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ON THE GRAND TOUR IN 1771-1773
BY JEREMY BLACK

The Osborn Collection holds a large and recently growing number of accounts of the Grand Tour. In the eighteenth century the Grand Tour was not only a crucial rite of passage for many members of the élite but a means by which a common European culture and heritage were defined and disseminated. The Grand Tour is traditionally associated with the English, but an increase in tourism was in fact a general European development, as the many French, German, Polish, and Russian tourists attest.¹ An anonymous account dating from 1758 found at Osborn Shelves c 469 concentrates on the United Provinces but also includes descriptions of a tour in the Austrian Netherlands and the Rhineland. The journals of Sir Nathaniel Wraxall recount his travels in 1777-78 in Austria, Poland, Bohemia, and what is now Germany. The Osborn Files contain uncatalogued material from the Courtown papers, which describe the travels of Lord Stopford in 1783 and in particular his expenses for 1782-83.

Of particular interest is the correspondence of the Rev. Norton Nicholls (1750-1811), a valuable account of the experience of a well-educated English tourist. It is a telling account for a number of reasons. Nicholls, Rector of Blundeston Suffolk, was not at the apex of the social pyramid but nevertheless gained an entrée into Continental society. He was observant and intelligent, more so than most tourists. A recent graduate of Cambridge greatly influenced by Thomas Gray (who had himself gone to the Continent in 1739), Nicholls was a young man whose letters deserve attention. Two qualifications must however be made: although his letters to his mother describing his tour are largely complete, those of 29 August and 28 October are missing, presumably because of the post; secondly, Nicholls refers in his letters to a journal that he was also keeping, but this does not seem to have survived.

The first letter, brief and hurried, was sent from Paris on 27 June 1771. Nicholls wrote largely to let his mother know that he had arrived safely. He had taken the usual crossing, from Dover to Calais (on which Gray had become very sick in 1739), in only three hours, then continued his "journey . . . in company with a Mr. Motteux an English gentleman and his friend with whom I made my short

voyage." The alacrity with which tourists clubbed together was an obvious theme of the Grand Tour and a prominent one in the letters of Nicholls. It reflected the desire of the tourists for companionship and their limited linguistic abilities (which their practice of travelling together in turn exacerbated), and was a feature criticized by some commentators. Nicholls did not find the journey to Paris especially interesting: "The country between this place and Calais is chiefly open corn land like Cambridgeshire or Huntingdonshire." He reached Paris at noon on 26 June and was introduced by Motteux "to the family of Mr. Panchaud the banker where I dined, went afterwards to the French Tragedy, thence to the Tuilleries, thence to the Boulevards, thence to supper, afterwards to sleep of which having had little in the journey I stood much in need."² The prominent role played by bankers in the Grand Tour was due to the personal nature of financial arrangements and the ability of the bankers to provide important local introductions; Nicholls's visit to the "French Tragedy" reflects the greater importance accorded to the theater and the opera by eighteenth-century tourists than by their modern counterparts.

Nicholls spent little time in Paris and pressed on to Switzerland, of which there are relatively few accounts of this period although travel there was increasing. In 1770 one anonymous British traveller noted that "there were a good many English at Geneva"; in 1785 another wrote from Lausanne, "I suppose the English colony consists of about 80."³ Nicholls was in Berne by early September 1771 planning to visit the Grisons, Milan, Turin, Lyons, and Paris and to return home in December, but his ambitions were in fact extending, thanks in part to the other tourists with whom he was mixing. Francis, 10th Earl of Huntington, pressed Nicholls to join him on his Italian travels. It was not that the Earl was without company—he had "with him Sir Harry Heron who is his companion in his post chaise"—but like many others he clearly found Nicholls agreeable. Nicholls decided to go with the Earl to Turin and Milan, writing to his mother that with another £600 he "might safely undertake the voyage of a twelvemonth at least." He asked her to write to him at his banker in Milan. It was already clear that Italy was central to Nicholls's view of the Grand Tour: "If I live I shall make the voyage of Italy one day;—I shall now be 600 miles or more on the way with the advantage of such a companion."

By 17 September Nicholls was at Zurich: "Here I have all sorts of recommendations; and have passed three days of seeing cabinets of natural history, and with the learned people of the place such as they

are; – principally with Mr. Gesner the poet, author of the death of Abel of which you have read the translation, he is a man of genius and aimable; – I pass everywhere like current coin as the friend of poor Mr. Gray, his respected name procures me more civilities than I deserve. . . . It is a passport through all Europe.” He had been to “the Glacières,” a sight of increasing attention in the second half of the century as interest in natural phenomena grew, and was also enchanted with Zurich: “The situation of this place is delightful. My window commands the beautiful lake, whose banks gradually rising are adorned with vineyards, with trees, with scattered houses and churches, and villages all white; – behind mountains rise, range upon range, the last mixing their eternal snow with the clouds.”⁴

The response in England was somewhat different. Nicholls was greatly dependent on his uncles, one of whom responded with concern to the financial implications of Nicholls’s new ambitions: “Travelling, no doubt, is very entertaining and instructive; and almost a necessary accomplishment for persons of rank and adequate fortunes,” he wrote, but there was also a “certain and great expence.”⁵

Norton meanwhile was pressing on in Switzerland. After writing on 17 September from Zurich he met two other English tourists there, Messrs Drake and Maxwell: “We passed the lake of Zurich together, which for its size is as beautiful as that of Geneva the same sloping banks covered with vines intermixed with groves; with white villages, and churches, and overlooked by mountains covered with eternal snow and emulating in size and horror those of Savoy. The lake was calm and smooth as glass, the sun bright and not the least chill of autumn we did not arrive at our inn till the moon had drawn her line of trembling splendour cross the lake.”

Nicholls’s prose was recognizably different from that of tourists earlier in the century: in his account of how the three companions passed on to a pilgrimage church “in a frightful solitude” he commented on the magnificence of the treasury and the devotion of pilgrims, in contrast to tourists earlier in the century who emphasized their credulity: “A proof of the force with which that religion acts on the minds of men, as well as the long journeys undertaken by starving families who often I believe perish by famine on the road, by women and children; the lake was scattered over with boats of them singing their litanies as they passed. From hence we divided I towards Glaris they . . . to Berne . . . I went to Glaris capital of a democratical canton shut up among dreadful mountains. I had a letter to the Landaman or principal magistrate who told me all that could be told of his

government in a few hours. You may judge whether luxury has much to do here when I tell you that a bailiff or governor of a district kept the inn at which I lodged madame his lady cooked my supper and served it afterwards, and all the family kept me company to do me honor though we did not understand a syllable of each others language."

From Glaris, Nicholls pressed on to Chiavenna, travelling part of the way through "a most astonishing country of rocks," with a member of the Salis family, the most influential in the Grisons. He found a climate "quite changed" as well as vines and forests of ripe chestnuts, and purchased some stoneware pots, which he thought unknown at that time in England and free of the problems of contamination posed by copper utensils. The set cost half a guinea, though with transport to England the price came to four guineas.⁶ On 2 October Nicholls wrote to his mother from Chiavenna: "Today I am going into the Valtelline said to be a paradise with the Governor of that country Count de Salis — He was brought up at Eton. I shall stay with him two or three days and be at Milan about the 10th — everything is prepared for me there a lodging taken (not as for an Englishman but at the same price an Italian would pay) by the civility of a gentleman here. I have letters [of recommendation] more than I want."⁷

Nicholls's next letter describes his journey through the Valtelline and across Lake Como: "The first part of our journey was along the valley in which Chiavenna stands, part meadow, part spoiled by the ravages of the Liro which rushes along it, enclosed between very high mountains, till it opens to the lake which is called here the lake of Chiavenna but is part of the great lake of Como, we made a little voyage of 2 or three hours and landed just at the mouth of the Adda where the Valtelline spread itself into a considerable plain: this part of the lake is horrid without much beauty; frightful naked rocks, cut into precipices, and cleft asunder as if they were prepared for destruction from one side, the other is less savage, covered with forests of chestnut, intermixed with a few vineyards and only covered with rock . . . I stayed with Count de Salis at Sondrio (the place of the Governor's residence) . . . From thence I travelled hither in company with some Italian gentlemen to whom he had recommended me — 30 miles at least of the way was by water on the Lake of Como . . . The banks soon lose their savage aspect, the rocks are no longer so threatening but mountains equally high, covered partly with chestnuts, the towns that adjoin to the very brink of the water are better built than

those in Switzerland ennobled by palaces, and climbing the sides of the hills; – white churches everywhere, even on the summits – after 3 or 4 hours olive trees in abundance mix their pale sickly green with the lively tints of the chestnuts and walnuts, escaliers of lemons adorn the coast, the trees are large and the fruit fine, but they stand under frames ready to be covered in the winter. At Tremezzo about $\frac{1}{2}$ the voyage the lake opens into a magnificent theatre, the mountains are covered as usual with chestnuts, olives, and walnuts but mixed with vineyards, the whole coast on either side is spread out with palaces and villas belonging to the great families of Milan.”

In contrast, Como was “a town of no great consequence” while in Milan there appeared little to be seen. Nicholls added, “I should much rather pass the winter at Florence or at Rome where there is so much worth attention than here where I shall spend my money to little purpose.” Nicholls was well, his servant Thomas “very well satisfied to pursue his travels,” and the attempt by his Milanese banker to give him a poor rate of return was thwarted.⁸ He stayed far longer in Milan than he had expected. In part this was due to the frequent rain – he had “no idea” of putting himself “in an open post chaise (the only ones of this country) at present” – but he also found much to attract him: “In point of society I am better here than I shall probably be in any other town in Italy, received even with cordiality and friendship by count Firmian,⁹ with politeness at court, at all the conversazione or routs . . . men of letters to talk with when I please; – but after all this is not Italy, there are neither antiquities, statues, nor paintings . . . I pay 3 guineas a month for my lodging . . . Thomas costs me $\frac{1}{2}$ a guinea a week, a hired servant to go behind the coach to go with messages and to interpret etc costs me about a shilling a day, besides this there is a little weekly bill for flambeaux, wood for fire and candles . . . if I were really ill I am among friends who are as interested for my welfare as if they had known me these twenty years, and would nurse me like you.”¹⁰

A month later Nicholls was still at Milan, and his letter home includes an interesting observation on the different types of English tourists: “I am tired of dating from Milan, but necessity with Lord Huntingdon at her heels has kept me here . . . Count Firmian told me that he had called in the postilions that carry the mail between here and Florence and that they assured him that it was with great difficulty and descending from their horses that they had been able to pass the mountains on account of the snow . . . Lord Huntingdon travels for amusement I (notwithstanding the idle time I have passed

here) for instruction; he is limited only by his own inclination, I by a thousand circumstances, so it is likely that our plans should be as different and incompatible as they are in effect. He will stay here at least till the middle of March, perhaps return into Piedmont for part of the summer, and certainly not arrive at home till next winter (would that I had been there the beginning of last month! but it was impossible)."

Nicholls also assured his mother that he would take care at Vesuvius: "For Sicily I gave up all thoughts of it; — for my travelling alone it will only be by days journey from town to town for all of which I shall have letters. At Florence there are said to be 50 English."¹¹ Nicholls was clearly moving in the highest circles, "constantly invited to the private balls at court, treated with great civility by the Archduke and Archduchess, and admitted with Lord Huntingdon . . . to Count Firmian's private *conversazione*."¹² Being in Anglican orders was no bar: "I make no secret of my profession and do not find that the avowal of it is attended with the least inconvenience; I thought myself obliged to mention it to the Duchess before I accepted a letter of recommendation from her to the Princess Guistiniani her cousin at Rome. She asked me if I thought her such a fool (in fact she is very sensible) as to esteem me less on that account, she said she had a son in the church herself and should think it strange if he were ill received for that reason if he travelled into England."

Nicholls was ready to go. The weather was good, he had purchased a carriage for £25, and was amply provided with letters of recommendation. He offered an interesting perspective on the activities of his servant: Thomas had "found two companions" in Huntingdon's "two valets de chambre, they go to the opera together and are vastly pleased without understanding a syllable . . . Thomas is very anxious to hear of his friends . . . he has never heard since he left England."¹³

Nicholls left Milan on 23 February and reached Piacenza that day, but found nothing much to see there. The next day he arrived at Parma, where he saw the Corregios and "went to see a Capucin Friar here a Father Turco whom Count Firmian had desired me to see as a rarity, and indeed! he is one, he has none of the prejudices of his order nor of any other; he said a thousand lively things during the visit I paid him in his cell. amongst others assuring me that I should meet with very unprejudiced people at Rome, he said the Romans are like the sacristan of a church who when there are spectators bows and makes a genuflexion every time he passes before the image of the Virgin, or the altar, but when the doors are shut continues to sweep

and walks by a thousand times without showing any mark of respect. The streets (it being the end of the carnival) were full of masks all day and the theatre at night in a continual hubbub. The *Infant*¹⁴ Duke of Parma had dressed himself and three companions like bats and passing from box to box made a frightful screaming during the whole time of the opera."

On leaving Parma on 27 February, Nicholls dined at Modena, "the prettiest town I have seen, neatly, regularly built, the streets strait with arcades . . . the weather so mild that I sat in a room without a fire and the windows open." He noted local views of the Duke, evidence that political discussion existed even when there was no forum for it: "They complain of the old blind, painted Duke, they say he has ruined the country and loaded it with taxes for the foolish vanity of keeping a number of useless troops which are really in the eyes of all less ornamental than a flourishing territory would have been."

On the evening of 28 February Nicholls reached Bologna. Letters of recommendation gave him immediate entrées. Nicholls took Count Firmian's letter to the Count's predecessor as governor of Milan, Marshal Pallavicini: "He invited me immediately to dinner and except one day that the Cardinal Legate the Pope's Governor of the country did me the honour to invite me I have dined there every day, for he will absolutely have it so. I had besides a letter from the Duchess Sorbelloni to the Countess Caprari one of the first persons here . . . My time then has been past thus—every morning from about ten to two I have been employed in seeing pictures, churches, and palaces—then I'd up to go to the Marshal's. He generally contrives to have some one of learning or merit at dinner. I stay there till between 6 and 7. Then a Marquis Morini . . . comes by the order of the Countess to attend me to some conversation or assembly. There I meet her, and play at loo or primiera very low a couple of hours, then I go home write my journal or notes critical in the margin of my books of painting etc and go to bed. I have besides this an hour in the morning for the same employment."

On 7 March Morini took Nicholls to visit the elderly Farinelli, one of the most celebrated singers of the age, who had performed in London during the time of Walpole. In the 1730s English tourists had arranged their itineraries in order to hear Farinelli, but by the 1770s they were visiting a retired celebrity, as Nicholls did (and Thomas Pelham in 1777).¹⁵

On 21 March Nicholls wrote from Florence. His letter emphasized the importance of connections: "Don't imagine me in a land of

strangers but in a country where I meet with friends at every step, where I find a cordiality and kindness that I have seldom experienced in my own country, and where I have all the reason in the world to be contented and happy . . . I travel as an English gentleman, (and except imprudences and extravagance) I must live as the rest of my countrymen do. I am presented everywhere, and by means of Count Firmian's recommendations on such a footing as scarce any Englishman has been. Sir Horace Mann¹⁶ has received me with great politeness, I had a very obliging letter of recommendation to him from Lord Huntingdon, he wrote immediately to have me presented at court (he is confined with the gout himself) to the Duke Salviati the great chamberlain to whom too I was particularly recommended by the Countess Carprara his sister, who with Marshal Pallavicini took care of me at Bologna — My principal friend here is Count Wildshek the Imperial minister for whom I had the strongest recommendations from his most intimate friend Count Firmian. I dine with him every day . . . My mornings are generally passed in the Gallery or seeing pictures somewhere."

Money was a problem, and in seeking a fresh credit at Rome Nicholls assured his mother that he was not being extravagant.¹⁷ He pressed on to Rome, whence in early May he made an excursion to Frascati, and on his return ascertained that a half-length portrait by Pompeo Batoni, "the best portrait painter here," would cost twenty guineas.¹⁸ Nicholls travelled on to Naples in May with the Earl of Findlater, but found that aristocratic company was not without its disadvantages: "I assure you that in spite of what I spend I am economical and spend not above $\frac{1}{2}$ as much as the people with whom I live . . . I find at present the great inconvenience of living with a Lord . . . because I suffer for the impositions he undergoes; he is used to be preyed upon by his servants, by the inn keepers, by all the world as we keep house together part of this falls on me, I scold eternally, and have changed some things for the better, but in general I find a considerable difference between living so and by myself. I shall leave him here . . . This country and climate are delicious indeed! The weather can not be called too hot yet. There is always a fresh breeze from the sea . . . Here I am already perfectly at home, every house in Naples is open to me, and I am received with the greatest civility . . . Everything in this country is interesting to me: — the natural situation, the ancient geography which may be traced everywhere by rivers, towns and mountains that still bear the same names they bore two or three thousand years ago. The ruins of Roman magnificence

that are spread over this coast which they made (and wisely!) their favourite retirement from public cares and the noise of Rome. The town itself has not the dead, solitary and depopulated appearance of most of those in Italy, but on the contrary swarms with inhabitants, the principal street is always fuller and infinitely more noisy than Cheapside – we turn our backs on it and our face is to the beautiful Gulph. It is Antiquities, geography and natural history that are the principal objects here, for there are few pictures except a fine collection that the King has . . . If we can digest the expence (which I give you my word I do not) all the rest is beyond even my wishes.”¹⁹

Nicholls’s Neapolitan idyll was increasingly disturbed by concern over the cost, and he returned to this theme later in June: “I never was better, scarce ever so well, that I bear the heat like an old fly, that I am as happy as my nature is capable of being, that I feel a little twinge now and then about money but comfort myself that it can’t now be helped and that I really have not one foolish article of expence to answer for except what the extravagance of my countrymen has entailed on me; there are but two methods of travelling one being admitted everywhere as a gentleman and spending with the exactest economy a great deal, the other of living at coffee-houses and spending little . . . I am charmed with this place, climate (for the violent heat is always tempered by a sea-breeze and one is cloathed accordingly), situation, antiquities, natural history (which I am returned to here) all in short enchanting. The middle of the day is so hot that one can not stir; so I sit in my thinnest Indian gown without breeches, a pair of drawers however and silk stockings in a long gallery which we have in our lodging with four great windows open to the bottom that look out on the Gulph, here I read, or write, sometimes I go out because I want to see what I have still to see and get away . . . about 8 o’clock make my toilette, and up and go out, to an assembly or the opera, after this as I belong to Count Wurmbrand’s little supping party, we go to Pausilipo situated on one part of the ½ moon of the bay about a mile from my lodging, there one sups upon fish, enjoys such a fresh air without chill or damp as is to be met with nowhere else, and a sky in which every little star is of consequence, this often lasts till daylight, sometimes till the sun grows hot, for here they have at this season no idea of sleeping in the night.”²⁰

Naples continued to enchant, but still the expenses mounted: “I have had so much to see here, the weather has been so hot, and besides I have been so enchanted with this place and climate in spite

of the heat which though violent is always tempered by sea-breezes that I have made my stay a fortnight longer than I intended . . . as for my expences I am in despair about them . . . it is incredible what with paying as an Englishman, living as an Englishman, paying for seeing, travelling about to see, without one vice or extravagance, without buying anything, indeed hardly necessities how much one spends. At Milan I kept no account and thought the money stolen, and still can not comprehend what I spent there. Here I keep a very exact one. At Rome I did the same but still it goes. I have here been perpetually travelling in the neighbourhood engaged agreeably but expensively in parties on the Gulph, little suppers, and expeditions to the neighbouring coasts with Count Wurmbrand the Imperial minister to whom I was most particularly recommended by Count Firmian, I lodge and live expensively with Lord Findlater – in short I am extremely uneasy in the midst of all that would otherwise please, interest and instruct me most . . . the advantages and inconveniences into which such powerful and unsought for recommendations as I have had thrown me.”²¹

July brought the obligatory ascent of Vesuvius, “a tiresome and difficult, but by no means dangerous ascent, it is so perfectly peaceable at present that one scarce hears a faint rumbling within the mouth which sends forth continually a sulphureous smoke. The ruin it has spread around it, the burnt dreary appearance, the odd forms which the cooling of the lava has produced, are things one must see to have any idea of them. Its steep sides are seamed all over with the scars, and furrows that the lavas of different periods have left in it.”²²

Nicholls soon left the nocturnal world of Naples for Rome, where he took a course with the celebrated antiquarian James Byres, observing on 19 September: “I am more astonished every day with this wonderful city! – near four months which I shall have passed here when I leave it are just sufficient to catch an idea of what it contains, but a twelvemonth would really not be too much to employ here with profit.”²³ He left on 4 October, travelling to Venice via Bologna, which he reached on the 14th. He pressed on in late November to Milan via Padua, Vicenza, Verona, Brescia, and Bergamo, “a journey in miserable roads and bad weather.” Financial problems mounted. He had obtained £50 from Byres, but “at Venice staying my month I spent the £50 and was obliged to borrow £30 more of Lord Findlater to bring me hither. The fatal necessity of being cheated in inns because other Englishmen who could afford it have been so before runs away with above half the money.”²⁴

Delayed at Milan by the importunities of Firmian, Nicholls became both concerned that his money would not see him home and certain that life in rural England would be dismal: "If I find the necessity of confining myself to one little spot in this great world, it certainly shall be one where I may want some conveniences but have some society. I am absolutely incapable of living forever at Blundeston! It appears dismal to me at this distance!"²⁵ He reached Genoa on 28 December, was detained there by unfavorable weather, eventually sailed to Antibes, and then travelled slowly overland to Marseilles, pulled by horses that "never trotted except by my particular intreaty about an hour a day." He was fortunately able to borrow from the British agent there, but did not like the town: "I long to be gone for I am acquainted with only one merchant here whom I met at the French Ambassadors at Venice. I wait for the return of a carriage . . . I walk in the morning, dine at the table d'hote or ordinary at my inn; go to the play at night, and am heartily tired of Marseilles and all its works."²⁶

Nicholls travelled next to Aix, where he met a number of English visitors and reflected on the opportunities for social flexibility presented by travel: "It is only, I find, in foreign countries that one has an opportunity of connecting oneself with the first and most agreeable people of one's own—such connections I hope may afterwards be continued and improved at least that is my idea and hope. I think hereafter I shall feel the influence and fruit of my travels through the rest of my life in more than one way. It is certain that no one has had better fortune in being well received by strangers and countrymen."

Nicholls liked genteel, beautiful Aix, which he compared favorably to "dirty, vulgar" Marseilles,²⁷ and then visited Nîmes, where he was predictably impressed by the Roman remains: "From Nismes the 25th—I went to Montpellier arrived in time to see the situation (which is fine on an elevation that commands a wide landscape of cultivated land mixed with villages and houses one way and the sea the other) and all that is to be seen, and returned the 26th after dinner—But in this journey my usual good fortune attended me—at a little inn where I dined going to Montpellier the Countess of Brancas stopped too, (she is one of the most illustrious families of France a descendant of the brave Crillon who adorned the court and camp of Henry IVth of France) she hearing there was an English gentleman arrived there imagining by the description that I was the same she had met at an assembly at Nismes and sent to invite me to dine with her;—the moment I entered she saw her mistake, but it was too

late to retract, so we dined together. She found that I knew numbers of her acquaintance, and I was much pleased with her conversation;—don't be alarmed for it was only her conversation for she is 60 or near it, has read, writ, and is I believe a very good sort of woman,—In short from Montpellier, we put my man who is an old Italian at least 70 with her woman who is certainly 50 in my chaise and we travelled together in her chariot hither where we arrived the 28th in the evening. That evening I supped at her brother's the Abbé de Crillon brother to the Duke of that name a great man at Paris. The next day (29th) I dined with her. She carried me to an assembly in the evening. The 30th I went to see the fountain of Vaucluse sung by Petrarch, and made immortal by him. It was the savage scene of ten years retirement when he flew from the charms and cruelty of Laura a lady of this town who lived 400 years ago and will live for ever in his verses. Yesterday I returned and I only wait now for a chaise to carry me to Lyons post for I could no longer bear the pace of my voiturier and have sent him back to Marseilles. The chaise will return today or to-morrow and I shall set out immediately. In the mean time, I have my good old Countess, her brother who has lived all his life in the best company of Paris, a Mr. and Mrs. Hill both sick, and a Captain Lyon who is here for his health too. I am really coming home as fast as I can. Not without trembling at the thoughts of our month of March after being rendered too delicate by these climates."²⁸

From Avignon Nicholls set forth for Lyons: "The third I left Avignon, and the 6th I arrived here. My journey would have been delightful (three day on the banks of the Rhone) if it had been summer. As it is winter and a horrid winter of frost, snow, and wind it was abominable! I have been able to see nothing of this fine town for it has snowed continually, there is at least two or three feet of snow on the ground! I find that my summer in Italy has rendered me absolutely unable at present to bear the cold. It dispirits one takes away my activity. However necessity the best spur one can have is at my heels, so I shall leave this place in two or three days that is as soon as I can get my chaise in order, find a servant, and an opportunity of sending my good old man to Milan. It grieves me that he must cross Mt. Cenis in such a season . . . His journey back will cost me at least ten guineas giving him a trifle for himself.

"I am recommended here by my good Countess to the Countess de la Salles whose daughter the Countess de Roule is first Lady of Honour to the Countess de Provence one of the Royal Family of

France, her husband has a great place at court, they are here and offer me all kinds of civilities at Paris where they are going. In short I want nothing but money, but as that is an irremediable want you will see me I hope in a fortnight. There are English here Lord Thomas Clinton, Captain Jervis captain of the ship which conducted the Duke of Gloucester and whom I had known with the Duke at Rome and others."²⁹

Good connections and financial problems were the central themes to the end, both being struck in the last letter, sent from Paris on 8 March 1773. It is easy to appreciate why for Nicholls the tour was a formative experience, his chance to shine, albeit at some expense, in a greater world than that of his normal social and professional orbit: "Damer is not ready to go till to-morrow when I think we must surely depart. I was obliged to draw on Mr. Hoare for the £20 as I supposed for I got only 10 louis for my chaise instead of 25 as I expected. Contrary to the lot of English here it is with the utmost regret and difficulty that I leave a most aimable and respectable French family here (that of the Count du Ronne) who have really treated me as their son. I was at Versailles with them yesterday. Madame who is one of the Ladies of the Countess of Provence is in waiting and gave us a dinner in such an apartment as I suppose our Maids of Honour have at St. James's. In short if you don't treat me well in England I shall certainly come back: for I am really spoiled by the kind reception I have everywhere met with among foreigners."³⁰

1. The most comprehensive recent account of the Grand Tour based on archival sources is Jeremy Black, *The British and the Grand Tour* (London, 1985).

2. Nicholls to Mrs Nicholls, 27 June 1771, Osborn Shelves c 467, vol. 1, no. 114.

3. Anonymous account of travels in France and Switzerland, 9 August 1770, Leicester County Record Office DG7/14/126; Mr Livingstone to Sir Robert Murray Keith, 14 September 1785, British Library, Additional MSS vol. 35535.

4. Nicholls to his mother, 5 and 17 September 1771, vol. 1, no. 120. He refers to Salomon Gessner (1730–1788).

5. G. to Mrs Nicholls, 30 September 1771, vol 1, no. 122.

6. Nicholls to his mother, 10 December 1771, vol. 1, no. 130.

7. Nicholls to his mother, 2 October 1771, vol. 1, no. 123.

8. Nicholls to his mother, 18 October 1771, vol. 1, no. 124.

9. The Anglophile and enlightened governor.

10. Nicholls to his mother, 24 December 1771, vol. 1, no. 132.

11. Nicholls to his mother, 24 January 1772, vol. 2, no. 1.

12. Nicholls to his mother, 8 February 1772, vol. 2, no. 2.

13. Nicholls to his mother, 9–10 February 1772, vol. 2, no. 3. On servants' views there is a very valuable account of Edmund Dewes dating from 1776, Bodleian Library, Department of Western Manuscripts, MSS Eng. Misc. d 213.

14. A pun on the Duke's title as a member of the Spanish Bourbon family.

15. Nicholls to his mother, 7 March 1772, vol. 2, no. 9; George Stanhope to Earl Stanhope, 25 October 1734, Maidstone Kent Archives Office U1590 C708/2; Pelham

to his mother, 2 October 1777, BL. Add. 33127. For criticism in Stettin at about this time of Frederick the Great see an anonymous letter describing a trip to Danzig, Osborn Shelves f c 52, pp. 10–11.

16. The British envoy.
17. Nicholls to his mother, 21 March 1772, vol. 2, no. 9.
18. Nicholls to his mother, 6 and 19 May 1772, vol. 2, nos. 14, 15.
19. Nicholls to his mother, 12 June 1772, vol. 2, no. 19.
20. Nicholls to his mother, 31 June 1772, vol. 2, no. 26.
21. Nicholls to his mother, 14 July 1772, vol. 2, no. 27.
22. Nicholls to his mother, 21 July 1772, vol. 2, no. 28.
23. Nicholls to his mother, 5 and 19 September 1772, vol. 2, nos. 39, 41.
24. Nicholls to his mother, 17 October, 11 November, and 1 December 1772, vol. 2, nos. 43, 44, 48.
25. Nicholls to his mother, 15 and 23 December 1772, vol. 2, nos. 50, 52.
26. Nicholls to his mother, 11 and 14 January 1773, vol. 2, nos. 53–54.
27. Nicholls to his mother, 18 January 1773, vol. 2, no. 55.
28. Nicholls to his mother, 1 February 1772, vol. 2, no. 56.
29. Nicholls to his mother, 9 February 1773, vol. 2, no. 57. Jervis's journal is in BL Add. 31192.
30. Nicholls to his mother, 8 March 1773, vol. 2, no. 60.