Dogs, Servants and Masculinities: Writing about Danger on the Grand Tour

According to their masters, dogs and servants did not have good luck on the Grand Tour. Letters, journals and publications across the eighteenth century reported tearful servants trembling at danger and hapless dogs plummeting off cliffs. These accounts were more than entertaining travellers’ tales. They pointed towards the centrality of danger in the experience and narration of the Grand Tour. Dogs and servants played a crucial narrative function in their masters’ constructions of danger, masculinity and elite identity. While dogs acted as extensions of the self, through which emotions of fear and concern could be indulged, servants formed an emotionally uncontrolled counterpart, against which the Grand Tourists’ superior abilities of courage and self-control could be framed. This article argues that these Grand Tour narratives of danger were a central tool in the construction and formation of elite masculine identity. Moving beyond the individual, they also contributed toward collective elite claims of emotional hegemony and fitness for leadership.

The term ‘Grand Tour’ is frequently used to refer to a broad set of British travel cultures, encompassing female and middle class travellers. This article utilises the more classic definition: a period of travel undertaken by aristocratic and gentry men after school and/or university and prior to fully entering adult society. The Grand Tour provided a formal education, through tutors, academies and universities, and an experiential education, through encountering European society and the varied experiences of travel. Often defined as an important rite of passage into adulthood, it formed participants in their adult masculine identity and endowed them with the skills and masculine virtues most highly prized by the elite. It was also perceived more broadly by the elite as a means of reinforcing their position of exclusive privilege and power.

This article contributes towards a revaluation of the Grand Tour and the masculinities it advocated. The majority of research has focused upon its Italian-based programme of aesthetic refinement and the education in polite sociability received through fashionable French society. As such, it is overwhelmingly understood as advocating a narrow interpretation of elite masculinity based around polite, cosmopolitan and virtuoso aspects. This reflects a more general historiographical trend. Until recently,
scholars, drawing on R. W. Connell’s model of ‘hegemonic’ masculinities, have interpreted eighteenth-century masculinity principally in terms of ‘politeness’, which was in turn succeeded by ‘sensibility’, as the dominate mode of masculine culture.\(^6\) Within the last decade, scholars have begun to revise the application of this theory. Alexandra Shepard and Karen Harvey have argued for the coexistence of several different dominant masculine codes with a greater degree of complexity and fluidity between them.\(^7\) A wider variety of eighteenth-century masculine cultures, identities and behaviours, including a range of decidedly impolite behaviour, have been acknowledged.\(^8\) Equally, while the evolving nature of masculine identity had received due attention, Henry French and Mark Rothery’s study of gentry families and their papers has revealed a strong continuity of masculine values from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century, and the importance of familial masculine traditions in overriding contemporary fashions.\(^9\)

Using manuscript letters and diaries written by gentry and aristocratic Tourists and their tutors between 1739-1780, thus rooting its arguments in archival material, this article contributes towards these wider debates. The travel publications of William Coxe, tutor to Lord Herbert, are also considered. Coxe’s travel experiences were strongly influenced by Herbert’s Tour and his publications closely reflect the interests discussed in Herbert’s manuscript material, indicating a degree of cross-fertilisation between middling and elite masculinity.

Recent scholarship has begun to show how the Tour incorporated many topographies, activities and curriculums that complicate the hegemonic model of politeness.\(^10\) Through exploring the purpose and use of danger within the context of elite culture and masculine formation, this article contributes towards this scholarship in demonstrating how the Tour allowed for multiple expressions of elite masculinity. While new forms of masculine expression, like the sentimental Man of Feeling of the 1750s, emerged, the study of danger reveals how older masculine ideals, cultures and values, including what I have termed ‘hardy’ masculinities, persisted throughout the period.

In stressing the multiplicity of eighteenth-century masculinities, the flexibility involved can be overstated. This array of masculine identities was not freely selected.
Grand Tourists faced coercive, frequently competing pressures from parents, family, friendships, tutors and the societies they encountered. Failure to conform led to sharp punishment and ostracisation. This pressure should not be underestimated when considering how their Tour experiences, particularly in relation to danger, were presented.

Dogs and servants were two important tropes used to narrate Tour experiences of and reactions towards danger. This article begins with an exploration of how Grand Tourists not only braved the unavoidable hazards of eighteenth-century travel but also actively courted danger and hardship as formative experiences. Having outlined the importance of these encounters to the Grand Tour’s itinerary, it then considers how the narration of danger formed an important platform through which wider issues of elite masculinity, authority, identity and power were explored. This analysis contributes towards recent debates concerning the histories of masculinity and elite self-fashioning. Furthermore, in identifying strategies used to evoke danger and narrate emotional states, it develops deeper understanding of the emotional culture and hierarchies of the eighteenth century.  

I. Danger, Hardship and ‘Hardy’ Masculine Formation on the Grand Tour

In 1809, Sir Francis Basset proudly related how, in the late 1770s, he fought with Prince Leopold of Brunswick and the Prussian army when ambushed by 5000 Austrian Cossacks, despite being commanded to flee to safety. Basset was one of a number of Grand Tourists whose itineraries deliberately courted danger, risk and hardship. Throughout the seventeenth century, the Tour incorporated martial education and voluntary participation in battle. Journals and letters throughout the eighteenth century clearly reveal that these activities continued. As Basset’s example demonstrates, volunteering persisted, albeit with decreasing frequency. Volunteering’s milder companion, the observing of troops, forts, camps, live conflict and historic battlefields, continued with enthusiasm. The Tour, with its access to continental military academies, remained the best option for preparing for a military career. Even those with no explicit military ambitions attended military and aristocratic academies, mixed with Continental courts that had marital cultures, and
partook in the martial-based curriculum of fencing, riding, dancing and other physical exercises.\textsuperscript{15}

Scholarship has recently begun to recover the importance of the martial and physical in elite concepts of identity. Michèle Cohen has contended that by the 1750s, a new masculine culture, chivalry, emerged in reaction to the dangers of politeness-induced effeminacy. Chivalry maintained a refined attitude towards women and produced men fired by martial exercise and valour who demonstrated their courage and manliness through physical endeavours.\textsuperscript{16} The rise of British antiquarianism supported a surge of interest in the chivalric, as demonstrated by Richard Hurd’s \textit{Letters on Chivalry and Romance} (1762).\textsuperscript{17} However, chivalry was also part of a wider marital masculine culture that reached back to the seventeenth century (and earlier) and continued into the nineteenth century.

In the eighteenth century, chivalry was closely related to martial and sporting cultures. Each highly valued internal virtues such as courage, honour, self-control, and a stoical endurance of hardship. They demanded external proof of these virtues in physically challenging and hazardous environments, like the battlefield, sportsfield or natural terrain. The traditional association between nobility, martial responsibilities and honour endured as central to elite self-fashioning, as illustrated through the continuation of the duel.\textsuperscript{18} As numerous military historians have noted, the aristocracy continued to dominate the officer ranks throughout the period as well as in the 1760s and 1790s militia movements.\textsuperscript{19} Basset, for example, attained his \textit{baronetcy} for his role in the North Devon militia.\textsuperscript{20}

Many elite sporting activities enjoyed substantial popularity and were perceived to involve risk and exertion.\textsuperscript{21} They were rooted in a martial heritage and were understood to foster manliness and train participants for conflict. The Grand Tour’s itinerary gave scope for many of these activities. Tourists referred approvingly to activities and identities associated with martial, chivalric and sporting cultures as ‘hardy’. The adjective ‘hardy’, meaning bold, courageous and daring, was a well-established term used principally in relation to a person’s manner, actions and qualities.\textsuperscript{22} For example, between 1775-1780 George Herbert, later 11\textsuperscript{th} Earl of Pembroke’s Grand Tour placed heavy emphasis upon martial and physical pursuits.
Herbert and his tutors, Reverend William Coxe and Captain John Floyd, attended Strasbourg and Turin’s military academies, undertaking a rigorous curriculum of military training and physical exercise. They also explored the harsh terrains of the Alps and (more unusually) the fringes of the arctic wastes. During a mountain journey to Turin, Herbert scoffed: ‘I wish and still wish only that those Gentleman who find hardships in such trifles, had followed the Triumvirate through Switzerland and other places where they went for their pleasure’. These lesser men were juxtaposed against ‘my Coxe [who] is certainly nothing less than a hardy, stout, Man.’ As such, I suggest that ‘hardy’ is a suitable portmanteau term for this set of masculine identities.

As Herbert’s example indicates, another forum for physically hazardous displays of masculinity gradually became available in the form of mountains. In 1741, the Common Room, a group of Grand Tourists, climbed the Mer de Glace in Savoy. By the 1770s, an itinerary of Alpine walking, climbing and riding was well established. The increased popularity of mountains in eighteenth-century culture has been principally considered as inspired by the Sublime aesthetic, popularised by Edmund Burke’s *Philosophical Enquiry* (1757). The Grand Tour’s engagement with mountains has typically been understood in this light, with earlier Tour engagement being considered as proto-Sublime. Sublime aesthetics undoubtedly did influence how and why Tourists encountered mountains. Throughout the 1740s to the 1770s, the language of sublimity was deployed with increased familiarity and confidence in descriptions of the Alps.

Mountains were ‘wild’ and ‘horribly majestic’ but few undertook a deeper engagement with the Sublime’s elevating philosophical properties. Unusually, in 1739 on the Grande Chartreuse road, Horace Walpole outlined the Sublime’s transformative influence while Thomas Gray reflected on its most crucial ingredient: the requisite safe distance that allowed mountains to be terrifying in the imagination, but not in reality. At the Grande Chartreuse, ‘You have Death perpetually before your eyes, only so far removed, as to compose the mind without frightening it’ while ‘Mont Cenis…carries the permission mountains have of being frightful rather too far;…with too much danger to give one time to reflect upon their beauties.’ Gray neatly encapsulated what Burke later described as ‘delightful horror’.
that ‘When danger or pain press too nearly, they are incapable of giving any delight, and are simply terrible; but at certain distances, and with certain modifications…they are delightful’. The Sublime hinged upon an aesthetic principle of distanced terror, allowing for experiences generated by a combination of looking and imagining.

Between 1741 and 1780 a number of Tourists broke this rule as they deliberately sought more physically testing encounters. In 1741, the Common Room clung with hands and staffs to the mountainside. Had they not, ‘we must many times have gone down into the Precipice.’ In 1778, George Legge, Viscount Lewisham, enthusiastically described the ‘mountain dangers’ of the highest mountain in the Canton of Appersell. These included sliding down a two-hundred foot precipice, getting lost in fog, and crossing another precipice where, had he slipped, ‘I must inevitably have been dashed to pieces’. These narratives sought to demonstrate how their authors placed themselves in dangerous situations requiring physical and courageous responses. Strikingly, while these Tourists used Sublime aesthetics in their descriptions of mountains viewed from a distance or even in describing the view at the end of a climb, they suspended this discourse when describing the more hazardous climbing activities.

Other scholars have considered examples of men engaging with natural hazards in dangerous ways. Barbara Stafford’s exploration of scientific voyages notes how experiences of discomfort, danger and terror were used to celebrate a certain masculine mind-set comparable to the Homeric hero and chivalric knight. Equally, Simon Bainbridge’s examination of Romantic mountaineering stresses climbing as an embodied activity which linked excitement and satisfaction to a sense of danger and fear that went beyond Burke’s notion of safe distance. Arguing that mountaineering was a ‘school of courage’ in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, Bainbridge contends that it approved manliness, tested physical ability and strengthened character. These encounters did not indicate a rejection of the Sublime, but rather suggest that more than one discourse was influential in eighteenth-century mountain engagement. The behaviour of Grand Tourists can be usefully understood in relation to older practices of martial and sporting masculinity, as mountains became yet another public forum where performances of courage, stoicism and endurance could be enacted.
The Tour’s martial and physical itineraries, alongside their links to older expressions of elite masculinity, assist in fully understanding the role of danger, hardship and risk in elite masculine formation. The risk of danger on the Grand Tour has presented a consistent puzzle: ‘why did young men from noble families travel abroad – a notoriously dangerous undertaking – at a time’ when many aristocratic male lines were dying out?\(^40\) However, hardship had generally been acknowledged as an important aspect of elite pedagogical theory, and travel as a means of accessing this. Cohen has observed that seventeenth-century conduct writers believed that the Grand Tour experience of wholesome hardship would produce men, not just gentlemen.\(^41\) As French and Rothery argue, danger and destabilisation always figured in elite understandings of the Grand Tour and were seen as the means of realising the full attributes of elite authority, autonomy, civility, and power.\(^42\) Danger and risk were therefore more than an unwelcome side effect. They formed an integral aspect of the Grand Tour’s culture, rationale and aims.

Within particular conventions, such as the ‘hardy’ masculinities, the Grand Tour appeared to demand both the actual experience of danger and an effective narration of this experience. Reliant only on these narrations, it is difficult to evaluate how dangerous these experiences truly were. Several Grand Tourists and tutors reported receiving or witnessing injuries from hunting, mountain climbing and other physical pursuits.\(^43\) Despite this, there is a surprisingly low serious injury and mortality rate, which could suggest that the severity of danger was rhetorically enhanced. More research is needed to explore the physical dimension of eighteenth-century masculinity, but this leads us to question to what extent the construction of masculinity and the significance of danger lay in objective experience and physical activity or in subsequent rhetorical construction and textual representation. For example, Basset’s experience of danger was clearly a dramatic incident in his life but the memory and narration of this experience remained an important tool in the construction of his ‘hardy’, martially-inspired masculinity for over twenty years. I would suggest the two are not mutually exclusive, but the remainder of this article focuses on the importance of retrospective construction and narration with particular attention given to the role of servants and dogs.
Grand Tour narratives of danger and discomfort formed a powerfully effective tool in the construction and avocation of a wide variety of masculine identities. Irrespective of which masculinity was being advanced, danger consistently emerged as a crux point through which these claims were made, even as the resulting narrative was shaped by the characteristics of the selected masculinity. For example, George Harcourt, Viscount Nuneham and later second Earl Harcourt used his experiences of hardship and danger to present a masculine identity embedded in sensibility and fashion. Travelling in the 1750s with George Villiers, subsequently fourth earl of Jersey and ‘the Prince of Maccaronies’, Nuneham eschewed opportunities to present himself in a courageous light. He used Mufty the barbet dog to reflect upon the dangerous uncertainty of travel. Having survived four month’s travel ‘without the least accident’, he hoped Mufty would reach England safely. Sadly, Mufty died of a leg injury, causing Nuneham to lament how unhelpful he would have been:

for I am such an idiot that I can not touch any creature in pain or that has a wound…was my greatest friend, to fall suddenly ill & want bleeding, my weakness would be such as to prevent my being of the least assistance to him.

Renouncing any sense of a masterly command of the self or ability to save others, Nuneham depicted himself as a creature of such extreme sensibility that his ‘weakness’ rendered him useless. Similarly, whilst he aesthetically appreciated mountainous landscapes, his descriptions of these terrains emphasised his extreme physical discomfort and fear. When travelling ‘From Bonn to Coblentz’, he frequently got out of his coach, as he was afraid of being thrown ‘over the most terrible precipices’.

As Nuneham demonstrates, narratives of danger and masculinity were closely entwined with emotion. Emotions, such as fear, were recognised and accepted in different ways within eighteenth-century culture. Within Sublime culture, fear became ‘thrilling’ or ‘pleasurable’, while amongst Men of Feeling, it could be a mark of sensibility and sincerity. Within the ‘hardy’ masculinities, fear was to be conquered in
order to demonstrate one’s courage. The following section explores how Grand Tourists advocating a ‘hardy’ masculine identity constructed their narratives of danger and dealt with emotion such as fear and terror. Whilst identifying several strategies, it focuses upon the powerful and problematic use of servants in discussions of danger and wider constructions of elite masculine identity.

This branch of masculinity sought to demonstrate internal virtues of courage and stoical self-control through physically demanding external performances. When reporting on these experiences, Tourists and tutors had to demonstrate their willingness to encounter danger and their courageous retention of physical and emotional self-control and hardiness. This process was not straightforward and emotions like fear had to be carefully negotiated. Each Tourist had to balance between demonstrating courage and assuaging parental anxieties over their safety. Equally, while earlier narratives of ‘hardy’ masculinity simply avoided mentioning emotions, over the century other cultural threads influenced later narratives. Sensibility and the Sublime complicated more ‘hardy’ discourses, resulting in an increasing pressure to demonstrate a sensibility towards fear and danger. True courage became associated with those who felt fear but proceeded regardless, yet direct discussions of personal fear remained problematic. In attempting to balance these various demands, Tourists adopted three key strategies when discussing danger.

Firstly, these narratives typically adopted the detached tone of a scientific observer and avoided personal expressions of fear. Throughout the Romantic period, a vocabulary of physical thrill slowly evolved but in the 1770s it remained limited to the extent that the simple exclusion of any vocabulary of fear was the easier, more common approach. Attempts were made to convey pleasure through engagements with danger. Lewisham’s tutor, David Stevenson described their passion for ‘diverting’ difficulties in 1777. Equally, the Triumvirate celebrated their hardiness. After their ‘Northern Jaunt’, Floyd mocked the English intolerance for cold, while Herbert joked that he thought Coxe had ‘fallen down some Precipice etc.’ Despite this, the descriptions of their actual experiences were extremely emotionally dispassionate. This abrupt silence contrasts with the rich emotional discourses found elsewhere in their writings.
To ensure their audiences knew that situations were dangerous, Tourists drew upon Enlightenment discourses and observational techniques. Driven by an Enlightenment-fuelled desire to classify the world, travellers and natural historians sought to contribute to the collection of knowledge, providing details, measurements and observations. The measurements provided by Tourists in their narratives of danger were a part of that on-going effort and their enthusiasm for measuring was not confined to dangerous situations. However, measurements could also be deliberately utilised to create a heightened sense of danger without using emotion. Tourists provided measurements, which gave a sense of scale and proportion, and statistically established a precedent of danger by reporting on previous accidents. For example, Lewisham described how a hailstone, ‘an inch & ½ or two inches in circumference’, smashed ‘just before my horse’s feet’. In 1763, John Holroyd, later 1st Earl of Sheffield clinically noted that the Schaffhausen cataract was over seventy feet high and comparable to the Thames in strength and width. He followed this intimidating observation with an event that occurred ‘not long’ before, when ‘a Boat with 18 persons was forced down the Fall. Two were saved’. While Holroyd’s own boat trip was incident-free, he created a parallel reading that could have resulted in his death, demonstrating his keen, but dispassionate, awareness of the danger. As Susan Fitzmaurice suggests, the process of reading meaning into the familiar letter relied upon anticipated, interpretative exchanges between the writer and reader. In maintaining an emotional silence and dispassionate narrative, the Tourist created a vacuum into which their readers (parents, friends, society) read the desired stoicism and courage.

The second strategy adopted in narrating danger was the construction of fearful ‘others’. Frequently servants, they became the bearers of emotional reactions that might reasonably be felt but that Tourists were unable or unwilling to associate with. For example, Coxe’s *Sketches of...Swisserland* (1779) dramatically cast one servant as an emotional ‘other’ when describing Herbert’s Alpine explorations.

While I was crossing the torrent on horseback, I heard a scream; and turning round, saw one of our servants seized with a panic on the very edge of the precipice, and vehemently exclaiming that he could neither get backwards or forwards. Nevertheless, with some assistance, he passed over; declaring, at the
same time, that he would take care never to put himself again in a similar situation.\textsuperscript{54}

Coxe used Herbert’s Tour as the basis for several travel publications, frequently dedicating them to the Pembroke family.\textsuperscript{55} The strategy of the fearful ‘other’ appears throughout his publications, most notably in describing their near-ship wreck on the icy Gulf of Bothnia. This included a rare direct reference to Coxe, Herbert and Floyd’s emotional state, yet their reactions were contained compared to the terrified, sobbing sailors.\textsuperscript{56} While the locals were incapacitated, Herbert and his tutors became increasingly active, establishing mastery over fear and, by extension, mastery over themselves and others.

\textit{we in vain endeavored by tacking and rowing to reach the shore…we continued until midnight, the gale hourly increasing; when at length by a fortunate tack and incessant rowing, we got under the lee of a high coast…After several fruitless attempts, we at last drove the boat upon shore, and disembarking, after much pains, upon a shelving hill of ice, we crawled upon our hands and knees, and gained the land, though with much difficulty.}\textsuperscript{57}

This intensely physical narrative highlights a crucial display of leadership and a bodily demonstration of masculine endurance directly linked with survival. With no mention of a captain, in ‘a crazy open fishing boat’ and a ‘wholly inexperienced’ crew, ‘we’ was implicitly associated with Coxe, Herbert and Floyd. As such, their superior emotional self-control played a crucial narrative function and the emotional ‘other’ provided a foil against which their superior virtues could be manifested.

Much of the discourse surrounding danger strove towards establishing individual reputations and reinforcing the collective elite hierarchy. Emotional hierarchies have often been a vital tool in the maintenance of elite hegemony. The elite endowed themselves with virtues of stoical self-control and, as the century progressed, with the additional ability of refined emotional sensitivity. In contrast, lower social orders were characterised as emotionally uncontrolled or, alternatively, brute-like in their emotional insensitivity. By claiming a hegemony of emotion and reason, the elite theorised their socio-cultural and political dominance. This argument was pervasive in
British and American officer/soldier and master/servant/slave discourses. Importantly, social equals (either British or Continental) were rarely cast as emotional ‘others’. One rare example is Lewisham’s account of his younger brother’s refusal to descend into a Hungarian mine while Lewisham coolly climbed a one-hundred-fathom drop. Perhaps one’s little brother was fair game in any century, but targeting one’s peers was problematic. It undermined the codes of honour central to elite masculinity culture and the integrity of the elite belief in their emotional superiority which, in order to be maintained, had to be collectively asserted.

The Grand Tour and its dangers offered an ideal first opportunity to indulge in such claims for young men keen to establish themselves as the next generation of elite leaders. Equally, as Coxe’s publications show, tutors also clearly enjoyed casting themselves as emotionally superior to servants. Written for a different audience and from a middling, intellectual author, Coxe’s writings nevertheless highlight an intriguing commonality and complex exchange between middling and elite masculinity. Coxe’s routes and activities were dictated and funded by Herbert’s father and took place within the cultural context of the aristocratic Grand Tour. Furthermore, Coxe and Herbert’s other tutor, Floyd, were closely connected with the Pembroke family in a professional and social capacity. Both men consciously staked a share in a ‘hardy’ masculinity identity and worked to maintain an emotional hierarchy that included themselves and Herbert. As an academic clergyman and professional solider, the themes of masculinity, power and identity would have interested them in different ways. Yet the masculinities they exhibited held much in common with their aristocratic charge and played an important role in Herbert’s willingness to encounter physical hardships. Their role in constructing his masculine identity in private and published spheres highlights the extent of the tutor’s influence, raising further questions regarding the direct influence those outside the elite milieu could exert on its culture. Equally, their relationship with the Pembroke family allows us to question how far their construction of masculinity was similarly influenced by their exposure to aristocratic ideals. Nevertheless, the clergyman, officer and aristocrat each constructed an emotional hierarchy that utilised reactions to danger and placed them above their servants in order to affirm their masculine identities.
Whilst important, demonstrating the correct combination of emotions, virtues and reactions became increasingly difficult. By the late eighteenth century, sensibility and corresponding elite claims to refined nerves impacted significantly upon narrations of danger. As battlefield writings show, courageous approaches to danger could no longer be conveyed through an absence of emotional description. During the American War of Independence, French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, officer ranks continued to enforce an emotional hierarchy but appropriated sensibility as a marker of elite status.61 By the early nineteenth century, it was argued that one ‘may, by possibility, have the courage of a lion, but he cannot possess the feelings of a man’.62 Exhibitions of extreme bravery amongst the ranks could be dismissed as insensitivity. Real bravery acted despite of fear, not in ignorance of it. An emotionally dispassionate narrative risked its writer being cast as emotionally insensitive. Thus by the 1770s Tourists had to demonstrate the emotional sensibility to recognise the peril. Yet the traditional demands of fearless stoicism remained unchanged. In response to these demands, they utilised a third strategy of contrasting their ‘informed’ intelligent courage with the ‘unthinking’ courage of the lower orders.

Herbert’s Tour was well attended by two tutors, Rover the Newfoundland dog, and his manservant Laurent ‘the Bold’. Laurent was consistently represented as a figure of capability, physicality and courage. He was unfazed by the most challenging conditions, leading Herbert to boast that ‘The Bold…is a most excellent Fellow on these Expeditions’.63 He matched his master in out-walking their mules in Italy, and his courage was known outside of the travelling party.64 After reading Coxe’s *Sketches*, Herbert’s old Harrow master asked if the panicked servant on the precipice was Laurent; ‘I can hardly think it was, as I know his courage.’65 Lady Pembroke was frightened of Herbert crossing the mountain without him, while Floyd warned him to always travel with ‘the trusty Laurent - …there are damned Scoundrels in Italy.’66 Clearly, Laurent was regarded as an insurance against harm.

Coxe provided the most dramatic example of Laurent’s boldness when describing their Mer de Glace expedition in *Travels in Switzerland* (1789). Having outlined the principal danger of five-hundred-feet ice chasms, Coxe emphasised how, equipped with shoe spikes and spiked poles, they moved with increased ‘courage and confidence’ and eventually ‘had not the least apprehension of danger’.67
One of our servants had the courage to follow us without crampons, and with no nails to his shoes; which was certainly dangerous, on account of the slipperiness of the leather when wetted.68

This unnamed servant, almost certainly Laurent, acting with extreme fearlessness, placed himself in serious danger. In fact, his courage appeared to outstrip his superiors’.

Despite, or perhaps in response to, this threat, the Pembroke circle carefully moderated Laurent’s image. Their depiction drew on an eighteenth-century figure dubbed ‘the sexy footman’ by Kristina Straub.69 Footmen were frequently chosen for their splendid physiques and, in theatre and literature, were imbued with a virile sexual charisma.70 This highlighted the shared masculine virtues between different social strata but equally sharpened the struggle for dominance between master and servant. Straub argues that from the 1740s onwards, this was addressed through novelistic depictions of manservants as idealistically led by their homosocial loyalty to their masters. For example, Tobias Smollett’s Humphrey Clinker shows Clinker’s ‘manly strength’ and physical sexuality as firmly contained by his subservient loyalty.71 The ability to command the loyalty and physical vitality of these hyper-masculine servants became an even greater advertisement for their masters’ masculine virtues.

Perhaps inspired by Smollett’s Humphrey Clinker, the Pembroke circle controlled Laurent’s masculine image through celebrating his loyalty to Herbert. He was ‘faithfull’, ‘trusty’, and ‘honest’. Even the art dealer Thomas Jenkins wrote of Laurent’s determination to re-join his master in Turin despite the snows blocking the route from Rome.72 Laurent had returned to Rome to get married, an act of independence frowned upon by employers and distinguishing him from Clinker, who put his master decisively before his love life.73 This emphasis upon his loyalty determinedly rewrote his actions and motivations and ignored such inconvenient truths. Equally, by the early nineteenth century, outdoor servants and hunting dogs were being celebrated for their shared attributes of ‘loyalty, vitality, strength, bravery, health or cunning.’74 This 1770s depiction of Laurent is an earlier example of such
practices. Laurent’s apparently single-minded devotion was deliberately paralleled with canine loyalty. Floyd and Lady Pembroke viewed Laurent as akin to a guard dog, while a tendency to ask about Laurent and an equally loyal Rover together indicates an association between servant and dog.75 This association’s more bestial aspects were also drawn out. Herbert, drawing upon a debasing connotation with dog breath, recorded how the hung-over ‘Bold’s Br-th over st—k to such a horrible degree lately’ that he doubted his soundness.76

Laurent’s courage on the glacier should be read in this context. In ‘following’ Herbert, he became a faithful dog refusing to leave his master’s side. Through animalising his motives, Laurent’s masters implied a bestial emotional capacity that attributed his ‘courage’ to a lack of sensibility rather than genuine bravery. In contrast, Herbert and his tutors actively recognised and strategically overcame the dangers. Thus Laurent the Bold formed an excellent foil, in which his laudable but simplistic courage became a spotlight for his master’s more complex performances.

Herbert’s family had a tradition of military service and he desired a military career.77 He perceived himself as fully embodying a martial masculinity, boasting several times that his ‘military appearance’ was recognisable even when he disguised it.78 As such, it was important to establish his capacity to command the obedience and loyalty of others. His family were also au fait with the culture of sensibility, as demonstrated by his mother’s explicitly sentimental letters. The Pembroke circle’s handling of servants in their narratives of Herbert’s Grand Tour experiences of danger suggests a sophisticated awareness of and response towards the shifting cultures, discourses and hierarchies of emotion and command, and a determination to establish Herbert with the correct masculine image. Yet Laurent demonstrates that these strategies were fraught with difficulties. Embodied several masculine traits that his masters sought to attain, Laurent highlights how different stratas of society could share markers of successful masculinity. In order to use this example of successful masculinity to complement their own, Herbert and the Pembroke circle had to establish a carefully nuanced and maintained hierarchy of physicality, emotion, and command.

In identifying three key strategies – dispassionate narratives and the creation of fearful and unintelligent ‘others’ – used by Grand Tourists seeking to promote a
‘hardy’ masculine identity in relation to danger, this section has drawn attention to the deliberate constructions surrounding the narration of risk. The following section continues to outline the strategies and difficulties surrounding narrative of danger, dogs and masculine identity. While some Tourists used dogs to establish more subversive masculine identities, others used them to covertly express emotions that were unacceptable in their established discourses.

III: Dogs, Danger and the Self

In general, Tourists and tutors assigned certain emotions to servants in order to disassociate themselves from both. In contrast, the eighteenth-century elites held a culture of close association with their dogs. While non-human ‘others’, dogs were companions and objects of affection. As previously discussed, the elite promoted refined emotional sensibility and the capacity to be moved by others as an indicator of their social status. Scholars of animal history have demonstrated that dogs formed a part of this, as they became sites of meditation to think and emote. Animal deaths, for example, led to considerations of human mortality. The extent to which dogs were perceived as extensions or projections of their owner was recognised in political and social satire, as Tom Almeroth-William’s analysis of John Collet’s Kitty Coaxer driving Lord Dupe towards Rotten Row (c.1793-1780) demonstrates. This final section explores how this projection played out within the Grand Tour’s climate of self-representation when pet and owner were in danger.

Pompeo Batoni’s portraits reveal a high population of dogs on Tour, where the process of casting dogs as extensions of the self continued. Walpole’s King Charles spaniel, Tory, was, like Walpole, used to a sedate life and totally unsuited to harsh physical terrains. Nuneham’s dog Mufty was symbolically sent home to act as his mother’s lapdog. In contrast, Herbert’s Newfoundland, Rover, accompanied him on his Scandinavian and Alpine explorations, while Lady Mary, Holroyd’s hunting dog, tumbled off a precipice in her eager pursuit of game. Both were singularly suited to masters who took pride in their hardy enjoyment of outdoor pursuits. Holroyd even used Lady Mary to highlight his libertine tendencies. During Rome’s carnival, she replaced him in the carriage as a licentious nobleman while he masqueraded as her squire on top.
Imbued with a permissible emotional climate of affection, a Tourist’s relationship with his dog provided an outlet for greater emotional expressiveness even amongst the ‘hardy’, more stoical masculine cultures. When Rover died, the news generated an outpouring of sympathy. Thomas Eyre wrote, ‘Alas! poor old Rover! I am very sorry the poor old Fellow did not live to see his native Country again’, while Lord Pembroke wrote ‘I sincerely regret him, & condole with you, knowing it is a much more serious loss, than vulgar minds can conceive’. Pembroke gave direct permission to grieve over an animal whilst also reinforcing the elite belief in their superior emotional sensibilities. In doing so, he raised Rover to a near-human level of dignity, planning a funeral procession with Coxe and Floyd as pallbearers. Elsewhere Pembroke demanded hypercritical levels of self-control. His change in attitude here indicates that dog-related disasters were legitimate sites of emotional release. In light of the deliberate associations drawn between the dogs and their Tourists, this allowed for some interesting opportunities for conveying and dwelling upon emotions of distress, fear and terror whilst also elaborating upon one’s masculine identity.

This was not straightforward. Herbert’s ‘hardy’ masculinity was augmented through a subtle but not compromising indicator of his emotional sensibilities. Yet such emotional releases could, unless carefully controlled, imperil masculine identities as the case of Holroyd and Lady Mary warns. Equally, Nuneham’s reaction to Mufty’s fate shows that dogs, danger and the associated emotional release were also used to replace ‘hardy’ masculinity with alternative identities. This is particularly evident in Walpole and Gray’s 1739-41 Grand Tour. James Watts has argued that Walpole invested in a rather unique elite identity based around a disavowal of traditional aristocratic ambitions. In resisting active involvement with parliament, government or the military, he resisted an identity centred on a command of power and others. This conflicted with his aristocratic position, forcing him to identify other means of distinction. He achieved this through his literary and aesthetic abilities, a dedication to novelty, and a constant reaffirmation of privileged exclusivity.

Walpole’s identity involved a disassociation from physical performances of endurance, courage, stoicism and command. His comically witty Tour accounts of danger, particularly the 1739 Mount Cenis crossing, were used to that purpose and
questioned accepted ideas of masculine responses to danger. ‘[T]he Devil of Discord in the similitude of sour wine had got amongst our Alpine savages’, nearly plunging Gray and himself off ‘the very highest precipice of Mount Cenis’, and his dog Tory was killed by a wolf. The porters were bestial and demonic; ‘Alpine savages’ with ‘cloven foot’, uncontrollable in their ‘rushed’ moments and drunkenness. Walpole utilised the familiar image of the uncontrolled lower orders but to very different effect. Whereas other Tourists might have demonstrated their command over such men, Walpole deliberately depicted himself as passively seated in his chair, unable to exert command over the situation. Likewise, when Tory was killed, his reaction was ineffective; ‘I saw it and screamed, but in vain’. Walpole depicted himself as a helpless victim, unable to save himself or his dog. In documenting his scream - an external, vocal manifestation of an internal lack of control - he also effectively undermined any personal claims towards stoicism.

Comically mourning the ‘dearest creature’, Walpole was alert to the political irony of a King Charles spaniel called Tory being killed by wolves. Rather than becoming a pathetic figure, he created a self-reflective masculinity that drew authority from mocking his own performance. His correspondents, Henry Seymour Conway and Richard West, responded in spirit and used the incident to refine their literary talents. Their responses showcased their command of classical, literary and historical references ranging from Edgar the Peaceable to Tom Thumb, Catholic canonisation practices and Diana, Goddess of hunting. Like Pembroke, Conway drew upon the literary practice of pet elegies, a fanciful demonstration of verbal dexterity characterised by a certain jeux d’esprit, declaring that his letter ‘like its author…shall carry its sadness not [in] its habits but in its countenance and in the very heart and bowels’. 

Walpole, West and Gray eventually established considerable literary reputations and drew upon the incidents and skills in these letters in their later careers. For example, in 1747 Gray published an elegy on Walpole’s cat, Selina, who drowned in a bowl of goldfish. Like the correspondence surrounding Tory’s death, the elegy was a witty, amusing piece. Gray used Tory’s death to experiment with a variety of literary forms, including a farcical parody of his Tour. In this, he replaced Tory with himself: ‘[Gray] is devoured by a Wolf, & how it is to be devoured by a Wolf.’
reimagining Tory’s death as his, he nodded towards the cultural tendency to cast dogs as extensions of the self and began to effectively draw out the process of exploring death, pain and danger and their associated emotions. Elsewhere, Gray experimented with an approach also found in Sublime discourses. One letter reflected ‘If [Tory] had not been there, and the creature had thought fit to lay hold of one of the horses; chaise, and we, and all must inevitably have tumbled above fifty fathoms perpendicular down the precipice.’ In this alternative outcome, Gray traced the fall that culminated in imaginary death. In Sublime and exploration discourses individuals frequently traced the fall of the precipice with a fixed gaze that divorced consciousness from the analytical self. This visual and imaginary progress culminated with the ground, resulting in an imagined obliteration of the self. Gray’s reflections potentially dwelt upon a similar emotional experience. Whilst briefly done, Gray’s writings on Tory’s death indicate a creative, experimental approach towards meditating upon the worst outcome of encountering danger.

Gray and Walpole consciously used Tory to support their literary identities and ambitions in a manner that legitimately dwelt upon danger and death. Their mediations were more closely tied to inspiration, humour and other literary constructions than to chartering revealing emotional reactions. Other Tourists more heavily bound in emotionally stoic masculinities used dogs to covertly meditate upon danger and the self. For example, Lady Mary’s fall preoccupied Holroyd to the extent that he inserted it as a postscript entry in his letter and journal.

Amidst the Alps Lady Mary in The Pursuit of Game tumbled headlong from a Great precipice of rocks, I was walking & seeing the fall, thought it impossible but she must be dashed in pieces, However she was not the least hurt, she immediately ran towards me shaking her tail in a supplicant manner as if she done wrong –

Holroyd, like Gray, visually traced her uncontrolled descent, which resulted in his imagined outcome of ‘she must be dashed in pieces’. Holroyd consistently wrote Lady Mary as closely connected to him. Even here, she ran straight to him after the fall. As such it could be argued that he read himself into her fall and imagined death. Holroyd’s ‘hardy’ masculine identity strongly influenced his unemotional depiction of
personal danger elsewhere. His decision to include his fearful imaginings over Lady Mary’s fall indicates an area in which he could carefully explore fears that could not be easily expressed elsewhere in his chosen masculine discourse.

IV: Conclusion

The Grand Tour took place because of, not in spite of, the danger and risk involved. As a formative coming of age ritual, it can be viewed as a series of tests. Tourists were tested socially as they met the individuals throughout Europe’s courts and fashionable circles with whom they would eventually treaty, fight and trade. They laid out money on art to decorate seats that were lasting symbols of prestige and importance. The experience of danger comprised another important test. Whether incidentally met or deliberately cultivated, exposure to danger and hardship formed and tested certain masculine virtues and, as such, was a crucial component in the Grand Tour’s purpose, culture and rationale.

The letters, diaries and reports from Grand Tourists, tutors and others were treated as evidence of the success of these coming of age tests. This evidence was circulated and closely scrutinised. As such, it formed an ideal opportunity to construct and assert one’s masculine identity. The importance of danger can be measured through the effort invested in the careful construction of the narratives concerning the Tourist’s emotional and physical reactions. As witnessed through the use of dogs and servants, these narratives deliberately utilised several strategies and could involve a sophisticated response to various wider cultural changes and expectations. While the experience and resulting narrative of danger certainly lent itself to the avocation of a ‘hardy’ masculinity, danger also consistently emerged as useful tool for asserting a wider variety of identities, including the Man of Feeling and the literary wit.

While a vital tool in the construction of individual masculine reputations, danger was also used to uphold the collective maintenance of elite power and identity. The narratives of danger advanced important claims surrounding the elites’ emotional hegemony and fitness for leadership in juxtaposing their courageous self-control against the helpless fear or fearless ignorance of their servants. They were an ideal first opportunity for the next generation of elite males to contribute toward this
collective self-fashioning while simultaneously asserting their personal virtues. Thus, dangers, and the Grand Tour itself, formed an important aspect of the complex eighteenth-century world of elite self-fashioning and power.

1 I would like to thank my supervisor Catriona Kennedy, Robin Macdonald, Kristin Bourassa and the two anonymous reviewers for their generous, thoughtful and formative feedback. Earlier versions of this article were presented at Rethinking the Grand Tour: Questioning Cultures of Eighteenth-Century Travel at the CECS, University of York, and the University of Cambridge’s Early Modern History Workshop. My sincere thanks to the organisers and delegates for their insightful questions and comments. The material pertaining to the Dartmouth family is used by permission of The Dartmouth Heirlooms Trust and Staffordshire Record Office (hereafter SRO).


15 This conclusion is based on my analysis of material relating to over thirty-five Grand Tours from c.1730-1780. See Paola Bianchi, ‘Una palestra di arti cavalleresche e di politica. Presenze austro-tedesche all’Accademia Reale di Torino nel Settecento, di,’ in *Le corti come luogo di comunicazione: gli Asburgo e l’Italia* (secoli XVI-XIX), ed. Marco Bellabarba and Jan Paul Niederkorn (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2010), 135-154, for Turin’s Academy Reale and its martial, diplomatic and courtly aims.

16 Cohen, ‘Manners,’ 319-325.

17 Cohen, ‘Manners,’ 316-319.


23 *Wishire and Swindon History Centre, archives of the earl of Pembroke (hereafter WSHC),* Ms. 2057/F4/278, Instructions for George Lord Herbert...1775-1780; WSHC, Ms. 2057/F4/29, 20th May 1779, Henry Herbert, 10th Earl of Pembroke, London, to Herbert; McCormack, ‘Dance,’ 325-6 contains further details on Herbert’s martial curriculum.

24 WSHC, Ms. 2057/F5/7, 1st December 1779, Herbert’s Grand Tour Journal.

25 WSHC, Ms. 2057/F5/7, 1st December 1779, Herbert’s Journal. See WSHC, Ms. 2057/F4/26, 12th August 1779, Sir Robert Keith, Vienna, to Herbert, for another example of this term.

26 The Grand Tourist, William Windham’s account of this was published in Peter Martel [and William Windham], *An account of the glaciers or ice alps in Savoy* (London, 1744).

60 SRO, D(W)1778/V/874, 8th October 1776, Lewisham, Vienna, to Dartmouth.
61 My sincere thanks to Sheila Thomas for this information.

62 Coxe, 67 Coxe, 66 WSHC, Ms. 2057/F4/31, 30th December 1779, Elizabeth Herbert, Countess of Pembroke, Wilton, to Herbert;
64 '11th November 1739, Walpole to West,' in Walpole’s Correspondence, vol. 13, 188-189.
68 ‘12th March 1740, Thomas Gray, Florence, to Thomas Wharton,’ in Gray, 140.
69 ‘7th November 1739, Gray, Turin, to Mrs. Gray,’ in Gray, 126.
70 Stafford, Voyage, 352, 408, 413-421, 423.