Jeremy Black, *France and the Grand Tour*. London and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003. x + 234 pp. Table, notes, bibliography, and index. $65.00. ISBN 1-4039-0690-4.

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There is a considerable literature on the grand tour, and on France's place within it. Much of it, however, relies on printed primary sources. Jeremy Black's aim is different: to rely almost exclusively on archival rather than public sources to give a fresh and different perspective on the experience of British travellers in eighteenth-century France. The result is a thoughtful and significant study that adds much to our understanding not only of France's place in the grand tour, but of Anglo-French relations in general during the period.

As Black points out, eighteenth-century British travellers had a very different purpose in visiting France than Italy, the traditional destination of the grand tour. "The impact of France on tourists was not framed by a search for cultural experience and a classical resonance comparable to that of Italy" he writes, "[I]nstead, the engagement was with modern France, a frame of reference in which challenge and hostility could more readily be seen" (p.191). Whereas Italy sheltered the remains of a past civilization on which most members of the British élite had been nurtured, France displayed a state and a culture that were immediate and dangerous rivals to that of Britain.

Unsurprisingly, British attitudes to France varied considerably during the course of the eighteenth century, and these variations were closely linked to the eddy and flow of the "second hundred years' war" between the two countries. In the years between the war of the Spanish succession and the 1730s relations were friendly, and this could be gauged by the number of eminent British travellers in Paris: in 1728 a French magazine reported that "fifty lords and gentlemen of the English nation" attended a dinner given to celebrate the first anniversary of George II's coronation. (p.2). Such cordiality did not survive the next bout of hostilities, from the War of the Polish Succession through the Seven Years' War. The burst of British self-confidence that followed the peace of Paris in 1763 then gave way, after the reverses of the American War of Independence, to a mood of doubt and introspection coupled with renewed fear and distrust of France. France may have served as playground and excursion for the British up to 1789, but she was always a powerful enemy, actual or potential, to be reckoned with.

Given this ambiguous context, how did France appear to the intrepid British tourists who braved the perils of the Calais packet (Abraham Hawkins' crossing in 1783 took eight and a half hours)? Paris was obviously the major attraction, and the travellers dutifully inspected the Louvre, Tuileries, Invalides, Notre Dame, and Palais de Justice. Lyon, too, elicited favourable comment, particularly the Place Bellecour. One factor that recurs with significant frequency in the accounts cited is the remarkable openness of French society to these English visitors, up to the very highest level. Having travelled to France to see the marriage of Louis XV, Humphry Parsons MP struck up a friendship with the young king; he returned frequently to Versailles thereafter, staying on very good terms with Louis and frequently hunting with him. Richard Creed, travelling with the Earl of Exeter in 1699, even had a chance meeting with Louis XIV, which reveals the Sun King as rather less remote and inaccessible than he is usually depicted:

…we met the king in a very large coach and eight horses…I rode by the coach; and the king seeing my Lord Exeter's equipage inquired whose it was; he captain of the guard came and asked me; I told him; but the king perceived I was of the company; called me and asked me particularly whose it was; I told him; he made me repeat the name to him, till he could say it perfectly well. He asked me if the king of England was arrived [in England from a visit to the United Provinces], and several questions relating to the journey and to England. I answered him so that he was pleased to be very free and civil to me (p.142).

Other aspects of travel through France were less agreeable. French inns, and particularly the insect population of the beds they provided, spawned a substantial, and uncomplimentary, literature. Walter Stanhope in 1769 encountered "beds …occupied with troops of bugs, and whole armies of fleas"(p.55), while Samuel Boddington, having managed

to repel the bedbugs, wrote from Lyon in July 1789: "I last night was attacked a by a new enemy, fleas of an enormous size. They have used me most cruelly and they are such an active foe that there is no escaping from them" (p.56). Arthur Young's Travels are peppered with references to the dreadful accommodation he had to endure on his journeys: "an execrable auberge, called Maison Rouge," near Limoges; the Lion d'Or at Montauban--"an abominable hole"; the Prince of Asturias at Bordeaux--elegant and well-furnished, "yet the necessary house the same temple of abomination that it is to be in a dirty village" (p.57).

Nothing more clearly defined the "Britishness" of these travellers than their reaction to French food. This was unfavourably compared, on every occasion and with almost religious fervour, to the great British national dish, roast beef. Certainly the British were generally recognised as masters of the art of roasting a joint, but this may have simply have been, as a Swedish visitor to England in 1748 slyly remarked, because "the art of cooking as practised by most Englishmen does not extend much beyond roast beef and plum pudding" (p.66). The British elevation of their roast beef, however, had a political and cultural subtext: plain, simple, solid and nourishing, it epitomised the British character, just as French cuisine, pretentious, overcomplicated, and unreliable, reflected their neighbours'. For British travellers, all these Gallic faults came together in one dish: the ragout. "I dined this day upon a veal ragoo'd", wrote Robert Poole from Paris in 1741, "but I like not their ragooes, nor method of cookery, in these parts….Their roast meat is not well ordered. Their boiled meat is done to rags, in order to make good their soup. Their bread, for common use, is generally made into long rolls, of two or three foot long; it is sometimes pretty good, at other times hardly eatable, and often but very indifferent" (p.65).

If eighteenth-century British travellers visited France in a spirit of curiosity and often appreciation, fear and distrust were never far from the surface. The numerous testimonies in *France and the Grand Tour* contain little of the pacific thought of the Enlightenment and still fewer early glimmers of the Entente Cordiale. As Jeremy Black concludes in this excellent and perceptive book: "The British critics, whether tourists or not, who condemned aspects of France, and discerned and defined hostility towards her, were more realistic assessors of circumstances, and predictors of future strife, than those who wrote of the brotherhood of man" (p.198).

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