

## Towards a History of Children and Heritage: Young People, Heritage Education and the Eighteenth-Century 'Grand Tour'

I

In modern Britain, as in much of the world, children and young people have become central to what we now call the “heritage sector”. Whether at museums and galleries, castles, places of worship or stately homes, gardens, landscapes or prehistoric sites, children will be a familiar sight. Many of these sites will make special provision for children, offering dedicated recreational and education activities and facilities, catering and retail opportunities. The marketing of heritage sites very often foregrounds children: on posters, brochures and handbooks, advertisements, publicity campaigns and social media posts. It is not too much of a stretch to say that children have become fundamental to the semiotics of heritage in twenty-first-century Britain. Publicity material depicting a family exploring a historic site, or children playing in an unspoilt landscape, deliberately signals openness to young people, but also implicitly signs what “heritage”, as an entire project, is for. Heritage (as opposed to history) is about the preservation of the past so that it can be transmitted to the future. Children literally, but also symbolically, represent those future generations.

It is perhaps surprising, then, to find that this close link between children and heritage is so recent. The idea that the physical remains of the past should be preserved for future generations can be traced at least to the mid nineteenth century, being most influentially articulated by John Ruskin. Historic buildings, “are not ours”, he wrote in *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, but “belong partly to those who built them, and partly to all generations of mankind who are to follow” (1849, 181). But these future generation were an

abstract and Ruskin, for all his educational progressivism, he formed no plan of heritage education for children, nor did he advocate their access. Indeed, like many others, he complained about their disruptive presence. “If I go to the Crystal Palace to make a note on the cast of a statue,” he wrote in 1867, “it is a considerable nuisance to me to have a party of children chasing each other around it”, and he doubted whether the children themselves could derive any pleasure or benefit from being there (Ruskin 1905, 218). It was Ruskin’s followers, however, who began to consider how the physical remains of the past could be presented specifically for children. The Manchester Art Museum, opened by Thomas Horsfall in 1877 with the aim of reaching working-class audiences, was perhaps the first heritage venue in Britain to have a coherent programme for school visits, and appointed staff especially to work with children in 1902. Over 77,000 school children visited in 1895-6 (Harrison 1985, 137). Others followed, such as the Victoria and Albert Museum which opened a small room in 1915 to cater for children during the school holidays (*Times* 1915, 5). School trips, and School Journeys (taking urban children into the countryside for short residential stays), had become an established part of curricula by the First World War, although the principle that children would benefit from such engagements was far from established. E. R. Lankester, Director of the Natural History Museum, for example, believed “that the instruction and interest offered by the collections in museums is by no means of a nature specially fitted for children’s minds”, adding “I doubt very much whether children should be taken to any museum, except as a treat, and then only for a very short visit” (Hooper-Greenhill 1991, 28). Attitudes at the Office of Works (forerunner of state-owned heritage agencies including English Heritage) and the National Trust (founded in 1895) were not dissimilar. Children were seen as more likely to damage rather than enjoy historic sites, and certainly there was no thought of introducing specific activities or facilities that would

induce them to visit until as late as the 1970s. The National Trust's first full-time education officer was appointed in 1978. By 1983 its handbook listed eight (of 290) properties with special provision for children, ranging from a collection of dolls' houses to one or two adventure playgrounds (National Trust 1983). There was clearly still a long way to go before the Trust's celebrated "50 Things to do Before You're 11¾" campaign, running from 2012, and the 2017 rebranding of Sudbury Hall, Derbyshire as "The Children's Country House", "created with and for children to spark a lifelong interest in heritage" (National Trust, n.d.)

This history of children's engagement with heritage is the subject of my ongoing research. What has become obvious are problems with evidence. While certain museums and galleries, government bodies such as the Office of Works, and large organisations like the National Trust have archives that can be trawled for policy decisions, building programmes, visitor numbers, market segmentation data and so on, many heritage sites have no such records. Moreover, informal visiting has always gone almost entirely undocumented. There is oblique evidence, for example, that children were among those who visited country houses in the nineteenth century, as when in 1869 the Midland Railway advertised "Cheap Excursion Tickets" to the Earl of Shrewsbury's country house at Alton Towers, setting fares (including admission to the gardens) at half-price for under-twelves, and free for under-threes. But record do not survive of how many young people took up such offers. Similarly, there may have been no special provision for children at Stonehenge but it would be ludicrous to suppose that no young people visited, still less to assume that many of them did not find their visit absorbing and enjoyable. Many of the photographs collected for English Heritage's 2019 exhibition *Your Stonehenge* feature children, often in family groups, some from as early as the 1860s (*Current Archaeology*, 2021). And according to an angry letter to the press signed "Archaeologist" the stones were "overrun by swarms of

school-children, who were scribbling on one of the wonderful pillars, making a slide down another, endeavouring to cut their names on a third: besides getting in the way of those who had come to investigate, and deafening them by their noise" (*Standard* 1893). What was true at Stonehenge was doubtless the case at thousands of other sites, indoors and outside, urban and rural. Whether individually, in groups or with families, young people were visiting heritage sites in numbers irrespective of whether they were encouraged to do so or not.

The further back we go, the more scattered, indefinite and unrepresentative the evidence becomes. Visitor books occasionally exist, as for Bamburgh Castle in the early nineteenth century in which we can read of visits from "Mr and Mrs and 2 Masters Davison" or "Mr. Fletcher from Edinburgh, Mrs. Fletcher and a son and three daughters" ("Visitor book for Bamburgh Castle."). Otherwise, we are reliant largely on diaries and journals, letters and memoirs. We know, for example, that Samuel Pepys took his young cousins Betty and Bab to Westminster Abbey on 23 February 1668, showed them the tombs, and prevailed on an attendant to open the coffin of Queen Katherine of Valois, whose partially decayed mouth he kissed (Pepys 1971). But we do not know how many children made similar visits, nor whether less well-connected visitors could gain similar access, let alone what young visitors made of their encounters. Memoirs can seem more compelling, like those of Richard Warner, born in 1763, who wrote that, as a boy, the location of his school in "the ancient scriptorium of the monks" at Christchurch, Hampshire, and the games he played in the abbey's cemetery ensured a youthful interest in "ecclesiastical remains, castellated ruins, and ancient barrows" (Warner 1830, 1:84-85). But, as Rosemary Sweet has pointed out, "the confession of a consuming personal fascination with the past, often originating in a pivotal childhood experience" is one of the "formulaic utterances to which antiquaries resorted"

(Sweet 2004, 32), and we need to remember that those who leave retrospective memoirs of youthful antiquarian pursuits are unlikely to be representative, or even reliable.

The rest of this article offers some further reflections on evidence and methodology in relation to what was probably the best known mode of encounter the material remains of the past in pre-modern Europe: the Grand Tour. As undertaken by upper-class Britons, the Tour lasted anything from a few months to several years, typically following a route through France and perhaps Switzerland to Italy – customarily taking in Venice, Florence, Rome and Naples as locations of the most celebrated classical and renaissance sites – before return through Germany and the Low Counties. The Tour developed a reputation for fostering debauchery as much as artistic and archaeological appreciation, particularly among young men who had just come of age at 21. When taken by younger people though, it was often understood as part of a strategy of informal education (Dent 1975, 172). But building up a full picture of how many children were on the Grand Tour, who they were, why they Toured and whether the act of Touring in some way nullified their status as children, is difficult. Letters, diaries, memoirs, portraits and fictionalised depictions all exist, but can we use them to definitively place children and adolescents more centrally in histories of the Grand Tour?

## II

Older historiography of the Grand Tour presents the typical Tourist as an elite, ephebic male, perhaps just out of university, being led around Europe by a tutor, or “bear-leader”. Recent work has shown this characterisation to be far too limited, emphasising the Tour’s educational dimension, its role in constructing professional identity and social networks, that many of those who took the Tour were women, and that itineraries were much more

varied than has generally been recognised (Ceserani et al. 2017; Cohen 1992; Dolan 2001; Sweet 2012; Sweet, Verhoeven and Goldsmith 2017). Existing scholarship remains vague, however, on the question of Tourists' age. Most accounts assume that the majority of Tours were taken shortly before or after the traveller came of age, as a kind of rite of passage. Writing in 1696, John Locke noted that travel "is commonly thought to finish the Work" of education, "and compleat the Gentleman", and that parents would demand the traveller "must be back again by One and twenty, to marry, and propagate" (Locke 1705, 382 and 388). Even the recent historians most sensitive to the nuances of Tour still theorise it principally as "the apex of one's education" (Verhoeven 2009, 116) and "a formative coming-of-age ritual" for the patrician class (Goldsmith 2017, 13). In many cases it was. But the age range of those undertaking the Tour was much wider.

The great challenge is acquiring quantitative data on those who undertook the Grand Tour. Collecting representative statistics is not practicably possible (see Reilly 2019; Verhoeven 2009, 16-19). No full prosopography of Tourists exists, the closest we have being the Brinsley Ford Archive, one person's assemblage of information about British and Irish travellers temporarily resident in Italy 1700-1800. But even though now assembled into a dictionary by John Ingamells, and available in partially searchable digital form, the archive resists methodical analysis. Its information is patchy, relying on only a limited range of sources, and it is generally organized around adult male individuals (Ingamells 1997, now online in resource published by Adam Matthew Digital 2009; for the history and limitations of this data see Kelly 2017). Giovanna Ceserani has sought to transform the Brinsley Ford archive into a functioning database but acknowledges the difficulty of full demographic analysis. Almost always, she notes, the record of a husband/father occludes his companions. Nevertheless, Ceserani calculates that over 5% of Ingamells' *Dictionary's* entries, "while

appearing under the heading of a single traveller's name, at closer reading contain larger family groups" (Anderson et al. 2017, 261). Michael Heafford's careful analysis of nineteenth-century Genevan Passport Registers points in the same direction. Of those British travellers whose ages were inscribed when they showed their passports in 1832 (the earliest date for which registers exist), 7.3% were under twenty – a substantial underestimate, Heafford insists, because children in family groups were unrecorded (2006, 35). Likewise, Richard Bates' examination of mid eighteenth-century official "Lists" of visitors to Spa notes the high incidence of children travelling with their families (2007), and Gerrit Verhoeven's analysis of early modern Dutch and Flemish manuscript travel journals shows that "minors, between ten and 18 years old, were travelling alongside their elders with increasing frequency", at least on shorter summer pleasure trips in the Low Countries (2017, 186-187).

"Unfortunately," Verhoeven notes, "there are no comparable figures for England" (2017, 187). Regrettably then, any assessment of British children on the Tour necessarily falls back on what Ceserani calls "the random sources that travellers left behind", typically letters, diaries, memoirs and graphic representations (Anderson et al. 2017, 256). It is worth noting that, far from exaggerating the incidence of young people on the Tour, letters and diaries produced by children are probably less often preserved than others, let alone published. A second point to note is the always intractable problem of how we define childhood. Using age alone would be a mistake. The point at which childhood ended and adulthood began was always blurred and, as is well known, conceptualisations of childhood changed radically over the course of the period in which the Tour flourished, and were affected by region, gender, religion and class. If an elite male could enter the Royal Navy at eleven or begin attendance at university at only sixteen or seventeen (younger in Scotland), he might well be

regarded as an adult if he toured in his mid-teens. When in 1661 John Wilmot, second earl of Rochester, embarked on the Tour (with a governor, physician, herbalist and two servants) he was only fourteen, but he had already been admitted to Oxford University, received his MA, entered into an intense drinking culture, been awarded a personal pension of £500 a year by the king, and written much-lauded verse in English and Latin (Larman 2014, 30-37). Other aristocratic Tourists of similar ages took diplomatic roles, reported their sexual encounters, and made substantial purchases (Turner 1994, 95). But then there is countervailing evidence that travellers in their teens, both male and female, could be considered as children, being required to continue formal education, or being prevented from participating in certain activities.

In fact, teenage Tourists seem generally to have been understood to be in a liminal state between childhood and adulthood. We see this clearly in Richard Lassels' *The Voyage of Italy*, first published in 1670, based on his own experiences as a tutor, and for many years the most influential English manual for the Grand Tour. While the main text takes the form of a guidebook, the "Preface to the Reader concerning travelling" is addressed to parents, advocating the Tour for their sons. The fittest age for them to embark, Lassels writes, is "fifteen or sixteen", though he expects them to be away until twenty or twenty-one. But although travelling without their families and nominally in command, he recommends that these young men be kept in entire subordination to a well-chosen "Governour" acting in *loco parentis*. The parent "must resign over unto him his full Authority, and command his Son to obey him", Lassels writes. It should be the Governor who controls expenditure. As Lassels presents them, these late-teenage travellers are in some ways adults: flocking to Venice on account of its courtesans, making expensive purchases, and talking "of nothing but duels, seconds, and eclairsissements" (Lassels 1670, 1:xxiv, xviii, xxi-ii). But in other ways



they are children, not to be allowed autonomy. There was a recognition, in short, that young male Tourists were simultaneously adults and children – an ambiguous duality captured in Thomas Rowlandson’s 1776 drawing of “The bear and the bear leader, passing the Hotel d’Angleterre”, in which a juvenile Tourist, just off the boat at Calais, is simultaneously extolled as sovereign agent and looked down upon (literally, and in their condescension) by the adults.<sup>1</sup> It reminds us that while it would be anachronistic for us to regard teenage Tourists as children, we should not use their superficially adult behaviours as a proxy for adulthood.

### III

The question of the proper age for Tourists was itself the subject of vigorous debate during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries across Europe. Some urged an early Tour. “I would have Gentlemen young when they begin to Travel abroad”, wrote Jean Gailhard in 1678. He meant “13 or 14”, citing boys’ greater malleability, tractability and capacity for learning foreign languages (1678, 18-20). Locke shared these views, urging that young men in “that boyling boisterous part of Life” at fourteen or sixteen were incapable of benefitting from travel since “they think themselves, too much Men to be governed by others, and yet have not Prudence and Experience enough to govern themselves”. He advised travel either earlier (“from Seven to Fourteen or Sixteen”) or later in life (1705, 383). In the opposing camp were

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<sup>1</sup> The drawing is online at <https://www.christies.com/en/lot/lot-6216547>. Caricatures might also depict the figure being led by the ‘bear-leader’ as an actual bear, but clad in human clothing and meek and childlike rather than fearsome, e.g. Ghezzi n.d.

those who criticised too youthful travellers, warning that boys should not be sent to travel “till they have grown to a good competency of discretion” (Campbell 1661, 58). Increasingly, it was this latter view that prevailed. A 1712 essay in *The Spectator* scoffed at “lads” taken straight from “Grammar and Taw [marbles]” and sent “crying and snivelling into Foreign Countries”, where they would spend their time “as Children do at Puppet-Shows, and with much the same Advantage, in staring and gaping at an amazing Variety of Strange Things” (Steele, writing as “Philip Homebread”, April 28, 1712, 5:272). By 1784, John Andrews was emphatic, the first sentence of his *Letters to a Young Gentleman, on his setting out for France*, asserting that “Until we are five-and-twenty, little or no benefit results to the far greater part of those who make what is called the grand tour” (1784, 1).

The limits of the evidence make it impossible to calculate whether, in accordance with this shift in the advice, average ages of youthful travellers increased over the course of the long eighteenth century. What we can say is that, at the beginning of the period, it was not uncommon for boys from the social elite to set out on their own tours in their mid teens, and for some it was earlier still. Robert Boyle, for example, son of the first earl of Cork, was eleven when he set out with his slightly older brother in 1639 (returning 1644). James Boevey, son of a London financier, was fourteen when he set out in 1636, as was John Wilmot in 1661. Indeed, the higher one’s social standing, the more likely one was to take an early Tour. Charles FitzRoy was the illegitimate grandson of Charles II. He began his career as a courtier at fourteen and then promptly set out on his Tour. By the second half of the eighteenth century, it does seem that such early tours were exceptional. In 1763, when approaching fourteen, Charles James Fox was taken from school by his father to Paris where he was given money to gamble and encouraged to lose his virginity. Earlier in the century

this might have been the start of his Tour, but in fact he returned to Eton, proceeding to university at sixteen and embarking on his Tour at seventeen (Russell 1859, 1:4).

What evidence should we use to assess the “childishness” of these Tourists? One possible indication is given from their portraits. Among the earliest “Grand Tour” portraits of English sitters are separate paintings of John and William Blathwayt painted by Edward Gouge while they were in Rome in 1707 (Fig.1a-b). When they set out in January 1705 the brothers were fourteen and sixteen. In their portraits, they look mature young men. We are fortunate in this case, however, to have a rich cache of letters and reports made by Monsieur De Blainville, the tutor who accompanied them first on a tour around the north of England in 1703 (when they were thirteen and fifteen) and then around Europe. The correspondence tells a different story to the portraits, demonstrating that, in a sense, the boys were never out of their father’s sight. William Blathwayt Snr. instructed De Blainville to write frequently with accounts of his sons’ progress, and chastised him when he did not. Blathwayt’s network of European connections acted as hosts, sending reports home, in which they clearly positioned Blathwayt’s sons as dependents, not self-governing agents. Their travels will “turn them into men”, wrote the Marquis d’Arzelliers from Geneva in 1706, but describes them as at present “good children” who “accept rebuke very well indeed.” De Blainville refers to them as “the Gentlemen your Children” and reports them to be “light and agile, and growing up in such a manner that it is a Pleasure to behold them.” He communicates to their father over their heads, and it is clear that it is Blathwayt Snr. who, even though far distant, directs their occupations, activities and destinations. Even well into their European Tour De Blainville was giving them small presents, and regular pocket money (Hardwick 1985, 70, 65, 53, 58, 65, 75, 64 and 144).

Although old enough to be at university or to serve in the military, and although depicted as adults in their portraits, the young Blathwayts were, in short, children. The Grand Tour is often described as a “finishing school”, but their days were filled with much more rudimentary instruction. Their own letters exhibit orthographical and grammatical naivety and De Blainville was obliged to provide lessons in writing and arithmetic, as well as “those things which appertain to Young Gentlemen” such as Italian, riding, fencing, dancing and carving meat (Hardwick 1985, 62-3, 55-8, 43 and 145). Notably, the material remains of the past were central too. Most of De Blainville’s letters list the buildings, galleries and sites they visited. “We have been assiduous in our hours of leisure, in visiting the Antiquities”, De Blainville wrote; they visited castles, fortifications, churches, abbeys, cathedral treasuries, a synagogue, a Jewish baths, palaces, country houses, orangeries, hunting lodges, guildhalls and noteworthy manuscripts, sometimes taking a detour from their route to do so. De Blainville’s detailed accounts show the small sums paid in each town for viewing the various “curiosities”. In Rome, they hired the “finest” expert guide for several days. It was he who led the Tourists into the Catacombs, where “We have caused some Tombs to be opened where we have found some remains of Bodies quite complete, which fell to dust as soon as we Touched them.” The boys were initially too timid to accompany De Blainville, and on his second visit, while the elder reluctantly joined him, the younger made it only thirty steps before retreating to the surface (Hardwick 1985, 94, 98, 96. 100-101).

The Blathwayts’ itinerary was far from unusual. Whatever else it was, the Grand Tour was organised around a classicist and antiquarian ethos, with stopping points planned around encounters with the material remains of the past. What accounts such as the Blathwayts show is that this applied to young tourists too, with these encounters firmly built into their educational programme. Indeed, although we might imagine from their public

presentation that they were precocious individuals who toured in the same way as their elders, actually education – and specifically what could be called “heritage education” – was often their chief occupation and indeed one of the chief reasons they had been sent away.

#### IV

The children and adolescents mentioned so far – all male – undertook Tours that were arranged at least ostensibly only for their own benefit. Probably a much larger number – girls as well as boys – found themselves touring as part of a family. Even if they have received scant attention from historians, these children are familiar (if often unremarked) figures from their presence in Tour portraiture. Some are the chief sitters in their own portraits, as in Pompeo Batoni’s sumptuous 1761 portrait of Louisa Grenville, aged just three, painted in Rome as the family toured Italy before leaving for Turkey (Batoni 1761; see Bowron and Kerbert 2008). Others play marginal roles in large group portraits, such as Johan Zoffany’s famous *The Tribuna of the Uffizi* (1772-1777) in which the thirteen-year-old Richard Edgcumbe is depicted as a pale boy fascinatedly watching an older Englishman sketching. More common are “conversation pieces” showing families in the midst of their travels. The children here are far from being mere “staffage” (minor figures in a painting, often used to give an indication of scale). Rather they were fundamental to the design, and their inclusion was clearly intended to exhibit familial affection and what, by the later eighteenth century, had become a fashionable commitment to good parenting. What was being commemorated in these commissions was not the simply the sitters’ presence in, say, Rome or Naples, but an enlightened decision to travel *en famille*.

Typically the group sits inside an elegant room with a view behind them that reveals their location. Good examples include Franciszek Smuglewicz' family portrait of the aristocratic collector Aubrey Beauclerk and his wife, in which they are joined by two young daughters and a son, forming a diagonal that leads the eye from the bottom right of the canvas out over a balustrade and up to Castel Gandolfo, near Rome (Smuglewicz n.d.; see Russell 1978; for a comparable example see French 2009, 142-143). In 1779 Beauclerk financed an excavation at Centocelle, near Rome, the success of which he celebrated by commissioning another portrait from Smuglewicz, this time with the same sitters actually on site surrounded by identifiable pieces of statuary from the dig (fig.2: see Bignamini and Hornsby 2010, 236-237). The son, although then about fourteen might pass for a typical gentleman on Tour, but his sisters, Catherine, then about ten, and Caroline, about four, play no less prominent roles in the picture, gazing at a Roman bust lying on the ground before them and thus the only sitters seeming to engage with the antiquities (other than as something to sit on). Even more striking is Hugh Douglas Hamilton's portrait of Frederick Hervey, fourth Earl of Bristol and bishop of Derry, with his grand-daughter, Lady Caroline Crichton, later Lady Wharnccliffe (ca. 1790) (fig.3). The setting is the newly designed English Garden in the Villa Borghese in Rome. Lady Caroline, aged around eleven, is presented as in almost every way the opposite of her grandfather. She is dressed in white with a pink sash to counterpoint his solemn, black vestments. She is young and full of movement; he is old and reposed, leaning against a massive oak tree. He leans to his left; she to her right, with one hand placed on a bas-relief figure of Spring on a large classical altar. But her outstretched other arm bridges the gap between them, indicating her grandfather as the source of her appreciation of the antiquity and beauty of what she has encountered in Rome, her close engagement with what she has seen denoted by the portfolio of drawings at her feet. It is a

picture designed to present a particular ideal of the Grand Tour as something shareable not solitary, bequeathable not personal, an educational rather than purely pleasurable activity that binds families together rather than a rite of passage designed to separate one generation from another.

Again, the absence of a reliable data set makes it impossible to determine exactly how many families with children undertook the Tour, but it was clearly a relatively common occurrence. Thomas Arundel, who helped to invent the Grand Tour in the early seventeenth century, travelled with his wife and children (they were painted as a family by Tintoretto in Venice) (Chaney and Wilks 2014, 72 and 183). A century later, Thomas Fermor, first Earl of Pomfret, and his wife, the writer and diarist Henrietta-Louise, were not untypical when they left for the Continent in 1739 with their two eldest daughters, Sophia, aged eighteen and Charlotte, fourteen. After several lengthy sojourns they reached Florence, where they rented a large villa before making an unhurried return in 1741. During their three years away, the earl and countess were separated from four other daughters and three sons left at home (although the oldest son joined them at the end of 1740), but diaries and letters show that the children they did take were far from being merely part of their parents' baggage. The countess of Pomfret was very much involved in her daughters' education while in Florence (Shefrin 2003, 30), and Horace Walpole, who met the then fifteen-year-old Charlotte there admired her fluent Tuscan and observed that Florentines called her "the brightest foreigner" in the city (Walpole 1937-1983, 37: 69 and 30: 15).

There were various motivations for family touring, and the rationales given in individual accounts show a combination of pull and push factors. Some families seem to have toured principally for pleasure. Others for reasons of ill-health, when a child or parent required a change of climate (as with the earl of Pomfret). The economy of living abroad

could be an inducement (Pomfret again). Others took their families abroad to flee debts or unhappy marriages. For some, questions of religion prompted family travel, as when the Catholic John Giffard took his children to France and Italy in the 1780s as a result of disagreements with his Protestant mother-in-law concerning the upbringing of his children (Ingamells 1997, 399-40). In many cases, the purpose of these family Tours was explicitly educational. In 1765, for example, Sir Thomas Worsley removed his fourteen-year-old son Richard from Winchester College after only a year and took him and his seven-year-old sister through France and Switzerland to Italy (Worsley MSS 44). It was in part an economy drive, but also a desire to show them the art, architecture and antiquities of Europe. Edward Gibbon, who met the family *en route* to Naples, where they stopped for two years, was sceptical, judging the city “in point of expence and education for his children, the very last place in Italy I should have advised” (Gibbon 1956, 1: 196). But the pedagogical opportunities were clear: for example Richard was taken to explore the recently excavated towns of Pompeii and Herculaneum and “walk on the coolest parts of the lava” at Vesuvius (Rubenhold 2009, 6-7). The line between a peripatetic “Tour” and more settled relocation is blurred. A Kent rector was “anxious to procure ... masters, not to be obtained in England, except at an expence which his income would not bear”, his son recalled in his memoirs. Thus, the father took Taylor, five in 1780, and his mostly younger siblings, on a slow educational circuit: Brussels for two years, Heidelberg for one, and Karlsruhe for five. A more conventional Tour followed in 1789-92, via the Rhineland and Tyrol to Italy, and back through Switzerland, spending anything from a week to eight months in each city (Taylor 1913, 2-16 and 5).

Whereas educational strategies for elite boys became increasingly formal so that Touring as a pedagogical practice declined, some later eighteenth-century educational



theorists began to argue for the educational benefits of the process of travelling itself, if conducted as a family. In Stéphanie-Félicité de Genlis' immensely popular *Adelaide and Theodore, or Letters on Education*, published in English in 1783 (a year after its first appearance in France) the eponymous pupils begin on a two year Tour through Italy when about twelve and eleven respectively. The Baronne d'Almane, presented as a paragon of educational practice, acknowledges to her correspondent that "You will doubtless say that my children are very young to travel", but argues that gaining a "complete knowledge" of Roman history "whilst they amuse themselves in admiring the monuments and ruins of Roman grandeur" will be ample compensation. Moreover,

my son, conducted by a father, whose tenderness can only be equalled by his knowledge, will learn to write a good journal, and insert nothing frivolous; in a word, reap all the fruits of travelling. I shall bring back *Adelaide* at fourteen, an excellent musician, an adept in drawing, talking and singing like a native Italian; and intirely divested of all those little feminine delicacies, which nothing but travelling can radically cure. She will neither fear the sea, nor bad roads; sleep as well in an alehouse, as in her own apartment. She will learn to be contented with a bad supper, and to do without a thousand things she now looks on as absolutely necessary.

(Genlis 1783, 2: 111-112)

The Baronne later describes their mode of travel. A four-hour pause in their journeying every day to "give our children various lessons", and their time in their carriage also made useful by instructive conversation, reading, story-telling, "reflections on verses" and talking "alternately English, Italian, French" (Genlis 1783, 2: 163).

As Gábor Gelléri has recently shown, French theorists had for some time been struggling to reimagine an "Enlightenment-compatible" Grand Tour, largely failing because of

a distrust of the Tour's elitism and its propensity to corrupt (2020, 45-54). Genlis reframed the debate by imaging a new kind of Tour that could be undertaken by a family. It was a remodelling of the Tour so that it aligned with good pedagogical practice as it was being developed in the late eighteenth century: direct supervision by parents rather than outsourcing education to tutors or schools; a Rousseauvian instilling of physical and psychological fortitude in children; and education "by circumstances, instead of wasting time ... in formal lessons", as Mary Wollstonecraft put it in 1789, which was embodied in the Tour's promise of direct contact with the sites, arts, languages and ideas (Wollstonecraft 1989, 7:142-43). As the political economist David Ricardo put it, watching his two daughters, Mary, seventeen, and Birtha, twelve, on their family Tour in 1822: "I am more than ever anxious for young people to Travel, it must enlarge their ideas — and puts off the contracted selfish feelings which we all of us are too apt to indulge" (1955, 10: 209-210). The family Tour was, in short, travel reimagined for a late Enlightenment society concerned with rational education, moral conduct, and a tolerant egalitarianism born out of broadened horizons. It was also a model of education that had encounters with "heritage" at its heart, and can be seen as a forerunner of modern practices that value heritage sites equally for the familial and educational opportunities they offer.

Of course this kind of educative, moral family touring was often an ideal more than a reality. For one thing, school-age sons in aristocratic families typically remained behind in Britain while their parents toured, meaning that most children touring as part of family groups were either girls, or very young boys. When, for example, Henrietta countess of Bessborough (known as Harriet) and her husband toured from 1791 only their daughter Caroline embarked with them, aged six, while (to their mother's regret at having had "to quit poor England & come & wander over hills & mountains far from my dear dear children

for so long”) John, ten, and Frederick, eight, remained at Harrow, and William (known as Willy), four, was left in the care of Harriet’s father-in-law (Bessborough 1940, 75). The letters of some touring parents show that they regarded their children as encumbrances. They travelled separately from them or left them behind, for instance at an inn with servants while they set out an excursion, or even for days, weeks or months (e.g. Holland 1908, 1:55-56 and 113). Others put children’s needs to the fore. In August 1793, the earl of Bessborough, having returned briefly to England on the death of his father, journeyed out to meet his wife Harriet in Naples with their youngest son, just turned six. “I shall come rather slow owing to my companion, dear Willy, who must not be tired”, he wrote. “[H]e is always in bed by ½ past 8, so you need be under no concern about him”, and “washes ... every morning as you desired” (Bessborough 1940, 87). He told his wife that he had made his son “Governor” on the journey, lamenting “it is a very arbitrary Government” and complaining particularly that he had been ordered to read aloud three children’s books in the chaise (“being hoarse or choaked with dust is not admitted as an excuse, & having read them thro’ several times is no reason why they should not be read over again”) and that mealtimes were at Willy’s convenience (“I dine with him between 1 & 2, & then drink tea when he sups, & have my supper after he is in bed”) (Bessborough 1940, 100-104). Indeed, families usually toured differently from parties of adults only. Genlis’ Baronne had parents, friends and children all in a “great coach” journeying at a leisurely pace between towns (with servants in a second carriage behind) (Genlis 1783, 2: 163). Probably more realistic was Herbert Taylor’s memory of “travelling by vetturino” (an Italian four-wheeled carriage let out for hire) “which is the cheapest, and for a large family without a courier, the most convenient” way to travel, but was “slow, subject occasionally to bad accommodation, and not agreeable” (Taylor 1913, 4, 9 and 12).

Children's own experiences of family touring remain difficult to access. Willy's letters to his older brothers at school might seem a little too readily to conform to the authorised protocols of Tour reportage, but nevertheless do indicate that the educative potential of site visits was being fulfilled:

Brothers, I have seen an irruption on Mount Vesuvius. I have not yet been up Mount Vesuvius though. ... I have been to Virgil's tomb, if you know any such person, he lived about 1800 years ago. We are at Naples. Virgil wrote poems. ... My mama is making a collection of lava, & I have a collection of curious things as well as my mama. ... My mama has got two vases. (Bessborough 1940, 100-104.)

His mother, Harriet Spencer, had as an eleven-year-old kept a diary of her Tour in 1772-73 which gives another rare record of what a family Tour looked like from a child's point of view. Again its record of the places she visited and of excursions to see "a great many pictures" in Brussels or "the collection of medals in the King's Library" at Versailles suggest that the journal was written in accordance with approved models. However, subtly different emphases can be detected. She focuses on the attentions paid to her family by European aristocrats, and seems most excited by the theatre, going hunting, new clothes, and any savage judicial punishments she sees or hears about. She reports that she receives presents of "bonbons", is asked about playthings, and sleeps when necessary on the floor at inns ("Papa says girls of our age should learn not to make a fuss but sleep anywhere"). At a ball she is allowed to stay up "till one hour past twelve" even though "mama remained till six next morning", whereas at the church of the Cordeliers in Toulouse only she (not her mother or older sister) is allowed into a vault full of ancient corpses because "the friars would not let any woman above twelve years". She often behaves and thinks like a child too, playing "blind-man's buff et la toilette des dames" and being scared of robbers, and writing that the

Duchess of Northumberland “is very fat and has a great beard almost like a man” while the Countess d’Egmont “is very famous for something but I don’t know what” (Bessborough 1940, 19-29). As with children and adolescents travelling without their families, it seems clear that they did not somehow cease to be children when they embarked on a family tour. Normal family structures were retained and these children still looked at the world through childish eyes. Their childishness was absorbed into the Tour and its antiquarian and artistic activities imperatives, not negated by it.

## V

Ultimately, it is impossible to know precisely how many children and young people took the Grand Tour, either as principals or as part of a family, but we can be certain that the Tour was very far from an adults-only activity. No statistical analysis is possible, but it seems highly likely that the lower age limit of those making the Tour on their own account increased from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries through the eighteenth and nineteenth. But the number of children and teenagers taking an active part in the family Tour seems to have increased. The result was that Grand Tour destinations would never have been devoid of the children of Britain’s social elite. Herbert Taylor’s reminiscences of his time in Germany and Italy, for instance, detail a succession of encounters with other children of his own age, also touring, and enough young people in Rome to play cricket in a “circus” specially constructed by Prince Borghese in his Gardens for them “to run and play” (Taylor 1913, 12).

And this is not to take into consideration all those children and young people who formed what has been called the “far larger penumbra” of the Tour: those who remained at

home in Britain but travelled vicariously (Sweet 2012, 289). “Are you travelling now? If you are I should like to know where you are”, wrote Frederick Ponsonby, then nine and at Harrow, to his mother, Lady Bessborough. Her letters to him and his brother exhibit exactly how non-travelling children still participated in the Tour, being fed educational snippets as well as family news, and receiving a heritage education by proxy. “I send you a little drawing of Vesuvius. It is now in irruption, but not quite so fiery as the drawing,” she wrote from Naples. “I send you two visiting tickets, one of a *gondola* what everybody goes in instead of a carriage”, she wrote from Venice, explaining “It is a boat with a little black cabin in the middle of it, that looks like a coffin.” “I sent you some account of Florence some time ago. I must now try to describe Pisa,” she wrote (oblivious to the any sibling jealousy she might have aroused by adding “but the children are making such a noise & riot all about me, that I scarcely know what I am saying”) (Bessborough 1940, 74, 105-6, 74).

Michèle Cohen has suggested that by the second half of the eighteenth century the Tour had come to be viewed by many as a corrupting experience (Cohen 1992, 252-255). Those who made this complaint had in view a stereotype of Tours undertaken by impressionable young men just out of school or university. Accounts of younger travellers, whether under the control of a tutor or their families, show that the Tour was often more educative and less dissipated. By the end of the eighteenth century, the family Tour was coming to be understood as offering an education that strengthened character, could overcome delicacy and self-absorption, and could give travellers a new awareness of their place and potential in the wider world – for girls as well as boys. Family Touring conformed more tidily with Enlightenment values and practices, and was a not insignificant part of the process of reimagining, even “subduing”, the Grand Tour: making it less decadent, less exclusively aristocratic and less anachronistic. It also forms an important chapter in the

history of children's engagement with the historic environment. Evidently the young people featuring in the diaries, letters, memoirs and portraits that have been discussed here were encouraged and expected to benefit from, and enjoy, their encounters with archaeological, artistic, cultural and natural heritage. If we focus attention on the young tourists who have often been omitted from histories of the Grand Tour, we can see the antecedents of the heritage education that was to become so much more manifest and pervasive in the twentieth century and today.

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