Other Travellers

In the Margin of the Group Portrait

One summer's day in 1747 an Amsterdam bookkeeper by the name of Hermans (b. 1681) and his wife took the passenger barge to Hoorn. After a short stroll around the city, the couple travelled to Medemblik to visit relatives, then on to Enkhuizen, and returned the next day by passenger barge.¹ They frequently made excursions of this kind, travelling around Holland and Overijssel to visit distant relatives, and always finding the time to inspect a monument or walk around the city. Yet Hermans did not belong to the upper crust of Dutch society; on the contrary, his well-thumbed Geheim Boeckje (Secret booklet, i.e. his diary) reveals that he was sooner a member of the middle class. Having begun his rather undistinguished career as an apprentice cloth merchant, he eventually became bookkeeper to the burgomasters of Amsterdam, spent a long time searching for a marriage partner, and accumulated only a modest amount of clothing and other possessions.² The Geheim Boeckje thus suggests that early-modern travel was not reserved only for the wealthiest regents and businessmen. By the middle of the eighteenth century, members of the Netherlandish middle class had joined in: junior civil servants, clergymen, small traders, notaries and barristers increasingly undertook 'diverting summer excursions' (divertissante somertogjes).³

Hermans's advanced age is also remarkable. Dutchmen who undertook a Grand Tour were usually young adults, whereas this Amsterdam bookkeeper was over sixty when he travelled to Hoorn and Medemblik. Another exceptional aspect is the presence of women travellers. Hermans often went on excursions with his wife, and his niece from Leiden paid them regular visits. On the Grand Tour, however, women were scarce.⁴ Hermans's Geheim Boeckje therefore sheds light on several groups that seldom figure in books on the Grand Tour: adult

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¹ Hermans, Geheim Boeckje, 105.
² Hermans, Geheim Boeckje, 2–6.
³ For other examples, see Sjornaal; Streng, Memorië van een plaisier reisje; Meersch, Reisbeschrijving naar Duitschland; Royen, Journael gehouden van reisie.
⁴ Towner, 'The Grand Tour' , 311; Burgess, 'The Grand Tour', 13; Leibetseder, Die Kavalierstour, 9–11, 46–51; Frank-Van Westrienen, De groote tour, 22, 37, 262; Black, Italy and the Grand Tour, 140–42.
travellers, members of the middle class, and women and girls. At the same time, the diary invites us to examine ‘pleasure trips’ (speelreisjes) and other forms of travel that were gaining in popularity in the eighteenth century. Owing to the focus on the classical Grand Tour, these less spectacular, more everyday kinds of travel behaviour have often been overlooked or neglected. Scrutinizing a series of dog-eared travel journals such as Hermans’s brings these new travellers and their pioneering types of travelling more clearly into focus. Did adults, both male and female, begin to travel more in the course of the eighteenth century? Did barristers, notaries and junior civil servants choose other destinations and have other reasons for travelling? Even though such questions may sound somewhat trivial, they are nothing of the kind. After all, influential theories in tourism studies maintain that changes in travel behaviour are often induced by changes in the social profile of travellers. Age, gender and socio-economic circumstances are crucial variables in this equation.

The Upper Middle Class

The burghers of Holland, Flanders and Brabant conceived of their world as a social order consisting of people from all walks of life. The margins were inhabited by the very wealthy at one end of the spectrum and the truly destitute at the other. The ‘men of government’ (heren van regeringe), established merchants and members of the landed gentry contrasted sharply with the down-at-heel rabble – drifters, beggars, sailors, unemployed soldiers, dock-hands and drudges – just above whom were the smallholders, shopkeepers, journeymen and unskilled workers. Situated somewhere between these two extremes was the amorphous category of the middle class: entrepreneurs with medium-sized businesses, low-ranking officials, military officers, barristers, physicians, professors and city clergymen (the upper middle class), as well as small tradesmen and artisans (the broad middle class). Unfortunately, it is difficult to assess the fortunes of these middle groups – in contrast to the urban elites – because records of their estate inventories and tax declarations seldom survive. Their profession will therefore serve as a proxy, even though this choice is