family. Consequently, most British parents felt more at ease in arranging for the further education of their sons in Protestant lands—the Dutch Republic rather than the Spanish, then Austrian Netherlands and the Protestant universities of the Holy Roman Empire rather than Catholic institutions in the hands of the Jesuits. Some of the more adventurous progressed to Poland, Hungary, and Russia, but they were a small minority. Towards the end of the eighteenth century, Scandinavia became quite popular, as much for its natural history as for its mines and navies. Yet overall, the sponsors of these tours seemed to share a common philosophy, that travel should be instructive, even advantageous for future careers, and to believe that useful knowledge of all kinds was to be found in the northern countries of Europe.

The timeframe of the book more or less dictated itself. While mercantile convoys and diplomatic missions afforded some protection before 1660, it was only in the second half of the seventeenth century that a responsible parent or guardian could contemplate allowing his son and heir to venture abroad independently. Britain's own bloody Civil War had already brought death and destruction to many families. Prior to the Peace of Westphalia of 1648 that ended the Thirty Years War, the Continent was a bewildering patchwork of warring states and even after the treaty was signed, bands of discharged soldiers roamed the countryside, resorting to robbery or worse to survive. The threat from Sweden in the north and the Ottomans in the east was to live on for decades. So, the phenomenon of the Northern Grand Tour as an educational rite of passage only gained momentum in the eighteenth century.

The *terminus ad quem* is also apparent. During the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, Britain was cut off from the Continent for the best part of twenty years. Even the lavish spectacle of the 1814–15 Congress of Vienna could not disguise the fact that the Holy Roman Empire, which had drawn travellers for centuries to the heart of Europe, had ceased to exist. As had the failed 'republican monarchy', Poland. And by this time, the reverse phenomenon was well under way: Britain's financial and commercial clout,

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technological innovation, and industrial development now attracted foreign visitors who were astonished, even appalled by the size and wealth of its capital city. The spread of macadamised roads, paddle steamers and railways both at home and abroad made travel quicker and cheaper, but not more profound. Shoals of tourists clutching Murray or Baedeker guides can scarcely be compared with earlier generations of travellers who had to search out sights for themselves. With the expanding British Empire, those still bent on adventurous travel ranged much further afield.

Therefore, after a brief survey of sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century travellers, the book moves chronologically from the late seventeenth to the early nineteenth centuries, each chapter concentrating on particular journeys and highlighting different aspects of the useful knowledge attained. In part a *peregrinatio medica*, Dr Edward Browne's travels in the late 1660s took him to the silver mines and mineral baths of Hungary, using his commission to report on them for the newly founded Royal Society as a *laissez-passer*. John Clerk of Penicuik was one of many young Scots to study civil law at Leiden or Utrecht University around 1700, the United Provinces having acquired added cachet for Protestants with William of Orange's wresting of the English throne from the Catholic Stuarts. In the mid-1730s the Reverends Richard Pococke and Jeremiah Milles toured the major cities of the German lands comprising the Holy Roman Empire to learn more about their religious affiliations and charitable institutions as well as to pursue their own antiquarian interests. In effect, all these journeys were updated versions of study which built on the tradition of the three higher faculties of medieval universities: Medicine, Law, and Theology.

The next section, chapters five to seven, considers the role played by tours in preparing young men for public life. With no professional training on offer for entry into politics or the diplomatic service, the best course for those contemplating such a career was to attach themselves to established British diplomats in post. Over the middle decades of the eighteenth century the success or otherwise of their mentoring role is examined by a close reading of the correspondence of Sir Charles Hanbury Williams in Dresden, Sir Joseph Yorke at The Hague and Sir Robert Murray Keith in Vienna.

The final section examines different ways in which *ancien régime* norms—social, intellectual, and political—were being weakened, as experienced by both middle-class and aristocratic travellers who were pursuing new horizons. Leading merchants and industrialists recognised the value of northern tours for their offspring to get acquainted with export markets firsthand or seek out

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the latest innovations in their fields. John Patteson represents Norwich cloth manufacturers in the former role, while in the latter, James Watt junior was the second British student to matriculate at the Freiberg Mining Academy in Saxony, founded nearly a century before any comparable institution in Britain. By the 1780s, enlightened attempts to reform the political status quo were destabilising northern Europe from the Netherlands to Hungary even before the outbreak of the French Revolution. John Henry Petty, Earl Wycombe, reported with an unusually discerning eye on these developments to his father, the 1st Marquess of Lansdowne. Yet despite the massive political upheavals resulting from the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, a few young Englishmen, among them Charles Parry, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and Henry Crabb Robinson, still managed to derive benefit from the freedom of thought experienced at the liberal German universities of Göttingen and Jena. Others embarked on more adventurous treks of exploration to the far north of Scandinavia, into the Arctic circle, and onwards to Russia. On their journeys in the 1820s, Thomas Knight and Thomas Parker collected specimens throughout the territory, hoping to make scientific contributions to the increasingly specialised fields of natural history.

These territories have been covered by historians with different degrees of emphasis. Dedicated attention has been devoted to British travellers in specific north European countries from the Dutch Republic to Russia.[39] Essays have been gathered together in loose compilations covering countries 'beyond the Grand Tour', employing a wide range of approaches.[40] In recent decades this broader territorial stretch has also become something of a happy hunting ground for scholars searching for the prehistory of current concerns, ranging from masculinity to national identity. The topic of masculinity is clearly of relevance, given that the Grand Tour was often viewed as a key rite of passage from youth to manhood.[41] Yet the word is problematic, not least because it did not exist in the English language before 1748 and was not self-consciously conceived as a form of subjective identity until the mid-twentieth century. On the deepest level, the hegemonic values associated with masculinity were so entrenched in the eighteenth century (and earlier of course) that they were the self-evident, uncontroversial norm and rarely challenged. More productive has been an analysis of the ways in which young men expressed their male social identities in different circumstances on their travels around the time of their coming of age. The acquisition of taste, manners, and the art of pleasing in polite society were necessary accomplishments, preferably without extending to a Frenchified dandyism.[42] Physical exercise and sport contributed

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increasingly to the manly stereotype, as did exposure to adventure, hardship, and danger, mainly encountered away from the caressing climate of the south.[43]

As other historians have shown, the families of the gentry 'strategised' or shaped their sons' travels both in advance and during their course, hoping for educational, social, and financial benefits.[44] Although travel was intended to separate young men from their families and home comforts in order to build up self-reliance, most parents attempted to maintain control from afar. Grand Tours highlighted the tension between paternal authority and filial resistance and escape. While the correspondence between parents and their offspring can illuminate the core purpose of the journeys, as understood by both sides of the bargain, it certainly reveals the complexities of personal relationships between fathers and sons. The former treated letters and bankers' drafts as strategic instruments, expecting in return frank acquiescence to parental authority. As well as prescribing educational expectations, parents also expressed anxiety over health and safety, both physical and moral, ever counselling the path of caution and restraint in their guides to life and principles for worldly success. Sons in exchange learnt how to couch their experiences in an acceptable form, sending exemplary letters as evidence of their maturation, playing down risk, and stressing the hours put in towards fulfilling educational goals. Instead of describing their experiences with candour, they acquired the art of dissimulation, not least in hinting that top-up funds were an essential prerequisite if they were to return home. Even their private journals were rarely confessional before the arrival of the 'age of sensibility' in the second half of the eighteenth century. Conventionally, they were dutiful recitations of facts, jotted down initially as notes in transit, enlarged upon at leisure, and completed with an eye cocked at subsequent public view as much as secreted away for personal reminiscence.

There has also been much debate about the growth of national identity, but use of the term in eighteenth-century Europe is tricky. Nationalism was not coined as a word until the 1790s and was barely used even in the nineteenth century. Instead, the world was structured round sporadically articulated feelings of dynastic allegiance and jurisdiction; rank, order, and dependence; church and confessional adherence; and ultimately, family. The Grand Tour fostered a sense of cosmopolitanism among the upper classes based on shared values and common standards of genteel behaviour, speech, and manners. Yet historians have also discerned a growing sense of British togetherness, encouraged by the Seven Years War and War of American Independence, contrasting

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the country's Protestantism and liberty with a French Catholic, authoritarian other. Sentiments of patriotism and loyalty were stimulated by military, economic, and diplomatic competition with France.[45] Inevitably, these broad-brush oppositions have required qualification and refinement. As was the case then and now, cosmopolitanism and patriotism were not mutually exclusive; feeling British could live alongside a sense of belonging to European high culture, depending on the circumstances and the company. Even the much-vaunted English liberty was located, it has been shown, within a wider north-European Gothic context, a pan-European line pushed particularly by proponents of the Scottish Enlightenment.[46]

This book refers to these concerns along the way and returns to them in the conclusion, but my understanding of the subject grows primarily out of the historical source material. To impose an analytic framework is to risk anachronism and to reduce individuals to a type, losing the specificity of their character and travels. Through their letters and journals, we can recover the immediacy of their lives, perceptions, and feelings on their journeys. Tuning one's ear to the past and listening, living with people—who did not know what lay in store for them—in their moment, is essential if we are to understand them without condescension and interpret them without distortion.

The fugitive traces of these young men as they ventured into what were then less familiar parts of Europe constitute a guide, albeit fragmentary and allusive, to territory that is still neglected by the British.[47] They provided a running commentary on contemporary politics, affording privileged glimpses (though usually on a worm's eye level) of great rulers, successful military commanders, and leading scholars to an extent unimaginable in countries round the Mediterranean. They acted as agents of cultural exchange, confirming the achievements of northern artists, architects, musicians, writers, engineers, philosophers, and men of science who contributed to the modernisation of European culture and society.

Some of their experiences can resonate in living memory. Take the feather-bed, first encountered by blanket-bedded travellers when they crossed the Rhine into German lands. Everyone voiced the same complaint: that they were too hot in summer and if you had the misfortune to share a bed, you usually ended up coverless. Coleridge preferred carrying his blanket about with him 'like a wild Indian, than submit to this abominable custom.'[48] Britons

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also recoiled with horror when confronted by the disgusting continental habit of social kissing. Howls of indignation echo down the centuries from unfortunate victims whose worldly goods were sealed or confiscated by the customs officers of the Reich.

By the late 1960s, the British had submitted to the duvet. In subsequent decades, cheek-kissing gained ground on the handshake even if its precise etiquette remained hazy. As for frontiers, all evaporated in the 1990s: empty lookout posts guarding traces of no-man's land and rows of utilitarian huts succumbed to creeping dereliction and demolition. The European Union abandoned internal borders and customs barriers, ironing out many differences between member states (although as is the way with European history, some have subsequently returned). The older Europe was more variegated, still rooted in past traditions, before increasing affluence and mass tourism smoothed cracks and painted over crumbling facades. As they recovered haltingly from the Second World War, towns and cities retained a gritty faded atmosphere which felt more connected to their chequered history. A cycle of rise and decline, destruction and recovery was and is endemic in northern Europe, scarred by wars for centuries. People were profoundly shocked by Tilly's sack of Magdeburg, the French destruction of Heidelberg and by Frederick II's bombardment of Dresden long before the devastation wrought in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Grass grew between the paving of blockaded Bruges and Antwerp in the eighteenth century, just as it did between the expansion joints of GDR Autobahnen in the 1960s, both for lack of commercial traffic.

Finding unexpected survivals of sights encountered by the young travellers was a bonus. Few Viennese are aware that the spire of their cathedral, St Stephen's, was once surmounted by a brass star and crescent. Edward Browne saw them *in situ* in December 1668, having been placed there, he learnt, during the siege of Vienna in 1529 on the demand of Suleiman the Magnificent, in exchange for sparing the church from attack. Removed after the unsuccessful Ottoman siege of the city in 1683, I came across their remains displayed on the walls of a staircase in the Wien Museum. **(fig.1)** In Ptuj, northern Slovenia, I tried to locate Schloss Turnisch/Turnišče, a Palladian villa where, in 1736, the Reverends Milles and Pococke had enjoyed the hospitality of its owner. From the description of its H-shaped plan, the local museum curators were able to use Google Earth to track the villa down. It was now part of an agricultural college and although outwardly recognisable, the interior had been gutted relatively recently in a fire. **(fig.2)** Such small discoveries brought me closer to the travellers I was following despite the intervening centuries, and I hope the

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FIGURE 1. Star and crescent from the spire of St. Stephen's Cathedral, Vienna, 1529–1685, Wien Museum

FIGURE 2. Schloss Turnisch/Turnišče, near Ptuj

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photographs I took along the way, together with contemporary images, add another dimension to the text.

Yet it would be a mistake to bathe these letters and accounts in an aura of empathetic nostalgia. Some cities were once sparklingly 'modern' for British travellers: Amsterdam, which vastly expanded in the century after 1585; Augsburg, having undergone an intensive programme of urban renewal around 1600 to lure prestigious Imperial Diets; Mannheim, rebuilt in the early eighteenth century after being flattened by Imperial and French troops; Berlin, massively enlarged by the kings in Prussia, Frederick I, Frederick William I, and Frederick II; St Petersburg, founded by Peter I in 1703 and by the late eighteenth century considered the most beautiful city in Europe; Dresden and Warsaw, enhanced as capitals with magnificent residences during the reigns of the Saxon kings of Poland, Augustus II and III; Munich, transformed by Ludwig I in the early nineteenth century.

Concepts of modernity not only involve programmes of urban development and renewal, but the rise of new centres of power, expanding opportunities for fashionable social life, the growth of economic and financial markets, new businesses and industries, and university departments and curricula. British travellers who were eager to experience them did not start out confident of the superiority of their home country—rather the reverse. On the fringes of the Continent and already reliant on the exploitation of colonies but with plenty of cash to dispense to potential allies, Britain was the wild card in European power play. Having executed one anointed king and chased out another, it was viewed with caution, if not distrust, by many of its neighbours. Until the second half of the eighteenth century it was not famed for its ingenuity and inventiveness. It lacked grand public buildings and imported its luxury products. Its artistic and musical achievements, where they existed at all, were largely created by foreigners. Encountering the sources of innovation was novel for young British travellers, and the freshness of their reaction is expressed in their correspondence.

Did the young even stick to the itinerary decided for them *a priori*? On the contrary for the most part. There was always an element of serendipity. The protagonists of this book pursued ambitious trajectories, embarking on travels to gain knowledge of things which excited their curiosity and of men who inspired their destiny. They exploited the vagaries of the postal system to wander further than had originally been agreed, well aware that by the time they received permission to proceed or injunctions to return, they would have long departed from the last *poste restante*. This book follows them.

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