British gentlemen who went on tour to Continental Europe in the early modern period were famously acquisitive: numerous studies have charted the arrival in the British Isles of goods from the Grand Tour. Furniture, artworks, fashion, foodstuffs, and other items both large and small were painstakingly packed and carried across the Continent to adorn the town and country residences of the English aristocracy.\(^1\) Italy was a particularly fertile source of acquisitions. In his general history of the Grand Tour, Christopher Hibbert provides an extensive list of the souvenirs that the average tourist would attempt to obtain in the major Italian cities: books of prints, medals, maps, paintings and copies of paintings at Rome, as well as scent, pomatums, bergamot, imperial oil, and acqua di millefiori; snuff-boxes and silk from Venice; glasses from Murano; swords, canes, soap and rock-crystal from Milan; mosaics of dendrite, and amber, musk and myrrh from Florence; point lace, sweet-meats and velvet from Genoa; snuff and sausages from Bologna; firearms from Brescia; milled gloves from Turin; masks from Modena; spurs and toys from Reggio nell’Emilia.\(^2\)

Hibbert points out that the acquisition of specific items in specific locations was often recommended by the eighteenth-century guidebooks, and slavishly followed by tourists as they made their way north \emph{en route} for home.

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**Book-Buying and the Grand Tour: the Italian Books at Belton House in Lincolnshire**

\begin{flushright}
\textit{by}\\
ABIGAIL BRUNDIN AND DUNSTAN ROBERTS
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Notably, apart from the ‘books of prints’ to be bought in Rome, no other kinds of book make it into Hibbert’s list of desirable purchases. This seems like something of an oversight when we consider that contemporary guide-books often contained, alongside advice on where to acquire certain luxuries, ample instructions on the purchase of books abroad and their subsequent shipment back to England. Robert Dallington’s _A method of travell_, first printed in London in about 1605, includes detailed, practical advice on travelling with books. He advises against bringing many books from home on the trip (‘let them be few or none’) due to the risks of incurring local taxes or unwanted inquisitorial attention. Better, Dallington advises, to buy what is needed on the spot, particularly as continental publishers were likely to stock much material not available in England, and then arrange to ship the books home at the end of the trip.\footnote{Robert Dallington, _A method of travell_ (London: Thomas Greede, [?1605]), fp. ci. See Pamela Selwyn and David Selwyn, “The Profession of a Gentleman”: Books for the Gentry and the Nobility (c. 1560 to 1640), in _The Cambridge History of Libraries in Britain and Ireland: Volume 1, To 1640_, ed. by Elisabeth Leedham-Green and Teresa Webber (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 489–519 (pp. 497–98).} Dallington’s advice finds a parallel in a late-seventeenth-century book on European affairs of state, _Li segreti di stato de i prencipi dell’Europa rivelati_. The author advises ‘Protestant gentlemen travelling in Catholic countries’ to avoid carrying books if possible, ‘in order to avoid risk of censure, for if the Inquisitor finds them he will be obliged to seize the books . . . and what is more, much time will be lost in their examination, since the Inquisition wishes to know everything in detail’.\footnote{‘Cavalieri protestanti Che viaggiano in Paesi Catolici’: ‘[P]er non correre il pericolo di qualche censura, perché se l’Inquisitore il penetra sarà obligato di pigliar i Libri, . . . oltre che converrà perdere lungo tempo all’esame, volendo l’Inquisizione saper distintamente ogni cosa’; Gregorio Leti, _Li segreti di stato de i prencipi dell’Europa rivelati, da vari confessori Politici, per lo beneficio comune di tutti quelli che maneggiano affari publici, e per la sodisfazione de’ più Curiosi . . . Parte Secondar_ ([?Geneva]: Antonio Turchetto, 1673), p. 22.} Instead, any books that were needed could be bought on location in Italian cities, although the author advises the use of a good local guide in order to avoid being fleeced.

Given the attention to book-buying in the contemporary literature surrounding the Grand Tour, it seems safe to assume that this activity formed an important part of a gentleman’s programme while he was abroad. Yet the rich and varied literature produced in the wake of Hibbert’s study continues to be insufficiently attentive to book-buying as a tourist activity.\footnote{Notable exceptions are the studies of Henry Newton, later Puckering, who travelled to Italy in 1636–7 and left clear traces of his book purchases in the Wren Library at Trinity College, Cambridge; and Thomas Coke (1697–1759), 1st Earl of Leicester, who acquired books on his European travels which formed the basis of his fine library at Holkham in Norfolk. See David McKitterick, ‘Adding to the Family Library: an Englishman in Italy in the 1630s’, in _Biblioteche private in età moderna e contemporanea: Atti del convegno internazionale, Udine, 18–20 ottobre 2004_, ed. by Angela Nuovo (Milan: Sylvestre Bonnard, 2005), pp. 105–15; and D. P. Mortlock, _Holkham Library: A History and Description_ (The Roxburghe Club, 2006), esp. pp. 35–68.} This omission is not altogether surprising, given the practical impediments to the subject’s study. The purchase of books can be difficult to track, and tour
accounts which record the purchase of books rarely specify their titles. Travel accounts do still offer the possibility of assessing the amount of overall expenditure on books, thus giving us a sense of the relative importance of this activity but, in order to understand the role of books in the Grand Tour more fully, one must turn to other types of archival evidence. For instance, María Dolores Sánchez-Jáuregui has recently surveyed the book collections of English tourists being shipped home to England on the merchant ship *Westmorland*, when it was captured by the French in 1779. She successfully identified groups of books that had been collected by English gentlemen tourists and were on their way home to private libraries, and which are now in the library of the Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando in Madrid. Sánchez-Jáuregui’s work reveals the insights to be gained from working on unusual sources and underlines the importance of book-buying on the Grand Tour.

Information about book-buying and the Grand Tour can also be gained from the private libraries that wealthy travellers amassed before, during, and after their journeys around Europe, libraries that bear the imprint of time spent abroad in the kinds of books bought, their provenance histories and (if we are lucky) the marks of use they have gathered over time. Collections of books that have remained *in situ* in the libraries for which they were originally intended constitute an invaluable resource for reconstructing the passage of books from continental Europe into the homes and minds of the English aristocracy, not least because these books are far more likely to have ‘preserved their layers of historic evidence’. It is a commonplace that scholars and readers in the early modern period were fascinated by Italy and its cultural heritage, both classical and contemporary. The private libraries of the aristocracy allow us to see English, early modern ‘Italophilia’ in greater definition, establishing what was being bought and imported from Italy, and what was actually being read and absorbed in aristocratic households.

A further benefit of studying private libraries is the opportunity which it offers for considering the reach of the Italian material acquired, beyond the gentlemen tourists themselves to a wider circle of family members, friends, and acquaintances who had the opportunity to consult and use the material in the library of a great house. Mark Purcell makes the important point that

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7 The 2012 exhibition at the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford on the capture of the *Westmorland* made clear the important place of books among a grand tourist’s purchases: the ship was carrying fifty-nine paintings and 294 books when it was captured, all bought by English tourists in Italy. See *The English Prize: The Capture of the Westmorland, an Episode of the Grand Tour*, ed. by Catherine Whistler (Oxford: Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford, 2012), p. 40.
9 On the cultural attractions of Italy in the eighteenth century, see Andrew Wilton and Ilaria Bignamini, ed., *Grand Tour: il fascino dell’Italia nel XVIII secolo* (Milan: Skira, 1997).
country-house libraries were often used by a far wider circle of readers than we might at first assume, including household servants, young scholars, and local gentry. Reconstructing this wider readership through archival and library records allows us to come to some tentative conclusions about the impact of Italian culture on English readers beyond the walls of the country house. In addition, it was common for owners of multiple residences to move their books between them—often between a London house and a country house—particularly before purpose-built library spaces became widespread in the later eighteenth century. Only part of any year would generally be spent in a country residence, away from the company and attractions of Town, and many of the books now in country-house collections were bought for town houses. In urban settings, there were substantially more contexts in which foreign books might be circulated and discussed.

This article presents the findings of a case study of Italian holdings in one English country-house library and pursues questions about the role played by books in foreign travel and the impact of these books on the understanding and appreciation of Italy in England. The spur for this research is the work by the National Trust to catalogue its numerous collections of books and thereby to open up to a wider community of researchers a treasure-store of historical resources. As David Pearson has rightly pointed out, the immense importance of the National Trust’s libraries may not lie in the texts of the books they contain, which are often easily consulted in modern research libraries or in electronic formats; rather, their significance is as records of reading and acquisition, and, in many cases, as collections of historical artefacts which have accumulated marginalia, ephemera, and marks of acquisition that allow us to trace their reception and use. The present study aims to investigate the Italian books at Belton House, Lincolnshire in each of these respects in order to shed light on the reception of Italian culture in one part of rural England.

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11 ‘A proportion of four months in London, a month at Bath or some other spa, a month travelling and six months at home was nothing out of the ordinary for a prosperous gentry family’; Girouard, Life in the English Country House, p. 6.
12 On the Trust’s cataloguing project, see Purcell, ‘The Country House Library Reassess’d’. The National Trust owns 140 historic libraries containing around 230,000 books: further details of individual libraries can be found online through copac.ac.uk.
The library at Belton House

Belton House contains a private library that bears the clear marks of travel and continental book-buying, as well as, more crucially, of the heavy use of and engagement with the books thus acquired. Belton is home to the National Trust’s second largest library, over 11,000 titles, bound in around 15,000 volumes, acquired and assembled by successive generations of the Brownlow and Cust families. Notably, the collection contains a substantial amount of Italian-language material—nearly 300 works published between 1500 and 1900, across a variety of genres and subjects—as well as a number of other titles published in Italy in other languages, and a much larger number of books about Italy or providing instruction in the Italian language, published outside Italy. By way of comparison, the library contains around 500 books in French for the same period, including a large number of guidebooks to Italy produced for the tourist market, often published in Italian cities.

The Italian books at Belton taken as a whole (including the books on Italian topics, as well as those composed in Italian) cover the range of subjects that one would expect in a working library, in which the books were clearly read and annotated but were not for the most part individually valuable. There have never been many fine manuscripts, incunables, or other prestigious collector’s items in the house; instead, the family bought a large number of more ‘ordinary’ books. These include numerous historical accounts and travel books about Italy, such as Lassels’s Voyage of Italy (1670) in a contemporary binding, Addison’s Remarks on several parts of Italy (1718), and various accounts of military campaigns and histories of the Catholic Church. There are also many maps and atlases, of which around

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14 The library at Belton has been fully catalogued by Peter Hoare. Its contents are now available at copac.ac.uk. See also Peter Hoare, ‘The Perils of Provenance: Serial Ownership, Bookplates and Obfuscation at Belton House’, Library History, 18 (2002), 225–34; Hoare’s article contains much useful information about the Brownlow and Cust families.

15 Details of the Italian holdings can be found in full at copac.ac.uk. We are also grateful to Peter Hoare for providing a copy of his detailed survey of the library’s holdings (January 2006, unpublished).

16 A representative example is Mariano Vasi, Itinéraire instructif de Rome, 2 vols (Rome: Pagliarini, 1797), inscribed by John Cust as purchased in Rome, April 1802.

17 Compare this to Thomas Coke’s library at Holkham, which includes hundreds of manuscripts and incunables bought in the second decade of the eighteenth century on the Grand Tour: see Mortlock, Holkham Library. Notably, the books at Holkham do not exhibit any identifiable annotations by Coke.

18 Richard Lassels, The voyage of Italy: or, a compleat journey through Italy (Paris [i.e. London?]; John Starkey, 1670); Joseph Addison, Remarks on several parts of Italy (London: J. Tonson, 1718). A handful of travel accounts of Italy were sold at auction in 1971, along with some Italian books on antiquities: see Sotheby and Co., Catalogue of Valuable Printed Books ... removed from Belton House (London, 8 November, 1971). The following examples are representative: Vincenzo Cartari, Le imagini de i dei de gli antichi (Venice: Vincentio Valgrisi, 1571), lot 49 (p. 10); Charles de Ferrare du Tor, Rome exactly describ’d (London: Michael Young, 1664), lot 60 (p. 11); Girolamo Lunadoro, The Court of Rome (London: Henry Herringman, 1654), lot 170 (p. 25); Taddeo Zuccaro, Illustri fatti farnesiani coloriti nel real palazzo di Caprarola (Rome: [s.n.], 1748), lot 213 (p. 29); John Raymond, An itinerary containing a voyage, made through Italy, in the yeare 1646, and 1647 (London: Humphrey Moseley, 1648), lot 222 (p. 30); Ægidius Sadeler, Vestigi delle antichita di Roma, Tivoli, Pozzuolo et altri luochi (Rome: Gio. Iacomo de Rossi, [1662?]), lot 237 (p. 32).
one hundred were published in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and a significant number are mounted on sturdy linen and stored in slip-cases for use on the road. Guidebooks, phrasebooks, dictionaries, and other language-learning devices form a sizeable sub-category, including French guidebooks and French-Italian dictionaries which demonstrate the status of French as a gateway language into Italian. There are also a number of works on antiquities from various Italian locations and a large number of works in classical Greek and Latin, some of them, as one might expect, in fine Aldine editions from the sixteenth century. An interest in music, and particularly in Italian opera, is well apparent from the collection and can (on internal evidence) be connected to tourism and to the women of the household. Literary works of all types can be found, from Dante and Petrarch through Renaissance authors (Machiavelli, Castiglione, Guicciardini, Ariosto), down to later, eighteenth- and nineteenth-century authors such as Alfieri and Foscolo. Finally, the visual arts were represented through an extensive collection of finely illustrated books, containing plates of landscapes, architectural drawings and diagrams, many of them of Italian subjects and produced in Italy, though most of these books were auctioned in the twentieth century.19

Today, most of the books at Belton are stored in a library room on the first floor and in a smaller study on the ground floor, containing 5,000 to 6,000 volumes each. The remaining books are kept in several attic storerooms and include many works associated with foreign travel.20 This arrangement is quite different from that which existed in previous centuries. It has been pointed out in architectural histories of the English country house that almost all the visual evidence of early library spaces has been expunged from England’s heritage houses through successive attempts at renovation and renewal.21 Before the eighteenth century, collections of books were rarely housed in large, purpose-built rooms, but more often kept in small spaces in or near the family’s private quarters, which were designated the parlour, the closet or the study.22 Book closets often functioned as the personal domain

19 Sotheby and Co., Catalogue of Printed Books Comprising a Portion of the Library from Belton House, Grantham (London, 4–5 March, 1957). More than a quarter of the 150 lots sold from Belton House contain material either printed in Italy or relating to Italian subjects. The following examples are representative: Francesco Bianchini, Del palazzo de’ Cesari (Verona: Pierantonio Berno, 1738), lot 11 (p. 4); Leopoldo Cicognara, Storia della scultura dal suo risorgimento in Italia sino al secolo di Napoleone, 3 vols (Venice: Picotti, 1813–18), lot 24 (p. 6); Raphael, Architettura ed ornati della Loggia del Vaticano (Venice: Santini, 1783), lot 109 (p. 14); John Smith, Select Views in Italy: with Topographical and Historical Descriptions in English and French, 2 vols (London: John Smith, William Byrne, and John Emes, 1792–96), lot 124 (p. 16).
of certain members of the household, typically the master or mistress. Over time, new, purpose-built library spaces subsumed these smaller collections and unified them within a single referencing system.²³

In line with this trend, books do not appear to have featured very much in the layout and internal design of Belton House when it was built in the 1680s. It is noteworthy that a domestic inventory from 1688, the year that Belton was completed, contains no rooms which are explicitly associated with books or reading, such as a library or study, and no dedicated items of book storage.²⁴ The only books recorded in the inventory are the bibles and copies of the Book of Common Prayer in the chapel and its accompanying gallery.²⁵ Likewise, a note entitled ‘Books in my dressing roome att Belton’, written by ‘Young’ Sir John Brownlow in a pocket account book for the period 1693–96, contains just five titles, including ‘Don Qixott’ and another copy of the Book of Common Prayer.²⁶

During the eighteenth century, the number of books at Belton and their visual presence in the house appear to have increased dramatically. A ‘catalogue of the books in the Lady Cust’s study’, dating from 1710, records over two hundred titles, including many literary, classical, and theological texts.²⁷ By the 1730s, a new catalogue listed around 1,300 titles, many of them works on European art history, literature, and antiquities, and many of them likely to have been recent acquisitions or recent arrivals at Belton.²⁸ The increasing number of books may explain the conversion in 1737 of a ground-floor schoolroom into another study.²⁹ By 1754 the book collection at Belton had grown to well over 2,000 titles (in 3,000 to 4,000 volumes) and had begun to occupy new spaces, such as the closets associated with the principal

²³ Thus, for example, the status of women as owners and readers of books is often difficult to track and understand: see Susie West, ‘Rare Books and Rare Women: Gender and Private Libraries 1660–1830’, in Gendering Library History, ed. by E. Kerslake and N. Moody (Liverpool: Liverpool John Moores University Press, 2000), pp. 179–95.

²⁴ Lincolnshire Archives, BNLW 2/2/2/7/3. All references to the Brownlow/Cust family papers in Lincolnshire Archives take the form BNLW followed by a reference number. The collection is still in the process of being catalogued. This may result in some reference numbers being changed. All references were correct at the time of publication.

²⁵ There is also a closet beside the chamber of the Lady of the house, and two closets close to the ‘best chamber’, all of which could have contained a collection of books.

²⁶ BNLW 4/6/8/3.

²⁷ ‘A catalogue of the books in the Lady Cust’s study, 9 June 1710’, BNLW 2/2/6/6. The exact room in question has not been identified.

²⁸ BNLW 2/2/6/7. This catalogue contains the full range of subjects from history to theology to law, as well as parliamentary debates and periodicals. A domestic inventory from 1737 contains further indications of the growing importance of books at Belton, including the appearance of a bookcase and a writing table in one of the two closets which adjoined Lord Brownlow’s bedchamber (BNLW 2/2/7/6, p. 111).

²⁹ See Tinniswood, Belton House, p. 27.
bedchambers.\(^{30}\) The collection was valued at £1,276, a sizeable sum by the standards of the time.\(^{31}\) Many of these changes were overseen by John Brownlow (1690–1754), Viscount Tyrconnel, who inherited the house in his minority and spent lavishly on its furnishings and contents. The library which he had amassed is likely to have been jeopardized by his substantial posthumous debts, although it is clear from the books which remain at Belton that no sale ever took place. Indeed, a catalogue drawn up in 1754 (seemingly on the instructions of his executors) contains numerous additions from later in the eighteenth century, indicating that, even after a period of financial instability, the collection at Belton had continued to grow.\(^{32}\)

As well as contributing greatly to our understanding of the numbers of books and their disposition within the house from the mid eighteenth century, the 1754 inventory also serves in a further way to extend our understanding of book use at Belton. Towards the back of the volume a run of pages is devoted to book lending and borrowing.\(^{33}\) The list includes books loaned to friends and acquaintances, as well as books moved from one Brownlow property to another or taken by members of the household to read on the long coach journey to London.\(^{34}\) We see that the works were valued individually, as their return to the library is carefully recorded in each case. Precious records such as these give us detailed information about specific books being read, by whom, even where.

Alongside loans to family members of both sexes, the records detail frequent borrowings from the library by a wider community around Belton House, including Belton village, the nearby market town of Grantham, and other Lincolnshire estates. Borrowers include successive rectors of Belton, their wives, and other male and female members of local Lincolnshire

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\(^{30}\) The 1754 catalogue is BNLW 2/2/6/8 (the majority of this volume is paginated, but the later leaves have been foliated). The estimate of the number of titles in the library at this date is provided in Peter Hoare, ‘The Brownlows and Custs of Belton House Lincolnshire and their bookplates’, The Bookplate Journal, 6 (2008), 3–37 (p. 15). Having lived beyond his means during much of his adult life, Tyrconnel complicated the situation further by dying intestate. See Elizabeth Cust, Records of the Cust family of Pinchbeck, Stamford, and Belton in Lincolnshire: Volume 2, The Brownlows of Belton, 1550–1779 (London: Mitchell and Hughes, 1909), pp. 214–20. It appears that his posthumous debts still stood at £14,400 in 1758, four years after his death (BNLW 4/6/20/4).

\(^{31}\) BNLW 2/2/6/8, p. 60.

\(^{32}\) While the library increased in size during the nineteenth century, as will be discussed below, during the twentieth century depletions greatly outweighed accessions. Alongside the two sales mentioned above, there was, in addition, a major clearance during the 1920s or ’30s, which saw a sizeable number of books, including foreign language material, offered to a local bookseller to sell on or destroy as he saw fit. We are grateful to Valerie Rumbold of the University of Birmingham for sharing this information with us from her family records.

\(^{33}\) BNLW 2/2/6/8, pp. 73–78, 158–159, [168], fols. 161v–163r, and the final leaf, which is neither paginated nor foliated.

\(^{34}\) A similar borrowing register for the books at Brodie Castle, Moray, Scotland, now owned by the National Trust for Scotland, is cited by Towsey, ‘Private Libraries, Elite Women and Shared Reading Practices’, p. 215.
families.\textsuperscript{35} It is interesting to note that the books borrowed from Belton were often recent publications: a certain Mr John Manton, a local gentleman farmer and frequent library user, borrowed and returned each of the six volumes of Edward Gibbon’s \textit{Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire} between November 1791 and August 1796, beginning when the later volumes of the work had only just been published.\textsuperscript{36} Women feature frequently in the records, sometimes consulting books on cookery and domestic medicine. We see, for instance, that the wife of Richard Cust, rector of Belton, borrowed three volumes of Vincent la Chapelle’s \textit{The Modern Cook} (1733) in 1778.\textsuperscript{37} In other cases, women borrowed works of Italian, French, and classical literature, corroborating the established connection between women and language-learning in the period. One of the additions to the 1754 inventory is a list of books stored ‘In the North Drawing Room for the use of the Young Ladies’, made up principally of late-eighteenth-century French and Italian dictionaries and grammars.\textsuperscript{38} In a similar vein, the records show the daughters of the household in 1792, Elizabeth and Lucy Cust, being schooled simultaneously in geography and French through the use of Charles Rollin, \textit{Histoire Ancienne},\textsuperscript{39} and a later ‘Miss Cust’ borrowing books on French and Italian paintings and statues, in the original languages, as well as Guicciardini’s \textit{Storia d’Italia}.\textsuperscript{40} Thus, although the women of the household did not themselves travel abroad, at least in the eighteenth century, they drew enthusiastically upon the cultural capital that resulted from foreign tourism.\textsuperscript{41}

The archival records for Belton House paint a picture of a collection of books that was in constant use by the family and the wider community

\textsuperscript{35} Mark Towsey’s examination of the sharing of books at Kilravock, Nairn, Scotland reveals a similar list of library users, including members of the local clergy, as well as local traders and members of the household staff. See Towsey, ‘Private Libraries, Elite Women and Shared Reading Practices’, pp. 212–13.

\textsuperscript{36} BNLW 2/2/6/8, pp. 75–76. For Towsey’s commercial relationship with the Belton estate, involving the trading of oats, see BNLW 2/6/1/25/1.

\textsuperscript{37} Vincent la Chapelle, \textit{The Modern Cook}, 3 vols (London: printed for the author, 1733). These volumes are still at Belton.

\textsuperscript{38} BNLW 2/2/6/8, p. 156.

\textsuperscript{39} BNLW 2/2/6/8, pp. 75–76. Charles Rollin, \textit{Histoire ancienne: des egyptiens, des carthaginois, des assyriens, des babyloniens, des medes et des persees, des macedoniens}, 13 vols (Amsterdam: Aux depens de la compagnie, 1730–36). This work is still at Belton, though the absence of some volumes from the Amsterdam edition has been patched with volumes from the Paris edition.

\textsuperscript{40} The books borrowed by the women include André Felibien, \textit{Entretiens sur les vies et sur les ouvrages des plus excellens peintres anciens et modernes} 4 vols (London: David Mortimer, 1705); an unspecified edition of Leonardo da Vinci, \textit{Trattato della pittura}; Paolo Alessandro Maffei and Domenico de Rossi, \textit{Raccolta di statue antiche e moderne} (Rome: Stamperia alla Pace, 1704); an unspecified edition of Francesco Guicciardini, \textit{Storia d’Italia}; as well as various other artbooks and volumes of engravings.

\textsuperscript{41} Towsey also finds evidence of women recommending travel accounts of Italy to one another in communities of female readers in Scotland: Towsey, ‘Private Libraries, Elite Women and Shared Reading Practices’, pp. 219–20. Women connected to the household at Belton did travel frequently to Italy in the later nineteenth century; see the private publication (at Belton House), \textit{Record of Travels and Tours in five portions of the globe, outside the British Isles, by the descendants of Brownlow, Baron Brownlow. Compiled by Robert Needham Cust, LL.D. Completed on his Eighty-fifth Birthday, February 24, 1905} (London: [s.n.], 1905). More generally on women and the Grand Tour, see Brian Dolan, \textit{Ladies of the Grand Tour} (New York: HarperCollins, 2001).
throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The Italian material in
the collection was enhanced considerably by two members of the household,
both of whom became ardent Italophiles in the wake of a youthful Grand
Tour and kept up their engagement with the language and its culture in later
years. The first of these was Sir John Brownlow, later Viscount Tyrconnel,
and the second was his great-great nephew John Cust, later 2nd Baron and
1st Earl Brownlow, who was born in 1779 and died in 1853. The extended
tours of Italy undertaken by these two men, almost a century apart, had a
lasting impact on Belton, not only by bringing books and other objects into
the house, but by instigating an interest in and engagement with Italian
culture among members of the household which was more sensitive and
profound than received assumptions about the Grand Tour might suggest.

Sir John Brownlow: the tour of 1710–11

The first European tour by a member of the Brownlow family following the
construction of Belton House (1684–88) was undertaken by Sir John Brown-
low in the period 1710–11. John was the eldest son of Sir William Brownlow
(1665–1701), the younger brother of ‘Young’ Sir John Brownlow (1659–1697)
who had built Belton House. The early death of John’s father, combined
with the disinclination of his stepmother, Henrietta Lady Brownlow
(1681–1718), to assume guardianship of John and his siblings prompted his
aunt, Anne Brett, née Mason (1666–1753), to undertake this responsibility.42
The fact that his father had died in debt and intestate caused John
considerable difficulty, and he later regretted the ‘many thousand pounds I
have lost in my minority’ through the perceived mismanagement of his
finances.43 John became 5th Baronet of Humby on the death of his father in
1701; he married his cousin Eleanor Brownlow (1691–1730) in
1712, sat in
Parliament as a Member for Grantham (1713–15, 1722–41) and Lincolnshire
(1715–22), and was made Viscount Tyrconnel (an Irish peerage that did not
grant him a seat in the British House of Lords) in 1718.44

Despite the financial uncertainties which afflicted John’s upbringing, it
was none the less decided that he should be sent, before reaching his
majority, on a European tour lasting a little over a year and costing upwards

42 For further details of John’s upbringing, see Hoare, ‘The Brownlows and Custs of Belton House’,
pp. 9–11.
43 Quoted in The Brownlows of Belton, p. 185. This letter was written ‘many years later’ to his
nephew, Peregrine, Duke of Ancaster, and it is not clear if the document is still extant. A letter from
Ann[n] Mason (d. 1717) to John Brownlow in 1711 complains bitterly about the terms of inheritance
that have, she feels, passed property to John that should rightly have come to herself and her children:
‘tis happy for me that some of yr estates are lyable to yr fathers debts, how undone had I else been’
(Ann Mason to John Brownlow, 4 December 1711: Lincolnshire Archives, uncatalogued family
correspondence). All further references to correspondence derive from this uncatalogued source unless
otherwise stated.
44 On Eleanor’s death, Brownlow married Elizabeth Cartwright (d. 1780), daughter of William
Cartwright of Marnham, in 1732. The authors are very grateful to Peter Hoare for the large amount
of information about the family which he has provided in an unpublished document.
of a thousand pounds—a substantial financial investment which suggests the importance that was attached to this kind of continental experience for a young man of his class.45 He was accompanied on his travels by an experienced guide (or ‘bear leader’) named René de la Treille, a Huguenot exile who, partly through the support of John Locke, had become an experienced tutor and continental guide to English families.46 We know relatively little about La Treille, though the part that he played in educating John Brownlow and in shaping his experiences in Europe must have been considerable. We can see, from the travelling accounts that he kept, that he was paid a salary of £100 per annum, a generous amount by contemporary standards.47 In later life, he appears to have exchanged his career as a tutor for that of a clerk in London.48 His will shows that, whilst he was not a landowner, his personal estate was quite considerable, and that he was able, certainly during his later years, to maintain a manservant of his own.49 His connection with the Brownlows seems to have endured until his death in 1731. In April that year, La Treille added a codicil to his will, seemingly to mark his

45 The surviving accounts for this tour cover a period of six months and were standardized into French livres in a deliberate attempt to assuage the complexities of contemporary European currencies. They record that 6,151 livres 6 sous was spent during this period. This figure, at the rate of exchange cited in the accounts (of £1 to 13 livres) equates to £475, from which we can extrapolate an estimate for the full cost of the tour. Besides the six months covered in the accounts, we know from other sources that the tourists spent a further three months in Italy and took four months to complete their journey. If we assume that their expenditure in the months for which we lack accounts was similar to that in the months for which we do have accounts, then we reach a figure of around £1,023, plus whatever was spent prior to the start of the accounts, which were begun in Genoa. For comparison, Ann Mason complains in her letter of 1711, cited above at n. 41, that her daughter, husband, and children are forced to live on an annuity of only £100 per annum, a generous amount by contemporary standards.47 In


47 BNLW 4/6/15/1. The family records cite an account book for 1690/1 (no longer traceable) in which two servants, a ‘George Newson’ and a ‘Mr Gibbs’, receive quarterly wages of £5 8s and £4 10s respectively, and in which Mr Hassard is paid £15 is for ‘seven months teaching Madam Betty [i.e. Elizabeth Brownlow, 1681–1723] at two guineas per month’; The Brownlows of Belton, pp. 168–69. One of Thomas Coke’s tour tutors, Domenico Antonio Ferrari, was paid a stipend of £100 annually from the 1730s to act as librarian at Holkham Hall; see Mortlock, Holkham Library, p. 64.

48 In 1716 La Treille was made a senior clerk in the Treasury, an office which he held until at least 1718, and which paid him £100 per year; see Calendar of Treasury Books Preserved in the Public Record Office, 32 vols (London: His Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1904–), vol. XXX, pp. ccxxxi, 391; vol. XXXI, p. ccclxi; vol. XXXII, p. ccclxxii.

49 TNA, PRO, PROB 11/646. Rene de la Treille is also mentioned by John Brownlow in letters dated 1717 (‘Mr la Treille is gone to Holland’), and 1723 (‘Mr La Treille’s Brother, a worthy minister of the French church at Rotterdam in Holland, dyed lately of an Apoplexy in his pulpit as he was preaching’).
retirement to Belton, in which he bequeathed three pounds to the poor people of the village and left small sums of money to several of ‘my Lord Tyrconels’ servants. In a final affectionate gesture, he left his horses to his former master, expressing the hope that ‘my Lord Tyrconel will do me the Honour of accept[ing]’ them.

Preparations for John Brownlow’s tour seem to have begun well before he left England in 1710. Although no correspondence has been located relating to the tour, evidence from the house itself reveals that John, schooled at home, had by his late teens received a thorough grounding in French, a language which would have provided a natural gateway into Italian. A pair of his geography exercise books, dating from 1708 and 1709, still survives at Belton House. The exercises start with descriptions of the poles, tropics, and the equator, and progress through the different continents, interspersing passages of description with lists of capital cities, navigable rivers, and national population figures and religions. All the exercises are conducted in French, and clearly formed part of John’s general schooling, possibly under the supervision of René de la Treille (see Figure 1). Other fleeting signs of preparation for travel can be found in the library at Belton. A partial copy of Li segreti di stato de i prencipi dell’Europa rivelati (1673) survives in the library in a scruffy cartonnage binding. Notes on the end flyleaf in John Brownlow’s hand show him translating words from the Italian, specifically from the section of the book giving advice to Protestant travellers in Catholic Europe. The author’s advice is playful: he recommends that the traveller avoid at all costs sharing a coach with a priest, who will cause trouble by interrogating him on his religion and seeking to ‘excavate all his flaws’. The idiomatic Italian phrase, ‘scavare la magagna’, has been carefully noted and an imaginative translation—‘pinch out a maggott’—added in the adjacent column. This is the same section of the book that offers the advice to tourists to refrain from travelling with books, for fear of unwanted attention from the local inquisitors. It is interesting to note that Brownlow, who travelled some decades after Turchetto published his advice—which may seem to be no more than a commonplace—was paying particular attention to this

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50 Liber geographicus Joannis Brownlowe, 2 vols. The first volume, which covers Europe, exhibits considerably greater signs of use than the second volume, which covers the rest of the world: it is more heavily worn and is the only one to have been paginated.

51 The mixing of language-learning with other forms of knowledge acquisition including geography was common practice in the period. See for example Guy Miege, A New French Grammar (London: Thomas Bassett, 1678), in which learning the language is combined with arithmetic, cosmography, geometry, geography, etc. Another example is Thomas Rogers, A short and easy method, to acquire the French and Italian languages, by grammatical rules. To which is added an abridgement of geography (Dublin: E. Waters, 1715). Warm thanks to John Gallagher for sharing these references.

52 For further details see Hoare, ‘The Brownlows and Custs of Belton House’, p. 20.
Ce pays est une des plus grandes et une des plus belles regions de l'Europe. Le gouvernement est different selon les lieux.

La religion dominante est la Catholique. Au

maine, la seule professée publiquement excepte les petits chefs des vaudois qui sont

Protestans; et les Juifs a Rome qui y ont des

synagogues avec approbation du Pape.

Il y trouve 40 archeseches, 248 evêches

e 19 universites, et 13 tribunaux d'Inquisition

initiés qui en masquent les cœurs dont la

meritaine et la mer Adriatique.

Les principales rivieres sont les 20, l'addigo

1 contette, l'adida, l'oglio, le Danove,

la Tiber, la Vénise, les Tiber, le l'Adige.

Les golfe sont ceux des Naples, de Gaeta,

de Salerne, de Taranto, de Manfredonia

du Diomino en Toscane.

Fig. 1  Liber geographicus Joannis Brownlowe, vol. 1, p. 182. (Belton House.)
section of the book, and perhaps bore its admonishments in mind when conducting his own tour.53

The overall shape of the tour undertaken by Sir John Brownlow in the company of René de la Treille can be inferred from a variety of sources.54 We know that they were in Padua on 3–4 December,55 in Venice on 6 December,56 and in Rome (where they stayed on the Strada Vittoria) on 6 April,57 that they made an excursion to Naples later that month, returning to Rome by 10 May; and that they finally departed the city on 3 July.58 The principal archival source for the tour is a set of accounts compiled by La Treille in late March, covering the two preceding financial quarters, and dispatched to London from Rome.59 These accounts additionally reveal that the travellers were in Genoa during October and that they spent much of November on their journey to Venice. The explanatory letter with which La Treille concludes the accounts also allows us to make some further inferences about their movements. He describes the unexpected variance in the exchange value of golden pistoles in Geneva and Turin, cities through which we can assume they had travelled. This would usually also have implied a route from Calais to Paris to Geneva, but the continuing hostilities of the War of the Spanish Succession might have complicated the party’s route across Europe. La Treille ends his letter by expressing their intention to ‘stirr out for Naples’ in the near future and stating their objective of making it back to ‘the Hague [with] time enough to cross the sea before Mylord Marlborough’.60 John and his entourage were safely back in England by the late autumn. Anne Brownlow (1694–1779), John’s younger sister, recorded the event in a finely-bound memorandum book which she had inherited from...
her mother: ‘My B[rother] came to London from his Travells Nov; 1711 & to Belton’.  

René de la Treille’s accounts, which he helpfully standardized into livres, provide a fascinating insight into the tourists’ expenses (see Figure 2). Though travel and accommodation account for roughly half the total expenditure, we also see purchases that are likely to have made their way back to Lincolnshire. In Rome, three fans were purchased for 71 livres and two more were bought for 69 livres, expenses which sit well alongside a visit to the ‘Carnival shows’ at the end of the preceding month. There are frequent payments for attending the opera (totalling 129 livres 1 sou) and for harpsichord lessons (102 livres, including 3 livres 10 sous on having the instrument fixed). Another notable expense is 97 livres 16 sous on ‘a velvet and silk lining for a suite’. There are also several entries for decorative pictures for the lids of snuff boxes, which John appears to have collected and which seem to have been very expensive: 83 livres 10 sous on ‘3 snuff box’s pictures’, 63 livres 5 sous on ‘2 pictures more for snuff boxes’ and 34 livres 10 sous on ‘another picture for a snuff box’. These ornamental purchases were matched by the active consumption of snuff, which John was buying plentifully: ‘a pound of snuff’ (11 livres), ‘snuff’ (5 livres 10 sous), and ‘A po[un]d of sn[u]ff’ (4 livres 5 sous). There are several other luxuries that are equally unlikely to have withstood the test of time. These include 46 livres on 25 lb of chocolate (probably for drinking), 35 livres on New Year’s gifts (presumably for other tourists whilst in Venice), 21 livres on 3 ounces of ‘Bergamote essence’, and a combined sum of 72 livres 1 sou on two ‘dinner[s] extraordinary’.

The sums of money spent on books are, by comparison, fairly small: around 60 livres during the six months covered by extant accounts, which equates to one per cent of the total. These purchases were made mostly in connection with John’s musical interests, and include payments for ‘opera books’ and for copies of ‘airs’, though we also find the purchase of ‘some books concerning Venice’ and ‘a book of medals’. Of course the extant accounts cover only the middle section of the tour, leaving several months

61 BNLW 4/8/6/1, fol. 2r. This item is listed amongst other keepsakes in the will of Anne’s mother, Dorothy, as ‘a Table-Book with a Shaggreen Case with Gold Studs and little bits of Gold and Silver Chain’. The chain is now lost, as is the stylus which it would once have connected to the rest of the book. TNA, PRO, PROB 11/455.

62 See above, n. 37. A telling insight into the difficulties of managing finances as one travelled through the Italian states in the early modern period is offered by a note inserted into the travel diary of John Bankes of Kingston Lacy, Dorset, who toured Italy in 1646. The inserted slip of paper lists multiple currencies in use in Genoa, Tuscany, Rome, and Naples: see Voyage de Monsieur le Prince de Condé en Italie: depuis son partement du Camp de Montpellier, jusques à son retour en sa maison de Mouron. Ensemble les remarques des choses les plus notables qu’il a vues en son dit voyage (Lyon: chez Jean-Aymé Candy, 1635). (The book, with copious manuscript notes by John Bankes, is in the library at Kingston Lacy; we are grateful to the house staff for providing access.)
on either side about which little is known. Even within the six months cov-
ered, however, there are sums that cannot be fully accounted for. There are
several payments made by La Treille to John (100 livres at Genoa and then a
monthly allowance of 115 livres once at Rome) that create a lacuna of 445
livres. This money might just as easily have been spent on books as on other
pursuits. Books might have been purchased in greater numbers on the final
leg of the tour, to avoid onerous transportation before they were shipped
home to England; but the accounts are lacking for this portion of the
journey. It would be fascinating to be able to examine in detail the books that
John bought whilst abroad, but the absence of books at Belton today that
can be linked through their inscriptions to this tour hampers any more
precise analysis of his activities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Entries</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oct</td>
<td>Paid to a tailor</td>
<td>2 livres</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Paid for 2 books</td>
<td>3 livres</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Paid for 2 pairs of gloves</td>
<td>3 livres</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Paid for a hat and a sword</td>
<td>3 livres</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nov</td>
<td>Paid for a cap</td>
<td>3 livres</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>For copy out 500 Livres</td>
<td>8 livres</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>For tavern bill of 1/2 florin</td>
<td>1 livre</td>
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<td>For tavern bill of 1/2 florin</td>
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Fig. 2  Tour accounts from 1711 showing purchases for October and November; Lin-colnshire Archives, BNLW 4/6/15/1.
A further likelihood, not revealed by the extant accounts, is that La Treille was also buying books. The pairing up of young tourists with experienced guides provided an opportunity for intellectuals of comparatively limited means to travel more extensively and more comfortably than their resources would otherwise have permitted. The opportunity to buy books was a significant benefit of continental travel for men like La Treille. We see in the accounts that he was drawing his salary as he and John proceeded with their tour, on one occasion paying himself in cash, which suggests that he wanted to make purchases. Though La Treille bequeathed his ‘Books in Generall’ to a fellow Huguenot, Henry Popple, more than a dozen bearing his signature are still at Belton. Three of these were printed in Italy, all before 1711.

While archival sources relating to John Brownlow’s eighteenth-century tour remain scarce, the evidence in his Lincolnshire house of the lasting impact of his European experiences is rich and abundant. Although he had clearly acquired good French before leaving for Europe, John’s proficiency in Italian on his return drew flattering comments from his contemporaries (albeit often from those with an eye on future patronage). A number of Italian grammars and phrase-books bearing John Brownlow’s bookplate are on the shelves at Belton, along with many dictionaries. One of these, John Barton’s *A new italian grammar of 1719*, is dedicated to John, opening with a four-page eulogy that praises him for being ‘a perfect Judge of Italian, as well as of the other polite Languages: All (sic) which You have acquir’d not meerly for themselves, but for the nobler Ends of improving your Mind, and being Useful to your Country’. Similarly, in the 1729 edition of his *History of the Rise and Fall of Masaniello*, Francis Midon included a six-page dedication that describes John as being ‘versed in most of the polite Languages’.

The inventory of the Brownlow family’s possessions at Belton taken in 1737 tells us that a ‘Map of old Rome’ was kept in John’s dressing-room, a glimpse of a concrete way in which memories of Italian travel might be preserved once back home. A more obvious way in which tourists might preserve and enhance such memories, and publicize their impact, was to purchase high-status objects, such as the many Italian paintings bought by

63 See, for an example of the kind of book a bear leader (i.e. a learned guide) might purchase, *The English Prize*, ed. by Sánchez-Jauregui and Wilcox, item 118 (pp. 284–85). Domenico Antonio Ferrari, Thomas Coke’s tutor, bought books and manuscripts when working as a bear leader, as well as instructing his young charge in his own book and manuscript purchases: see Mortlock, *Holkham Library*, pp. 64–66.
64 TNA, PRO, PROB 11/646. In a recent communication, Peter Hoare has alerted us to two Elzevir travel books in the library at Hatfield House also bearing René de la Treille’s signature.
67 BNLW 2/2/7/7, p. 112.
68 The Italian Books at Belton House in Lincolnshire

John that were sourced through London agents and displayed in London and Lincolnshire.68 Furniture was also acquired, including a fine Italian ebony table cabinet inlaid with lapis lazuli, imported at great expense from Rome in the wake of the tour for the Brownlows' London house in Arlington Street and later moved to Belton, where it remains today.69 John also kept up his interest in Italian opera, placing himself at the cutting edge of English interest in Italian music in the early eighteenth century.70 When the Queen's Theatre opened in London's Haymarket in 1709 and rapidly established itself as England's thronging centre of Italian opera,71 John became a subscriber to related publications, and also commissioned manuscript transcriptions of new operatic works, including those by Alessandro Scarlatti and his son Domenico.72 As with language-learning, engagement with Italian music passed from John Brownlow to the women of his household, as is demonstrated by the ownership marks in a number of the operatic scores and other musical works in the study at Belton.

Finally, and most obviously, John Brownlow, on his return from Italy, filled his house with books, in Italian—works of literature, philosophy, history—and in other languages on Italian subjects and themes. The library catalogues compiled during his lifetime, along with the inventory made just after his death, testify to the significant expansion of the Italian material at Belton

68 A letter to his sister of 1747, thanking her for the unexpected gift of a painting, mentions the use of picture agents including one who was clearly Italian: ‘she [John's wife] fancy'd some of my picture merchants in London had sent itt unbespoken, & I believe [sic] she thought itt Count Viani, but I was sure itt could not be him, when itt was carriage pay’d’ (John Brownlow to Anne Cust, 12 October 1747).

69 The 1737 inventory for the house in Arlington Street shows that the dining room, where the lapis cabinet was kept, also contained two ‘views of Venice’ (BNLW 2/2/7/7, p. 124). The drawing room was also full of Italian art, including works supposedly by Veronese, Carlo Dolci and Carlo Cignani. A 1754 inventory (BNLW 2/2/7/8, unpaginated) shows that the cabinet had been moved to an untitled room in the same house. The cabinet is now in the Blue Dressing Room at Belton, having been repurchased by the National Trust at auction in 1984; see Belton House, Lincolnshire. The Property of The Lord Brownlow and The Trustees of the Brownlow Chattels Settlement, 30 April to 2 May, 1984, Auction Catalogue, Christie’s Sale 2876, Belton House (London: Christie, Manson and Woods, 1984), p. 141.


72 Hoare, ‘The Perils of Provenance’, p. 229. The manuscript copy at Belton of Domenico Scarlatti, Tolomeo et Alessandro, contains the only known copy of the instrumental parts for the latter two acts: see Malcolm Boyd, ‘“The music very good indeed”: Scarlatti’s Tolomeo et Alessandro Recovered’, Studies in Music History Presented to H. C. Robbins Landon, ed. by O. Biba and D. W. Jones (London: Thames and Hudson, 1996), pp. 9–20. John’s interest in the opera was maintained in later life: a letter to his nephew John Cust written in 1736 states, ‘I am drawn in to be a subscriber to both operas; that of ye Haymarkett where Farinelli sings, is much ye best, though I think them both good. But almost all ye good singers are gone, except Farinelli & Strada. Two operas spoil one another, & both are thin of company’ (John Brownlow to John ‘Speaker’ Cust, London, 25 January 1736).

73 Musical works at Belton belonging to women include a manuscript collection of songs in English, French, and Italian signed ‘Anne Masson’ (sic) (i.e. Anne Mason, later Brett (1666–1755), aunt to John Brownlow, Viscount Tyrconnel) and Songs in the Opera Calid Cloitida (London: Jacob Tonson, [1709]), this latter work containing an ownership inscription by Alice Brownlow (1659–1721), commonly known as ‘Dame Alice’, who was the wife of ‘Young’ Sir John, the builder of Belton House.
House in the first half of the eighteenth century. The catalogue dating from the 1730s contains a considerable number of works on Italian history, antiquities, art, architecture, many of them printed abroad and many acquired after his return from his tour. This catalogue includes sixteen titles, in Italian, French, English, and Latin, under the subject heading ‘Historia Italica’, including recent travel guides to various Italian cities that predate the tour, as well as works published after 1711. It also includes twelve works of Italian literature ranging from Dante to Ariosto, including a number of sixteenth-century editions. The catalogue additionally contains a two-page insert in a different hand listing further Italian titles in folio: these include a three-volume *Vocabolario della Crusca*, works of literature and books of prints. The 1754 catalogue shows greatly increased library holdings in all areas, demonstrating the concerted book-buying of Tyrconnel throughout his lifetime. As well as the numerous additions to this catalogue after 1754, there is also a four-page insert which lists sixteen works of Italian literature, and other volumes on art, architecture, and antiquities.

Even in his old age, long retired from parliamentary life and living permanently at Belton, John continued to buy books from London dealers, using his nephew, Sir John Cust (1718–1770), as an intermediary. Family accounts for the 1740s detail a sum of £50 a year ‘for books in London’, probably purchased for Belton House, and £76 on books and bindings in eight years.

A letter written in 1749, five years before his death, sets out careful instructions regarding the acquisition of, and payment for, a number of titles which demonstrate the range of his interests at this late stage of his life. He mentions works of literature (Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, in an edition published that same year), science, contemporary politics, classical literature, and theology:

I also beg the favour of you to pay the second payment for me to Doctor Newton’s Milton, I have his Receipt for the first payment lock’d up in my Buroe at London; but will cancell it immediately upon the Receipt of the Book. I subscrib’d to Doctor Trebeck, his Uncle. I have 29 Numbers of Albinus’s Anatomy, if there are any more Numbers, pray desire Mr Dodsly to send them me, & I will pay for the whole. I should like to have a true copy of the Poll for Westminster Election to see who & who are together. There is the Life of Socrates, Elihu on Job, by the provost of Oriel, which if, with the rest, you would send me, would much oblige.

After John’s death, the library continued to expand at a considerable rate. The catalogue which was drawn up at his death in 1754 was used until the early nineteenth century, by which time it had roughly doubled in size, with

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74 The 1730s catalogue contains seventeen pages of additions at the rear, beginning in 1735 (BNLW 2/2/6/7).
75 BNLW 2/2/6/7, pp. 55–56.
the addition of a significant number of Italian books and books about foreign travel. The family’s acquisitions were not antiques and are unlikely, individually, to have been expensive. The emphasis appears to have been more on practicality than on prestige, an attitude which, broadly speaking, is reaffirmed in the impact on the library at Belton of the second major European tour.

The Honourable John Cust: the tour of 1801–2

John Brownlow, Viscount Tyrconnel, died without issue in February 1754. Belton passed through his sister Anne to his nephew, Sir John Cust, Speaker of the House of Commons (1761–70), and then to his great nephew, Sir Brownlow Cust, 1st Baron Brownlow (1744–1807). His eldest son, John Cust, 2nd Baron and 1st Earl Brownlow (1779–1853), the second grand tourist to have filled the library shelves at Belton with Italian books, was thus the great-great nephew of John Brownlow, Viscount Tyrconnel. John Cust grew up at Belton House in an environment already enriched by the travels of his predecessor and no doubt benefited from the now substantial library during his own youthful education. Although he seems to have been a worry to his parents, suffering from a speech impediment (probably a stammer) that caused them to withdraw him from Eton by 1794 and seek remedial private tuition,78 preparations began when he reached the age of twenty-one to send him on an extended period of travel in the company of his younger brother Henry (1780–1861).79 The brothers’ departure for the continent was preceded for John by a four-month tour of the British Isles with a Cambridge friend, W. F. Brayley, in the summer of 1800; this took in the Lake District, Scotland, Northumberland, and Yorkshire. Insular tours of this kind had grown in popularity following the French Revolution, as a means of fulfilling the desire to travel without venturing into the unstable lands of continental Europe at a time of conflict with the French Republic. The brief respite offered by the truce and subsequent Peace of Amiens from 1801 to 1803 once again opened the way to foreign tourism, however, and the Cust brothers set out during precisely this window of opportunity.80 A set of accounts for the British tour survives, in which every kind of expense is

78 John Cust appears on the Eton class-lists for 1791 and 1793, but is no longer listed by 1796, although the names of his brothers Henry and Richard both appear: see H. E. C. Stallyon, The Eton School Lists, from 1791 to 1850 (London: E. P. Williams, 1863). His parents’ concerns about his speech impediment are detailed in a correspondence with the school (G. Stevenson to Brownlow Cust, Lord Brownlow, 27 November [n.s.]), and with Sir George Baker, a London physician (G. Baker to Brownlow Cust, 15 September 1792). On Baker’s recommendation, John Henry Renouard was appointed as tutor to the Brownlow children in 1793; he became Vice-Master of Trinity College, Cambridge, in 1806. See John Venn, Alumni Cantabrigienses, 10 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1922–1954), IX, 276.  
79 Henry’s participation in the foreign tour remained in doubt until shortly before departure due to ill health (Henry Cockayne Cust to and from his father, 10 July 1801).  
recorded, ranging from small acts of charity to more substantial outlays on transport and accommodation.\textsuperscript{81} Without having to leave the British Isles, John was thus able to prepare himself for continental travel in a very practical way. The book purchases which are recorded for this tour are usually described as ‘John’s Book’, suggesting that John, more than his companion, saw a strong connection between tourism and book-buying.

The continental tour undertaken by John Cust began in July 1801, when he sailed with Henry and a French-speaking servant named Royer from Great Yarmouth to the German port of Cuxhaven, near Hamburg. The brothers’ departure was preceded by some months of considerable effort on the part of both parents to amass an address book of continental contacts who could perform the necessary introductions for their sons in each new city.\textsuperscript{82} More practical arrangements were also considered, including the fitting out of a coach that was to be dismantled and carried with them by water, as well as the purchase of various maps and guidebooks.\textsuperscript{83} We see from the borrowing records in the 1754 library catalogue that the Cust brothers took with them Johann Putter’s three-volume \textit{Historical Development of the Present Political Constitution of the Germanic Empire}—an indication both of their serious intentions and their expectations about the books which could readily be obtained while they were abroad (see Figure 3).\textsuperscript{84} Like many of their fellow tourists, the Cust brothers undertook the difficult journey to St Petersburgh in order to witness the coronation of Tsar Alexander I. As John’s father, Brownlow Cust, remarked in a letter addressed to the brothers in St Petersburgh, ‘I can easily imagine that the shew of the coronation may not be worth the candle, tho’ numberless Englishmen are going to it, amongst others the son of Dr Ellis & Bear-Leader to L[or]d Thurlow’s nephew & others I believe with them from Cambridge’.\textsuperscript{85}

From St Petersburgh, John and Henry travelled to Moscow and then southwest via Warsaw, Dresden, and Prague to Vienna, arriving in January 1802. In Vienna they parted company. Henry was in more of a hurry than John,
not wanting to forfeit another term at Cambridge and thus needing to be home by March (John had graduated in 1800). He therefore decided to travel on a more limited tour down into Italy in the company of a Cambridge friend, Parker, and return home with him. The account book for the tour shows a payment to Henry on 3 January 1802 of £300 for his onward journey. John, meanwhile, intended to continue at a more leisurely pace, and to see Munich and Innsbruck before reaching Venice by February. He wrote, ‘Italy [is] a country which notwithstanding the pillage of the French holds out great temptations to me, and which I feel a strong inclination to gratify. My return may thus be delayed until the end of the summer’. During his

86 Perhaps John Parker (bapt. 11 October 1781), who was admitted to Trinity College on 11 February 1799 (Venn, *Alumni Cantabrigienses*, IX, 26).
87 BNLW 4/6/161.
88 John Cust to Brownlow Cust, Vienna, 6 January 1802.
stay in Vienna, John joined up with a Cambridge friend, Robert Rushbrooke (d. 1845), and with the tutor and antiquary John Chetwode Eustace (c. 1762–1815) who was accompanying a young Irishman, Philip Roche. (Eustace later wrote up his tour as the best-selling Tour through Italy (1813), which he dedicated to John Cust, Lord Brownlow.89) This expanded group of four continued the journey into Italy.90

As with John’s insular tour the previous year, the Custs kept a careful record of their expenses, large and small. Using the same account book which John had taken around the British Isles, the brothers kept their accounts jointly whilst they travelled together; later, once Henry had left, John used the book as his own. The expenditure which it records equates to around £2,500.91 John Cust also maintained an assortment of notebooks during the Italian leg of his tour in which he recorded information, copied down inscriptions, and sketched buildings.92 Following much the same route as his ancestor a century earlier, John and his party travelled down the Italian peninsula from Venice, taking in Padua, Verona, Mantua, Modena, Bologna, Rimini, and Ancona before arriving in Rome. From Rome they travelled to Naples, spending five weeks in June and July in that city. A plan to visit Sicily was at some point abandoned, so the party returned to Rome then travelled north again to Florence, and from Livorno (Leghorn) by ship to Genoa, Milan, and Lake Como, before heading home across France. John arrived back in England in November 1802 and immediately took up his seat in the House of Commons as an MP for the borough of Clitheroe, Lancashire, to which his father had arranged to have him elected in absentia while on tour.93

Books played an important part in this tour, especially during its latter half, under the influence of the tutor Eustace. The accounts show that the frequency and value of book purchases increased significantly after he joined John at Vienna. Purchases include guidebooks and maps, and an Italian dictionary bought in preparation for the move south into Italy.94 The journal which John had begun in England but which had stagnated after a

89 On John Cust’s meeting with Eustace in Vienna, see Benjamin Colbert, Shelley’s Eye: Travel Writing and Aesthetic Vision (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), p. 131. Eustace acknowledges in the dedication to his book that a number of details of his account were provided by John Cust: ‘To Lord Brownlow, the Author must acknowledge another obligation, as he is indebted to his Lordship for several useful observations during the course of this work, and particularly for the details of the excursion to the island of Ischia, and the account of the solitudes of Camaldoli and of Alvernia’ (John Chetwode Eustace, A Tour through Italy, 2 vols (London: J. Mawman, 1813), 1, p. xv).
90 We see from the Custs’ account book (BNLW 4/6/36/1) and from uncatalogued correspondence that Rushbrooke had been following a similar route to John Cust, albeit a little ahead of him, and that their stays in various cities had overlapped. It is not known how Roche and Eustace reached Vienna, but Eustace is cited in the tour accounts on 9 January 1802 borrowing money to purchase books.
91 BNLW 4/6/36/1. This calculation is based on the exchange quotations provided in Denzel, Handbook of World Exchange Rates, 1590–1914. It excludes sums lent to or made on behalf of fellow tourists.
92 BNLW 4/5/19/1–6 (journals), 4/5/20/1–3 (notebooks), BNLW 4/5/21 (art/architecture notebook).
93 All of these details are contained in the uncatalogued tour letters from John Cust and his father.
94 BNLW 4/6/36/1 (25 January 1802).
few pages in northern Europe was recommenced after Vienna and proceeded to fill five further volumes, indicating perhaps that increased book purchasing coincided with a generally more serious approach to travel. In total, the accounts show that sums equating to around £75 were spent on books, meaning that book purchases make up roughly three per cent of the total cost of the tour, a three-fold increase on the early eighteenth-century tour.

Several dozen of the books at Belton House today (see Figures 4 and 5) can be linked to the European tour, either through inscriptions (John signed his name, as well as place and date of purchase, in many of his Italian books) or through annotations which link the text to a particular experience or object that caught the imagination of one of the tourists. Of these, some are ‘working books’, such as guidebooks and theatre programmes, and some were treated with higher regard. A working book which survives is a guide to Rome and Tivoli by Andrea Manzzale, which retains the coloured paper wrappings in which it was sold and exhibits numerous signs of use, including annotations and underlining on several pages. At the bottom of a page describing the Villa Adriana at Tivoli, for example, John noted many of the sites which he could see looking out across the hills from this vantage point. Similar practices can be observed in a guide to the paintings of Parma by Clemente Ruta. Where a painting by Cesare Aretusi is mentioned, John Cust notes, ‘copy from Coregio (sic) is in the library’. John’s life at Belton, growing up in a house that had been filled with Italian paintings by an ancestor following his own Italian tour, had clearly prepared him for the trip. An inscribed playbill from Naples for a production of Giuseppe Palomba’s musical comedy Chi dell’altrui si veste presto si spoglia, indicates that John, like his great-great uncle before him, enjoyed Italy’s musical offerings; in this case, he attended a performance in which the leading lady was the acclaimed Neapolitan diva Carolina Miller. Examples such as these demonstrate the concerted manner in which John Cust went about his travels, suggesting the importance of books in his apprehension of his physical surroundings and in their subsequent memorialization.

95 Andrea Manazzale, Viaggio da Roma a Tivoli concernente le notizie più esatte de’ monumenti illi stri di quella città (Rome: Fulgoni Antonio, 1790).
96 Manazzale, Viaggio da Roma a Tivoli, p. 25.
97 Clemente Ruta, Notizie delle pii celebri pitture esistenti in Parma (Lucca: [s.n.], [1793]), p. 55. Other fine Italian paintings came to Belton House from John Cust’s father-in-law, Abraham Hume (1749–1838), one of the most devoted collectors of Venetian art of the period, although many of these works were subsequently sold; see Linda Borean, ‘Abraham Hume e Giovanni Maria Sasso: il mercato artistico tra Venezia e Londra nel Settecento’, in Auctions, Agents and Dealers: the Mechanisms of the Art Market 1660–1830, ed. by Jeremy Warren and Adriana Turpin (Oxford: Beazley Archive and Archaeopress with the Wallace Collection, 2007), pp. 161–68.
Fig. 4  Tour accounts, April 1802, showing purchase of a book on 14 April (BNLW 4/6/36/1).

Fig. 5  The purchased book, a copy of Francesco Cancellieri, *Descrizione delle funzioni della Settimana Santa nella Cappella Pontificia* (Rome, 1802), inscribed by John Cust.
A minority of books has been handled rather differently. A history of the Holy House of Loreto by Antonio Gaudenti is in pristine condition and has been elegantly bound, probably by an Italian bookbinder. Additionally, it has become the durable container for another souvenir of the tour, a small engraving, seemingly also bought at Loreto, which has been tipped into the front of the volume. There was clearly a categorical difference between the guidebooks which were used heavily in situ, but which were left in their original wrappers and ultimately stored out of sight in the attics at Belton House, and more distinguished works which were bound, sometimes in elegant Italian bindings, and which subsequently acquired places in the family’s main library spaces. Interestingly, in John Cust’s case, it seems that there were more of the former than the latter, reinforcing the impression that his book-buying was motivated not by a desire to collect, but by an informed engagement with the culture through which he was travelling. Books performed a vital function in his tourism, as a means to unlock (and later to recollect) the main attractions of his tour. This impression is reinforced by the multiplicity of journals and notebooks which John kept while travelling. His many annotations, no doubt informed by Eustace’s knowledge of the country and its treasures, were part of a larger scheme of noting and recording information; books were bought not just to be read, but so that the information which they contained could be processed and more deeply learnt. A hierarchy can be observed: guidebooks, heavily annotated, fed into rough notebooks; these in turn informed the narrative of the more polished tour journal; ultimately, some fruits of this journal appeared in published form in Eustace’s Tour through Italy.

As with the Italian tour undertaken by John Brownlow in the early eighteenth century, many of John Cust’s greatest investments in Italian culture occurred sometime after his return to Lincolnshire. He put considerable effort into expanding the library at Belton, and into ensuring that its multilingual credentials were upheld, by the acquisition of many Italian titles and the expenditure of considerable sums of money in redesigning the architecture of the house’s library. Jeffry Wyatt, later Wyatville (1766–1840), was employed between 1809–10 to draw up a scheme to convert part of the old kitchen in the house’s north-west wing into a new ‘great library’. Wyatt also designed the presses for the library (still in situ today, albeit in a different location), and the room was subsequently furnished by Gillow and Co. with chairs, writing table, and green silk curtains for the doors of the book cases. When the famous bibliographer Thomas Dibdin visited Belton after John Cust’s renovations were completed, he commented favourably on the new library room: ‘It is one of the prettiest books-depôts imaginable; containing some admirable volumes of virtú and antiques—all with good

100 See Tinniswood, Belton House, pp. 56–57.
mellow-toned backs—such as comfort, while they attract, the eye of the bibliomaniac’.  

As with his ancestor Viscount Tyrconnel, there is evidence that John Cust retained a high level of fluency in the Italian language and a reputation as a student of Italian culture long after his return to England. He was responsible for commissioning an allegorical statue of Religion from the acclaimed Italian sculptor Antonio Canova (1757–1822) to adorn the funerary monument of his first wife (Sophia, née Hume, 1788–1814) in Belton Church. He initiated a correspondence with the artist, spanning the period 1816–26, with a letter written in fluent and stylish Italian. He also acquired a twelve-issue set of the short-lived Italian language periodical published in London, L’Ape Italiana a Londra (1819), which was sent together with a handwritten note from the editor, who offered the volumes gratis and sought a continuing subscription. The editor had been advised of John Cust’s interest in Italian by his old Cambridge friend, Edward Dodwell, who had travelled through Italy at the same time, although the fact that the pages of the journal were left uncut suggests that the publication may have come too late to capture the Earl’s enthusiasm.

As with Sir John Brownlow’s tour almost a century earlier, the tour early in the nineteenth century heralded a period of heightened interest in Italian culture on the part of the residents of Belton House. The women of the household in particular benefited from the renewed engagement with all things Italian. In a letter thanking him for the gift of a bookcase in 1803, John’s mother Frances expressed particular interest in the translation of Petrarch by Susannah Dobson that he included: ‘I confess she is not of my acquaintance. With your permission, however, I shall be glad to know her

102 On Canova’s popularity in the period, see Christopher M. S. Johns, Antonio Canova and the Politics of Patronage in Revolutionary and Napoleonic Europe (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998). Edward Dodwell, who remained in Italy until 1817, also acted as an intermediary in organising this commission: ‘as I knew you would be anxious to hear how your statue was advancing, I went to Canova the day before I quitted Rome, & have the satisfaction of informing you that it is sufficiently finished to shew that it will be a very beautiful thing, & will do you a great credit in introducing one of Canova’s masterpieces into our Country. It will be completely finished in a few months—I have a letter for you from Canova, who no doubt will tell you when he thinks it will be ready for imbarcation’ (Edward Dodwell to John Cust, Paris, 23 March 1817).
103 BNLW 2/2/3/5.
104 L’Ape italiana a Londra. Giornale per le colte persone della Gran Bretagna e d’Italia, compilato da una società d’Italiani, e pubblicato il 15 e penultimo dì d’ogni mese (London: Schulze e Dean, 1819). The Belton copy appears to be unique. The letter to Lord Brownlow inserted inside issue 4 (30 May 1819) reads: ‘I take the liberty to leave some Numeros of a journal which appears since two months under the name of l’Ape Italiana a Londra. Mr Dodwell who honors me with his friendship recommended me to do so thinking that perhaps it could be amusing to your Lordship to become like him a subscriber. The subscription’s price is of only two schilling a number. I shall have the honor to call again in some days for an answer, if it is agreeable to give it to your Lordship. Meanwhile I am with respect Your Lordship’s’ The most humble servant B. De Sanctis—Editor of the Journal’. The journal’s content ranges from erudite essays to gossip, commentary on current events, accounts of the movements of professionals in Italy (to new academic jobs for example), book reviews, advice on how to eat figs, and correspondence. On Italian-language publishing in London, see Parkin, ‘Italian Printing in London’.
opinion of your favourite Petrarch'. As well as borrowing material from the library dealing with continental art and literature, Elizabeth and Lucy Cust, John’s sisters, practised their own language skills. Elizabeth wrote to her brother in Italian in 1802 while he was away on tour, clearly aiming to benefit as far as she could by association from the linguistic advantages her brother was able to enjoy. She and her sister were both complimented by contemporaries on their knowledge of the language: a copy of Nardini’s *Teatro italiano* of 1800 in the library at Belton contains an Italian dedication from the editor to the same Elizabeth and Lucy Cust, in which they are praised for being ‘endowed with every talent’ and ‘most knowledgeable about Italian literature’. The sisters also painted murals in the ceiling lunettes of the drawing room depicting putti at ease in pastoral landscapes, works which were clearly inspired by Italian models, and which today nicely complement the Italian collections on the library shelves.

While John Cust seems to have been more a reader of books than a collector of books-as-treasures, he none the less became a member of the exclusive Roxburghe Club in 1842. However, the fashion for acquiring first editions of seminal literary works at exorbitant prices never took hold at Belton. Rather, the library collections remained a resource that was characterized by engagement with and collective enjoyment of works of every type, with a notable emphasis on continental and Italian books.

**Conclusion**

Travelling abroad was a serious undertaking for young men in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, not only due to the practical difficulty and expense that it entailed, but also because of the onus on them to acquire the breadth and wisdom that would be needed in future public life. Despite his long-standing Italian interests, John Brownlow may have felt unequal to the serious task of learning which foreign travel required of him: ‘I never knew how to serve myself . . . lazy as I am naturally, [yet] my freinds (sic) will do me the justice to confess that I am not a cold or indifferent freind’.

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105 Frances Cust to John Cust, Belton, December 1803. The book in question is Susannah Dobson, *Petrarch’s View of Human Life* (London: John Stockdale, 1791) (an abridged translation of Petrarch’s *De remediis utriusque fortunae*).

106 Elizabeth Cust to John Cust, 23 February 1802.


108 The drawing room was converted in 1876 into what is now the library: see Tinniswood, *Belton House*, p. 16.

109 At the 1812 sale of the Duke of Roxburghe’s large collection of rare books, £2,260 was famously paid for a 1471 first edition of Boccaccio, a staggering amount of money at the time. The club of the same name was formed in commemoration of this sale; see Nicolas Barker, *The Roxburghe Club: A Bicentenary History* (Roxburghe Club, 2012).

Cust, on the other hand, grew up in a house that had been filled by his ancestor with Italian literature, paintings, and artefacts, and he thus set out on his Italian tour as a more serious, scholarly, and well-informed tourist than his predecessor. It is perhaps no surprise, then, that while Brownlow spent his money on snuff and chocolate, Cust spent his on numerous books, which he proceeded to study and annotate. He set off for Italy on a self-conscious quest for culture, and recognized the effort that would be needed to attain this goal. As Cust’s friend Robert Dalrymple wrote to him on their return home, ‘I do not know how much I am improved by being abroad. I certainly endeavoured to make good use of my time . . . my conscience tells me that my leisure hours have not been misapplied . . . I believe few young people have lived more regularly than your Party & me since leaving England’.\(^\text{111}\)

While scholars have focused on the acquisition of art objects, furnishings, and other luxuries on the Grand Tour, they have overlooked the role of books in guiding tourists in their other purchases and in their apprehension of European culture. The importance of books was particularly great for younger tourists, who were not yet financially independent. Books provided a comparatively economical means of cementing continental experiences as a prelude to the importation of more lavish goods through agents and intermediaries later in life. Furthermore, continental books bought during and after travel contributed to the culture of foreign-language learning in the country house. In this culture the learning of languages was significantly unlike that which occurred in other contemporary contexts, such as diplomatic and courtly circles or those of mercantilism and trade. This culture was not only less goal-orientated, but it also unlocked languages for the wider household, including the women who did not travel abroad. We can confidently suppose, based on the evidence at Belton, that Italian books were enjoyed in the original language, in the context of an enhanced understanding of literary and historical contexts, and by a readership that extended beyond those who had gone on tour. As the borrowing records at Belton testify, books were enjoyed in conversation with other interested readers and library users, by the household, and by the extended family and the wider community. The Grand Tour thus becomes the central event in a continuous process of cultural accumulation and renewal, in which the tangible reminders of previous tours helped to fuel the imaginations of future generations of tourists. Each new tour brought back a wealth of books, objects, and experiences, which had a lasting impact on the country house, its occupants, and all those who crossed its threshold.

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\(^{111}\) Robert Dalrymple to John Cust, London, 20 December 1802.