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Review Article

Grand Tourists in General and Particular

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Rosemary Sweet, *Cities and the Grand Tour: The British in Italy, c.1690–1820* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2012). 329 pp., illus. ISBN 978 1 107 02050 4. Hbk. £62.

Brendan Cassidy, *The Life & Letters of Gavin Hamilton (1723–1798) Artist & Art Dealer in Eighteenth-Century Rome*, two volumes (London and Turnhout, Harvey Miller Publishers, 2011). 440 and 415 pp., illus. ISBN 978 1 905375 59 2 (set). Hbk. £150.

The literature of the social and cultural phenomenon known as the Grand Tour is extensive. Works on this topic, both generally fascinating and of great specialist academic importance, are legion. Two books on the subject, both by the prodigiously productive Jeremy Black, were the focus of a review article which I published in this journal some years ago. These – *Italy and the Grand Tour* and *France and the Grand Tour* (both 2003) – were undeniably significant contributions to the subject and were packed with material of great interest, much of it culled from a remarkably wide range of archival sources. But their standing, and indeed their general utility and 'accessibility', was vitiated by a number of problematic characteristics which caused me to commend them only with reservation. They were also oddly derivative of previous work by Black himself, and were marked by excessive repetition. My review article[1] coupled these two Grand Tour books with one on British eighteenth-century antiquaries by Rosemary Sweet, a work of great distinction.

At the end of my joint review of Sweet's *Antiquaries* and Black's twin Grand Tour volumes, I observed that Professor Sweet was herself working on a study of the Grand Tour in its purely Italian – and therefore in its most important, indeed its absolutely fundamental – manifestation. I suggested that, if she followed a parallel method of research and deployed similar resources towards a book akin to her *Antiquaries*, she would be likely to 'compel us to consider the whole subject anew.' She has now produced her own impressive contribution to the literature of Grand Tour studies; and so we must indeed revisit the Tour and its fortunate participants. In doing so with Rosemary Sweet as our 'bear-leader', we see new sights and enjoy fresh prospects yet on familiar 'classic ground', and we meet some new companions on the voyage.

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[1] I. G. Brown, 'Eighteenth-Century British Antiquaries and Grand Tourists', *Scottish Archives*, 11 (2005), 129–41.

To some degree the way had been marked for her by the two Jeremy Black books (and of course by other, earlier works on the topic in general). But, in following an independent course which is – apparently paradoxically – at once rather narrower and yet rather broader in its parameters, she has given us a work which is (to follow the colour metaphor alluded to above) a 'red' as opposed to a 'black' book, and one which will surely long remain a most important contribution to the study of the Grand Tour and its cultural significance for the British.

The real strength of the Jeremy Black *Grand Tour* books was their use of archival sources. In my *Scottish Archives* review I praised him for this. The private journals and correspondence of travellers provide a distinctive voice quite different from printed accounts intended for public consumption, these often drawing upon each other (by a method of what Sweet calls 'cutting and pasting') and adhering to convention in terms of views expressed or matters described and discussed. Manuscript records of the Grand Tour offer, as Black argued, something akin to 'the real tourist experience'. Adhering firmly to this belief, Sweet has been equally assiduous in her pursuit of tourists through the mazes of British archives, and she has quoted judiciously from many of these unpublished diaries and letters. Black quoted perhaps too much, too breathlessly and too repetitiously; but one could perhaps wish that Sweet had quoted rather more than in fact she does. But then she is a highly disciplined scholar, and she never loses sight of her particular purpose in writing her book.

Rosemary Sweet is an urban historian. Her book is specifically about the *cities* of the Grand Tour as the British saw and reflected upon them, and as they compared them (usually unfavourably) with contemporary urban developments at home. In this way, she uses the Grand Tour experience 'abroad' to help define the essence of 'British-ness' and what, at the time, were the perceived merits of 'home'. This does not make her new work any the less interesting than some other Grand Tour studies of a more general kind and having a less focused purpose: her work is very interesting indeed. It is also very readable, always allowing for a degree of modern 'academic' phrasing and word use, and the occasional socio-economic cliché which creeps in with its jargon jangling. But we do need to remember why she approaches the subject in the way she does. This book is about the Grand Tour of Italian *cities* – how travellers experienced, described and represented them – and is approached in the context of the study of urbanism. She points out early on, and correctly, that the Grand Tour was very much an urban thing: people travelled *through* the countryside to stay *in* towns and cities.

Sweet also makes the link between the historical significance of the Tour per se and the importance of the way it was recorded – in journals or in letters – by the travellers themselves: 'The Grand Tour had an important role to play in the construction of British elite masculinity, providing the opportunity to display the key qualities of taste, virtue and judgement both through the activity of sightseeing and through the reflective performance of writing, whether in letters home, diaries or published accounts.' This passage sums up well both the Tour itself and the archival or literary record, this second-level degree of importance attaching to a cultural and social phenomenon being especially relevant to readers of *Scottish Archives*.

This review is written for an archival journal and one with *Scottish* in its title. It will be a convenient method of progress though the mass of material cited by Sweet if I comment on the Scottish sources used. Jeremy Black tantalisingly alluded to the extensive Grand Tour journal of Sir William Forbes (1792–93) in the National Library of Scotland (NLS), but perversely did not once cite it or quote from this important record. Sweet, by contrast, makes extensive use of the Forbes journal.[2] Indeed I think she may cite and quote Forbes as often, or more often, than she quotes from any other manuscript source. I wonder whether she was pointed towards this diary by the observation in my 2005 review article that the Forbes journal constituted a wonderful potential quarry which might profitably be worked by a scholar of the Grand Tour. But, alas, my review article is not even cited where it really should be, at the end of the very first footnote to the first chapter of her book where two other surveys of recent Grand Tour literature are highlighted. But then, of my own other forays into Grand Tour scholarship, only one is cited …

Jeremy Black did not mention the two sets of travel diaries of Sir James Hall of Dunglass (1783–83 is the date of the specifically Italian journals)[3] also in the National Library. This oversight I pointed out; and Sweet has homed in on these. Hall's account is, I think, the second most frequently cited among the Scottish sources. Interestingly enough, Sweet tells us that Sir William Forbes had read Sir James Hall's journal. Hall had evidently written it for the benefit of a small circle – a wholly different and very much more limited audience from that which writers of published travel accounts hoped to attract – and she suspects that Forbes likewise intended or expected his journal to be read in the same way. The copious Forbes journal in NLS is clearly a fair copy, prepared over several winters following his return from Europe, and he has spatchcocked into this manuscript long gobbets of Gibbon, Robertson, Roscoe and other contemporary writers.

Both the Hall and Forbes journals are so full of interest that they could well have furnished very much more by way of anecdote and example than they do. (The best anecdote culled from the Forbes journal relates to Sir William's disgust not simply at being shown an exceptionally lewd statue in the museum at Portici but his outrage at the extortionate fee demanded by the guide for showing it!) But in Sweet's hands the study of the Grand Tour is much more of an austerely pursued topic than it was in the books of more 'popular' writers such as the late Christopher Hibbert, or even than it was by a fellow academic like Jeremy Black. I mean no criticism of Sweet in saying this: her book is admirable and impressive, and the subject matter could hardly fail to inform the specialist or fascinate even the general reader. But she has, as I have already pointed out, a specific agenda and chooses to approach the subject from a particular angle: this makes her book rather different from previous studies.

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[2] National Library of Scotland (hereafter NLS), MSS 1539–45.

[3] NLS, MSS 6324–8.

Roger Robertson, younger of Ladykirk, is another Scottish traveller whose letters have been used effectively by Rosemary Sweet. I had myself written on Robertson specifically in Venice[4] (cited in *Cities and the Grand Tour*) and on him more generally, deploying some choice quotations and drawing attention to his epistolary methods[5] – this publication not being cited by Sweet. My declared intention to write further on Robertson's tour (1750–53) at greater length had possibly led her to draw less from his letters than I might have expected her to do. Robertson was an interesting but somewhat earnest young man who wrote in French to his father to show him how proficient he was in the language of international travel, and even then about all the most worthy and correct aspects of the Grand Touring experience. To his mother and sisters he wrote in English (with an element of Scottish idiom), telling all these relatives about rather different aspects of his Italian activities in varying levels of detail and in a way that he thought would appeal to the female mind and outlook.[6] Rosemary Sweet may not have very much liked the Robertson approach of 'talking down' to the females of his family, because she herself has a great deal to say on the place of women on the Grand Tour and on women as commentators on the Italian scene, in this following up Brian Dolan's earlier work on this aspect of the general Grand Tour experience.[7] Indeed, in the Sweet interpretation of the Grand Tour, women deserve as much if not more recognition as perceptive commentators than their male compatriots. In this she is freshly original and very interesting indeed: her first chapter on 'Experiencing the Grand Tour' stresses the female view strongly and effectively. This is not unfettered feminism, merely setting the scholarly record straight. Woman writers (published and unpublished) on the Grand Tour did not generally 'undermine the prevailing models of female knowledge and taste by directly challenging male authority in areas of connoisseurship or antiquarian or historical expertise'. Many clearly enjoyed art more than antiquity because its appreciation was not so dependent upon pre-existing classical learning. And they did not have to risk getting sunburned among the ruins, as was Anne Miller's worry. Mrs Coutts did no good to the cause of female erudition and women's intellectual worthiness to travel as cultural equals alongside men when she said of the Colosseum that it would be 'a *very* pretty building' when finished and whitewashed.

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[4] I. G. Brown, 'Water, Windows and Women: the Significance of Venice for Scots in the Age of the Grand Tour', *Eighteenth-Century Life*, 30:3 (2006), 1–50.

[5] I. G. Brown, 'A Grand Tour Letter-book of Roger Robertson, Younger of Ladykirk, 1750–53', *Friends of the National Libraries Annual Report 2003*, 24–7.

[6] NLS, Acc. 12244, Grand Tour letter-book of Roger Robertson, 1750–53.

[7] B. Dolan, *Ladies of the Grand Tour* (London, 2001).

'Colosseum' is spelled throughout 'Coliseum', which I find contrary to historical sense, but which must be Cambridge house style. There are a number of incorrect spellings in the book, sometimes of Italian words and terms: for example, the area within the ancient walls of Rome but which in the age of the Grand Tour remained as unbuilt-upon pasture, gardens and vineyards was the *disabitato* not the 'disabatio'; the land surrounding Naples was in ancient times the *campania felix* not the 'campagna felix'(this last surely a mixing of Latin and Italian). Certain facts are awry. The 'Coliseum' cannot have been seen as symbolic of the 'decline in the standards of morality and public virtue of late imperial Rome', nor can it have 'symbolised the excess and luxury of the later empire' even if the great bath complexes perhaps did that: the Flavian amphitheatre is a construction of AD70–80. The 'Scaligieri tomb' in Verona is, in fact, a complex of monuments rather than one single funerary tribute. Robert Adam (had he been mentioned) would hardly have been among those alleged to 'routinely dismiss' Piranesi's 'imaginative renderings of the ancient city' of Rome. Solimena might have been included among the handful of Neapolitan artists admired: he was Allan Ramsay's master. It is the Palazzo Medici Riccardi in Florence, not the 'Riccardo Medici'. The Carthaginians were most certainly not defeated at Actium! But these are petty reviewer's quibbles in a book that is really excellent.

I had never before thought of the Grand Tour as 'a stage for the performance of elite masculinity'; but I suppose that Sweet is justified in calling it this. Of course women could also, on occasion, be upsides with the men. The best anecdote in the book relates to the hoydenish Ann Flaxman (wife of the sculptor) and Vesuvius. Quite a lot of women travellers did in fact tackle the ascent: no Italian female would have dreamed of doing so (they barely walked anywhere if they could avoid it, let alone climbed volcanoes), thereby demonstrating the superior qualities of British womanhood. Mrs Flaxman, helped by an 'additional draught of strong beer' went up on her mule, 'most gallantly singing'. Beer-swilling 'ladette' that she was, she chose to slide down the mountain on her backside. Discovering gems like this, Rosemary Sweet must have enjoyed some at least of her archival research, even if she never overlooks the strong need in writing an academic book such as this to introduce terms and concepts along the lines of 'elite homosocial libertine culture', something that in the course of time, and with the growing appearance on the Grand Tour scene of both more women and more urban-based travellers, becomes 'the increasingly numerous heterosocial middling presence'.

It strikes me as odd, even perverse, that some outstanding Scottish sources should be completely overlooked. Perhaps Rosemary Sweet reckoned that Robert Adam – 'Bob the Roman', alias '[his] dearest Mother's British boy' (to quote two of his self-awarded epithets in his letters) – had long been so well known as an observer of the Italian scene in the 1750s that he could readily be set aside on this occasion. Adam's fame as a sparkling correspondent on the Grand Tour is, of course, very largely due to John Fleming's brilliant use of the remarkable letters that came to light among the Clerk of Penicuik muniments many years ago. Robert Adam, not exactly one to hide his light under a bushel (or perhaps that should be a corn-husk garland from his repertory of neoclassical ornament), would surely not have agreed that he could ever be left out of such an account! Still, no more important book on the British experience of Italy or on the emergence – as a result of that experience – of a precocious British artistic talent has ever been written than that which Fleming published.[8] It was truly revelatory. Love him or loath him – both attitudes are perfectly possible when one reads his wonderful letters to his admiring family back home in Edinburgh – Adam can hardly be ignored. Yet Sweet does not once mention him; nor does she cite Fleming. I can't help feeling that our Bob might profitably have made it even occasionally to her pages, because he does have the most trenchant things to say on everything, Italian city life and urban townscape most certainly included. But one can't expect everything in a book such as this, especially one with (as I have to keep reiterating) a very particular 'take' on the Tour.

Gavin Hamilton is another letter-writer who well might perhaps have been used to point. But probably his letters, now almost all published (see below), were not conveniently available when Sweet was writing her book. Yet Hamilton is merely mentioned once, and then only in passing. That reference places him in company with some other British antiquaries, dealers, *ciceroni* (call them what you will) who were such a feature of the eighteenth-century Italian Grand Touring scene. Of these men, James Byres, a fellow Scot, is himself discussed only a few times. On one occasion he is mentioned on the strength of his apparent ability to reduce the essence of the Colosseum, a rather 'male' preserve with all its suggestions of blood and violence, for the female mind. For his women pupils he would tease out certain aspects of the structure and its story such as he thought would be likely to interest them. Byres's Southern Italian and Sicilian journal in the NLS is listed among Sweet's manuscript sources consulted, but no apparent use of it is actually made in her book.[9] The letter books of Andrew Lumisden might have been used to profit: several have now been acquired by the National Library from various sources over recent years.[10] And, by the bye, might not Lumisden's interest in the high-rise housing of ancient Rome (the *insulae*), as set out in his *Remarks on the Antiquities of Rome*, have been sparked by familiarity with the high-density living conditions in the tenements of the Old Town of Edinburgh? The captivating, illustrated journals of James Hall, younger son of Sir James Hall of Dunglass, which are also in NLS,[11] would have furnished some excellent material on Florence,

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[8] J. Fleming, *Robert Adam and his Circle in Edinburgh and Rome* (London, 1962).

[9] Byres's journal is NLS, MS 10339.

[10] The Lumisden letter-books are NLS, MSS 14260–2 (of 1759–61, 1767 and 1769–70 respectively) and Accs. 8774 (of 1762), 11328 (1751–55) and 13018 (1763). There is also Acc. 10475, which is a microfilm of a letter-book of 1765.

[11] NLS, MSS 27623–37. On Hall, see I. G. Brown, 'Intimacy & Immediacy; James Hall's Journals in Italy and Germany 1821–1822', in (ed.) C. Richardson and G. Smith, *Britannia*

Rome and Venice, and would have supplied some additional similes for the striped stonework of Tuscan cathedrals: Rosemary Sweet quotes travellers referring to these buildings as 'harleqins' jackets' or 'zebras' coats', and might have added James Hall's splendid 'sailors' inexpressibles'. And there are other sources which I might have expected to see reference to in the book.

Sweet makes the interesting observation that though the Grand Tour was dominated by aristocratic or well-born young men, none of the published accounts which so form our idea of the Tour as a cultural phenomenon was actually written by them. Rather these travel accounts were the work of 'the middling sort' – tutors, clergymen, aspiring men of letters, antiquaries, physicians, artists, architects, etc. This fact renders all the more valuable the manuscript sources in which that travelling élite recorded their immediate and personal insights into the experience of travel. Sweet's analysis of the different characteristics of such archival evidence is acute. The journal of a Norfolk merchant reveals that Tobias Smollett, author of the splendid epistolary *Travels Through France and Italy* – a work still much enjoyed by modern readers, not to say one relied upon as a source by several modern writers on the Grand Tour – never stirred from his room in Turin (so the innkeeper told the Norwich visitor) but depended instead on his *valet de place* for his local knowledge.

An important feature of this book is its emphasis on two under-researched aspects of the wider story of the Grand Tour. The first is the question of how, in the later eighteenth and earlier nineteenth century, the 'classical' vision of Italy evolved into one that focused on 'Italia romantica'. The second (a function of what Rosemary Sweet sees as part of the British transition to modernity in the eighteenth century) is the 'shift in cultural values away from neoclassicism towards medievalism and the gothic'. Increasingly, she suggests, visitors travelled in Italy with two versions of the Italian past in mind: the rationality and order of classical antiquity; and the unruly, disordered violence of the gothic middle ages. In this she breaks some fresh ground, I think, in Grand Tour studies. Very little has previously been written on what British travellers thought of those Italian monuments that were not classical, and why they came to appreciate them for their own sake – if indeed they did. She shows that a growing literary taste for the picturesque and the world of romance had as concomitant development a changing appreciation of the gothic. This trend replaced the previous 'collective ignorance' of its very existence and the attitude where the gothic was simply ignored into obscurity. But I admit to being left rather puzzled by her chapter 6, with its extended digression on the historiography of the categorisation of gothic styles and attempts to settle upon an accepted nomenclature. I felt we were a long way from the subject of the Grand Tour and the cities forming the core of its itinerary, even though I could

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Italia Germania: Taste & Travel in the Nineteenth Century (Edinburgh, 2001), 23–42; and idem, 'James Hall's Paris Day', *Scottish Archives*, 17 (2011), 13–25. See also, most recently, I. G. Brown, '"Tre volte terra classica." La spedizione siciliana di James Hall', introduction to James Hall, *Diario Siciliano (Febbraio–Marzo 1822)*, ed. R. Portale (Lugano, 2013).

understand that a consciousness of Gothic architecture and its variations was indeed growing in acceptability.

The chapters on the four great cities of Italy – Florence, Rome, Naples and Venice – are extremely well constructed and are full of insights into these places in the lives of British Grand Tourists and the ways in which they experienced them. Archival sources have been trawled to profit. Florence was the most desirable place for prolonged residence, a sort of home from home. There was not so much in the way of unfulfilled expectation there than in the other cities because it was much less known beforehand through school or university reading, and less familiar through paintings and engravings, travel literature and the like. It was also clean, unlike the other places. Interestingly, cleanliness was perceived as ever more important as the period covered by Sweet's book advances: what might have been tolerated in 1700 was treated as shocking 80 years later, partly because British cities (is she including Edinburgh?) had become more easy on the olfactory sense. It is part of what she calls the 'recalibration' of relationships in the way visitors described Italian cities. Sir Horace Mann added a note of continuity for countless British visitors, introducing them to society and, as we learn from Sweet, on one occasion presenting a young man to the elderly *contessa* who had been his father's mistress.

Sweet is very good on Naples, about which we tend to know less than we do of the travelling experience of Rome or Venice. Sir William Forbes wrote of the 'lounging, idle style' adopted there after the hectic round of archaeological sightseeing in Rome. Her summing-up of the essence of the place is spot on: a dangerous frisson combined with seductive beauty, a peculiar balance of menace and attraction. Tourists wrote in their journals of their *ciceroni* admitting to having committed murder or grievous bodily harm. The differing views of the *lazzaroni* are fascinating. They are, apparently, quite different in unpublished accounts from those expressed in print. Childlike innocence and charm was the received 'literary' opinion, where the authors were articulating or rehearsing fashionable rhetoric; whereas in personal diaries and correspondence, in which there was less emphasis in writing for a particular readership or creating a work that conformed to certain literary expectations, travellers tended to be much more critical of the roughness of the Neapolitan mob.

Venice, *città galante*, the libertine city, was generally thought of as a place for a short stay: in the British psyche it was unsettling because it was so unusual and curious – but strange, too, and melancholy, and thus uncomfortable. The manuscript accounts back this up amply. Venice could not be judged, as other cities were, by the quality of her pavements. Young men could be – and were – very naughty in Venice: Sweet tells us of Philip Yorke, 'whose letters to his uncle were a sanctimonious exercise in affirming his unwavering adherence to a path of virtue in the midst of temptation'. Roger Robertson was also very keen to tell his father how upright he was his behaviour. Did these young men protest too much their rectitude and innocence? Later on, visitors to Venice responded to *La Serenissima* not just for itself but as Byron and other poets had epitomised it in verse. Here, the example of young James Hall might have been cited to the chapter's benefit.

In the context of her discussion of Rome, Sweet has much to say about the use of maps by tourists: apparently these useful things were at one time more 'a medium for the representation of antiquarian knowledge' than they were 'a means of articulating modern urban space'. Sweet's text here refers to Sir Richard Colt Hoare but her footnote to James Boswell. Talking of him, I'd have thought Boswell might have liked a map to guide him to the nearest lady of pleasure. But, to be serious, Sweet's discussion of the use and purpose of maps and guidebooks is interesting. Rome's antiquities were as much intellectual prompts as objects of curiosity in their own right. The purpose of viewing them was to recall the piece of Latin poetry or ancient historical event with which they were associated, rather than to understand them as buildings or as constituent parts of a city. That I can entirely accept. Sweet's promotion of Charles Cameron – a Scot when it suited him – as some sort of architectural and antiquarian hero rather than as the opportunistic and somewhat shady character he was, I can't. Very recent research into Cameron and his use of the Richard Topham drawings now at Eton College might have caused Sweet to seek an alternative exemplar of the effect of Rome on an emerging mind.[12] Robert Adam, or the Adam draughtsman George Richardson, whose handful of letters in the National Library tells us so much of what Rome meant to a man of quite humble station,[13] would have served her purpose better.

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Two weeks before I unwrapped and began to read Brendan Cassidy's two handsome volumes, I was myself in Rome. There, in a single day, I encountered (in the museum at Ostia) classical sculpture excavated by Gavin Hamilton in his role, first as archaeologist and subsequently as art dealer; and then, that evening (in the former Palazzo Braschi, now the Museo di Roma), huge canvases on Homeric themes by the same Gavin Hamilton, this time in his role as one of the most significant neoclassical history painters of the day.

Hamilton was one of the kenspeckle figures on the Roman scene during the great age of the Grand Tour, when many of the leading *ciceroni*, dealers and antiquaries were Scots – a remarkable constellation of men constituting what Mrs Piozzi called 'the Scotch Phalanx'. He himself was one of those men – artists, architects, antiquaries: men professionally engaged with art and antiquity – who may, perhaps, not properly be classed as 'Grand Tourists' in the normal sense of rich young men 'doing' Europe with a nominally cultural purpose. But in practice we tend to group together all British visitors who went to Italy at this period with the same broadly similar aim in their travel.[14] All visitors to the Eternal City knew Hamilton, or at least knew *of* him: his influence on British taste was profound. That influence was to be noted in three areas, all intimately interconnected in the one personality and the one circle of taste and patronage. Hamilton was a most distinguished dealer in (on the one hand) old master paintings and (on the other) classical antiquities. The obtaining of the latter, either for stock or for specific markets, required him to become an archaeologist – if not quite in the modern sense then certainly as an excavator of many highly important ancient sites such as Hadrian's Villa at Tivoli. Yet Hamilton had gone to Rome initially to be a painter, and it was, indeed, as an original artist that he hoped to be remembered. He was celebrated as an artist in his lifetime, and was esteemed in Italy (the Museo di Roma paintings are ex Villa Borghese) and throughout Europe. He was also collected by some British patrons. But his reputation soon vanished, and his art fell from favour – to be rescued from oblivion only in modern times and as a result of an increasing interest in the *settecento* and in Grand Tour studies.

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[12] A. Aymonino, with L. Gwynn and M. Modolo, *Paper Palaces: The Topham Collection as a Source for British Neo-Classicism*, exhibition catalogue (Eton, 2013).

[13] NLS, MS 3812, ff. 1–4 (of 1761–62), on which, see I. G. Brown, '"The Fittest Place in Europe for our Profession": George Richardson in Rome', *Architectural Heritage*, 2 (1991), 29–40.

Brendan Cassidy has done a superb job. The effort that has gone into this publication is prodigious. The result is a triumph of scholarship which could hardly be bettered. Cassidy has produced a book which will be of fundamental importance to all those working in the field of British taste and collecting. The texts of 333 of Hamilton's letters are printed here, those in Italian being offered in the original and also in lively translation. The letters are extensively annotated and these notes themselves present a mass of scholarly information, culled from many disparate sources. The substantial 95-page introduction – itself one of the most important pieces of writing to date on Hamilton's life and work in general, and drawing on wider archival research in Scottish sources – includes many allusions to individual letters from this corpus. This structure makes the whole publication function smoothly as one major work of reference. There is a judicious series of in-text figures, and a separate section of plates illustrating Hamilton's paintings and comparative pictures by others, but more especially a good selection of some of the most famous of the marbles he excavated or handled: works of sculpture that now ornament many of the most celebrated public collections of the world, or remain in British country houses. There are notes on Hamilton's correspondents, a copious bibliography, and a detailed and comprehensive index.

Naturally the author is to be warmly congratulated on a splendid achievement. But his publisher, equally, is to be commended for the boldness of vision in undertaking such a work. The book is beautifully printed and produced, and Harvey Miller Publishers have taken a risk that I hope will be repaid by the good worldwide sales that Cassidy unquestionably deserves. One might, perhaps, have expected mere online publication of such a large corpus of letters on recondite subjects which, after all, few are likely to read through for pleasure – though they might indeed derive much of that from a minute reading, and some amusement too, particularly when one considers how much insight is shed on what one might call the psychology of dealing and collecting. Hamilton used many and various wiles to tempt potential buyers to commit themselves to a purchase: to hurry them, he would tell them such-and-such a work was almost spoken for or had gone; that the Pope himself did not have a better specimen; that Lord so-and-so had just paid more for something less fine; that such statues were becoming very hard to find; and so on. It is all fascinating. Cassidy is sardonically witty in his description of how Hamilton conducted business with the young, rich and gullible Earl of Breadalbane, 'reeling him in slowly'. He sold to others to make Breadalbane see how desirable works were; mentioned the names of other collectors as buyers of his stock; made him regret missed opportunities; told him he would not be much longer in Rome; stressed that good works were less and less easy to come by; gave (intentionally or otherwise) intriguingly false provenances; etc., etc.

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[14] See the fundamental work of reference for Grand Tour studies, compiled from the Brinsley Ford Archive: J. Ingamells, *A Dictionary of British and Irish Travellers in Italy 1701–1800* (New Haven and London, 1997).

Not a few letters in the edition come from Scottish collections, including those in Register House and the National Library of Scotland, or accessed through the National Register of Archives. Almost all are interesting, and in some the sense of discovery is palpable and the accounts of excavation and pursuit exciting, even riveting – especially when the Pope sends his inspectors of antiquities round to Hamilton's house to bag the best from a recent dig for the new Museo Pio Clementino in the Vatican. Particularly remarkable is Hamilton's retrospective account (in Letter 161, of 1779) of the course of his diggings at Hadrian's Villa. We can revel, vicariously, in almost endless tales of treasures pulled from the yielding earth. The letters allow us to participate, as it were, in the recovery of splendid spoil, classical art of the first rate now to be found in the world's museums, but at the time simply 'things worthy of a deep dilettante to furnish a cabinet'.

The essence of Hamilton's own art is encapsulated in an early letter to the Marquess of Tweeddale preserved in the National Library. Hamilton hoped to produce a history picture 'representing some great & heroick subject so as to fix the attention of the spectator & employ his mind'.[15] Cue all those Homeric series and half-grandiose, half-insipid mythologies of Hector and Andromache, Achilles and Patroclus, Paris and Helen.

There is, however, a problem. Of Hamilton's three most regular correspondents, one was a Venetian picture dealer and agent, Giovanni Maria Sasso, and two were rich and voracious British collectors hungry for ancient art, the Earl of Shelburne (later Marquess of Lansdowne) and Charles Townley. Almost all of the many letters to Townley have just been published elsewhere![16]

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[15] NLS, MS 14552, ff. 20–21v, 24 September 1755 (Cassidy, Letter 4).

[16] I. Bignamini and C. Hornsby, *Digging and Dealing in Eighteenth-Century Rome*, 2 vols (New Haven and London, 2010).

Certainly the texts in the alternative publication are not always complete; and in his preface Cassidy suggests that his versions, as well as being complete, are also more accurate, and correct in matters of interpretation. That is as may be. The fact is that we have here a large and expensive exercise in what seems (something at any rate) like double publication. Or to put it another, more prosaic way, it's as if two buses on a badly served route had come along one after the other. The late Ilaria Bignamini had transcribed all the letters of Townley relevant to her purpose of investigating and analysing the search for, excavation of, and trade in antiquities in eighteenth-century Italy and Rome in particular. Cassidy's purpose, focused as it is on one dealer alone – who also happened to trade in pictures as well as marbles – and who was himself a practising painter, is at once wider and narrower. But one does have a real sense of treading the same 'classic ground' twice over. The specialist scholar needs to add to his or her set of *Digging and Dealing in Eighteenth-Century Rome* (at the cost of a mere £45) Cassidy's *Life & Letters of Gavin Hamilton* at a thumping £150. The bookshelves, moreover, will need to be of stout construction as all these volumes are weighty and thick. The Townley letters offered by Bignamini are to be found in the second volume of her *Digging and Dealing*, where they are very unattractively and economically set out on the page, austere and crowded. They are, moreover, totally devoid of the annotation, explanation or commentary which makes the Cassidy edition such a rich and appealing quarry: what Hamilton himself might have called the *robba* (literally, the 'stuff' – that is the goods, or works of art) which he had unearthed at one of his 'cavas', or excavation sites.

Cassidy argues, surely correctly, that Hamilton's letters now made available to scholarship 'will … provide material for a more thoroughgoing assessment of [Hamilton's] achievements'. He earlier surmises that his edition represents 'doubtless not all that survive', and suggests that it is 'virtually certain that more … will come to light'. He is indeed correct, for as fate would have it, a small clutch has just (in 2012) surfaced; and this includes some that antedate the earliest in Cassidy's edition.

Hamilton died in Rome, having ventured only once since 1756 back home to Muirdeston, Lanarkshire, in 1789–90. Cassidy seems to have overlooked a rather interesting biographical sketch of Hamilton, probably by the Earl of Buchan, published in the Edinburgh periodical *The Bee* in July 1793. This suggests that an artist, so well regarded in Rome, was scarcely known to his countrymen, 'unless among dilettanti and connoisseurs', but that in time he would come to enjoy enduring, European fame. The article refers to these forays back home as 'starts from his permanent abode'. It also makes the interesting claim that Hamilton had given orders for a 'painting room' to be built in Lanarkshire, presumably in anticipation of transferring his residence from Rome. But, for whatever reasons, Scotland failed to please him, and *The Bee* memoir speculates that he was likely to live out his life in Italy, for he was 'still busy in his career; may he long live to pursue it with success!' So it was to be. The Scottish climate was the thing: 'In short I find no good air for my lungs and no proper aliment for my mind. I am afraid I cannot hold out long here, but must resolve to cross the Alps once more. Rome has always been propitious to me, and I still hope to be cherished by her even in times of adversity' (Letter 260). After my most recent visit I cannot but share his sentiments, as winds, rain and sad Edinburgh's tram-works replace blue skies, warmth and achingly beautiful *piazze*. I did not know that Gavin Hamilton had described my own activities in Rome (or the activities of someone very like me, lost in wonder as I always am in the city): 'Your friend Mr Brown is very busy in search of antiquity. No cortile, Villa or Pallace escapes his dilligent enquiry' (Letter 132).