INTRODUCTION TO THE GRAND TOUR

“A man who has not been in Italy is always conscious of an inferiority, from his not having seen what it is expected a man should see.”
Samuel Johnson

The Grand Tour was ‘a phenomenon which shaped the creative and intellectual sensibilities of some of the eighteenth century’s greatest artists, writers and thinkers’. 1.

The Grand Tour influence
The Grand Tour, which attracted British travelers to the continent between c.1550 and 1850, was hugely influential in terms of Britain’s cultural, social, political, architectural, gastronomic, sartorial and artistic evolution. Among its many and far-reaching influences, it fueled the transformation of Britain’s finest historic houses and provided much of their contents, defined the syllabi of many English preparatory schools, and introduced the authoritative architectural language of neoclassicism to British governmental and institutional buildings.

The name
According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the first recorded use of the term was by Richard Lassels (c. 1603–1668), an expatriate Roman Catholic priest, in his book The Voyage of Italy, which was published posthumously in Paris in 1670 and then in London. (Anthony Wood reported that the book was "esteemed the best and surest Guide or Tutor for young men of his Time.” )
Types of traveler
Lassels's introduction listed four areas in which travel furnished "an accomplished, consummate Traveler": the intellectual, the social, the ethical (by the opportunity of drawing moral instruction from all the traveller saw), and the political.

The Travel
Originally, the Grand Tour was expected to last about three and a half years: six months of travelling and three years of living abroad, allowing gentlemen to absorb the cultures they were visiting and improve their language skills.

The Grand tourists
The Grand Tour was extremely exclusive and only undertaken by the very rich, mainly the sons of the aristocracy. This was because travel was both difficult and expensive. Travelers carried little money for fear of robbery. Instead, they took letters of credit from their London banks, which they then presented in major cities.

The importance of the Grand Tour
As E. P. Thompson stated, "ruling-class control in the 18th century was located primarily in a cultural hegemony, and only secondarily in an expression of economic or physical (military) power." 4.

The historian Edward Gibbon remarked that "According to the law of custom, and perhaps of reason, foreign travel completes the education of an English gentleman."

With John Locke's Essay Concerning Human Understanding (1690), it was argued, and widely accepted, that knowledge comes entirely from the external senses, that what one knows comes from the physical stimuli to which one has
been exposed. Thus, one could "use up" the environment, taking from it all it offers, requiring a change of place. Travel, therefore, was necessary for one to develop the mind and expand knowledge of the world.

1. Adam Matthew Digital website
2. The Grand Tour by Rachel Knowles 2013
3. From a journal entry dated 11 April 1776 in James Boswell’s Life of Samuel Johnson (1831), vol. 3.

**Women on the Grand Tour**

Although the Grand Tour was predominantly undertaken by gentlemen, a number of ladies also travelled abroad. The blue-stockings **Hester Piozzi** was particularly well-known for her travels in the 1770s and 1780s.

Women who were separated or divorced from their husbands often travelled abroad as they were more readily accepted on the continent. **Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire**, went into exile abroad after becoming pregnant with her lover’s child in the early 1790s, **whilst Caroline, Princess of Wales**, travelled abroad from 1814 to 1820.

A group of women including **Jane Parminter and her cousin Mary** undertook the Grand Tour in the 1780s. When they returned in 1795, they built the sixteen-sided house, A la Ronde, in Exmouth to remind them of their travels and display their mementoes including several Bartolozzi prints and a shell picture.
The letters written by sisters Mary and Ida Saxton of Canton, Ohio in 1869 while on a six-month tour offer insight into the Grand Tour tradition from an American perspective.[25]

Some Essays on the Grand Tour
Over the past two decades, Jeremy Black has become synonymous with the Grand Tour, with two of his most well-known publications being Italy and the Grand Tour and The British Abroad.(1) Ironically, it may well be due to his extensive research and publications on the subject that his essay is disappointingly slight. The essay is too broad and at the same time too brief to satisfy a potentially wide readership.
NB (Jeremy Black, Italy and the Grand Tour (London, 2003); The British Abroad (Stroud, 1992))

Rosemary Sweet's essay represents the most traditionally academic material on the site and yet, by virtue of its organisation by city, also the most accessible secondary account. Her account takes us from Florence to Rome and on to Naples and Venice. Although the focus is Italy, rather than a more geographically inclusive interpretation of the Tour, Sweet makes important connections between the political context of the Continent at large and the specific experiences of the individuals upon whose accounts historians rely. Furthermore, by focusing upon the cities as they were encountered by the tourists themselves, rather than the antique remains they examined so self-consciously, Sweet provides a fascinating analysis of 18th-century attitudes to urbanisation. Street plans, lighting, crime and hygiene are revealed as common preoccupations among travelers. By providing such a distinctive and original perspective, Sweet makes a valuable contribution to Grand Tour scholarship.

Essays digital resource:
“The Grand Tour” Marlborough, Adam Matthew Digital, 2009
Reviewer:
Dr Katy Layton-Jones Corpus Christi College, Cambridge
Quotation:
Dr Katy Layton-Jones, review of The Grand Tour, (review no. 839)
http://www.history.ac.uk/reviews/review/839