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BRYN MAWR CLASSICAL REVIEW

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Cristina Neagu, Katherine Harloe, Amy Claire Smith (ed.), *Winckelmann and Curiosity in the 18th-Century Gentleman's Library: Christ Church Upper Library, 29 June - 26 October 2018*. Oxford: Christ Church Library, 2018. Pp. 134. ISBN 9781872333663. £10.00.

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The output of festive meetings, conferences, and exhibitions dedicated to the memory of Johann Joachim Winckelmann on the occasion of his three-hundredth birthday (1717-2017) and two-hundred-fiftieth year of death (1768-2018) has been impressive. All over Europe, laymen and scholars alike have been able to acquaint themselves with the wide-ranging personality of this scholar, who is generally seen as the inventor of classical archaeology as a discipline, as well as a source of inspiration for neo-classical art in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. The book under review was edited on the occasion of an exhibition at Christ Church College, Oxford, and testifies to an important quality Winckelmann possessed: curiosity and fascination for things Greek and (to a lesser degree) Roman. Apart from a general presentation of the exhibits—in a venue which I have not been able to see—it includes four essays, each highlighting examples of 'curiosity', in a section called 'Setting the Scene', with "the scene" evidently being part 2, the Catalogue. The essays can easily be read independently, and all may serve as starting points for further research. The preface is signed by one of the best British specialists on Winckelmann, Katherine Harloe, who does not, however, contribute a study.¹

Amy C. Smith opens the volume with an essay on collecting Greek vases in southern Italy. In the late eighteenth century, rich British collectors started to be depicted with Greek vases rather than with Greek sculpture or standing in Roman ruins seen during

their Grand Tour. They started to buy ceramics dug up in Etruria and Campania and had them transported home. Smith brings together the first serious British collector, Sir William Hamilton, who served for 36 years as the British ambassador in Naples; Pierre-Hugues de Hancarville, the man who wrote the text to the lavish edition of his first vase collection; and the up-and-coming expert, Winckelmann. Despite Hamilton's request, Winckelmann would not write the text for the printed edition of his collection, but he undoubtedly developed Hamilton's interest by discussing the vases with his two friends. A portrait by Joshua Reynolds shows Hamilton with a cupboard full of vases proudly topped by an enlarged Apulian oinochoe.² Smith presents a fine recapitulation of previous vase studies in Italy, in which the question of their origin – Etruscan (given their Italian find-spots) or Greek (given the Greek words and letters written on them) – played a paramount role. It would be Eduard Gerhard who, in 1840, could definitively prove the Greekness of this class of black-and red-figure pottery.³

The second essay, by Cristina Neague, deals with the Christ Church College library and its benefactors in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, when considerable amounts of books as well as curiosities were donated to this old Oxford University institution. The college was urged to build new premises to accommodate the donations in a proper way. Ancient coins formed a popular part of private as well as public collections. It would be rewarding to know how and where these antique pieces could be purchased so far away from the Mediterranean.

Nicola Pickering presents a brief but rich overview of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century houses inspired by the excavations at Pompeii. Whereas, first, details of mural paintings were copied or adapted on the basis of the fragments illustrated in the *Antichità d'Ercolano esposte*, by the nineteenth century complete decorative systems were introduced, often together with architectural elements and even house plans, as we see in full-fledged Pompeian houses in Aschaffenburg (the Pompejanum) and Paris (the Maison pompéienne). Pickering's overview prompts the reader to look for further examples and, more importantly, to wish for thorough analyses of these developments. Over the last year a couple of collected volumes in which attention is paid to the phenomenon have appeared, but a corpus, let alone an overarching analysis, is still lacking.⁴

The last essay, by Fiona Gatty, is dedicated to a social *Aufsteiger* similar to Winckelmann, the British merchant James Morrison. His collection included a

'collarette' composed of 33 ancient and modern intaglios (fig. 32). Gatty takes this object as an example of popular gem collecting, for which Winckelmann's 1760 catalogue of the enormous collection of Baron Philipp von Stosch became an important impetus.

Then follows the 'Exhibition handlist', containing brief descriptions and illustrations of relevant illustrated publications (among them the aforementioned *Antichità* in the possession of Christ Church), vases, gems, and gypsum prints of ancient works. The last object is a Hellenistic statue of Aphrodite and infant Eros presented more extensively by Sadie Pickup (pp. 122-125).

All in all, the book offers a fine bunch of 'curiosity studies' connected with research and collection-shaping. Winckelmann appears a couple of times as the intellectual managing and inspiring *spiritus rector* behind the scenes, and in that sense the book forms a welcome addition to the Winckelmann studies and catalogues published over the last couple of years. It strikes me that Winckelmann's works are only quoted after their first editions, without consulting the monumental and fundamental edition of his works edited by the Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur in Mainz and the Winckelmann-Gesellschaft in Stendal.⁵ Although some international publications are cited by the various authors, the focus on English-language studies is very strong, particularly for a work devoted to the intellectual exchange of ideas and objects across national boundaries that was so typical of the seventeenth through nineteenth centuries.

Notes:

1. See Harloe's *Winckelmann and the invention of antiquity: history and aesthetics in the age of Altertumswissenschaft*, Oxford 2013.
2. Enlarged: it is 33 cm high. See Ian Jenkins and Karin Sloan (eds), *Vases & Volcanoes. Sir William Hamilton and his Collection* London 1996, 181, cat. 56 (all vases on Reynolds' painting – here pp. 176-177 cat. 51), all of which are now in the British Museum. The splendid Meidias hydria in the British Museum highlighted by Smith (p. 30) and in the exhibition catalogue (p. 107; fig. 8) stems from this collection, and stands rather hidden at Hamilton's right side on the ground (fig. 7); it

measures 52 cm in height.

3. A couple of studies on vase collecting and research might be added to those listed by Smith: Pierre Rouillard and Annie Verbanck-Piérard (eds), *Le vase grec et ses destins*, Munich 2003; Stefan Schmidt and Matthias Steinhart (eds.), *Sammeln und Erforschen: griechische Vasen in neuzeitlichen Sammlungen*, Munich 2014; Ruurd Binnert Halbertsma (ed.), *The Canino Connections. The history and restoration of ancient Greek vases from the excavations of Lucien Bonaparte, Prince of Canino (1775-1840)*, Leiden 2017.

4. See for instance Anne-Marie Leander-Touati and Shelley Hales (eds.), *Returns to Pompeii. Interior Space and Decoration Documented and Revived, 18th to 21st Century*, Stockholm 2016 (with a review by J.R. Clarke, [BMCR 2018.12.13](#)), and Katharine T. von Stackelberg and Elizabeth Macaulay-Lewis (eds.), *Housing the New Romans. Architectural Reception and Classical Style in the Modern World*, Oxford and New York 2017 (with my review, [BMCR 2017.12.05](#)); Birgitte Coers, *Die Farbe des Vergangenen. Pompeji in der Kunst der Moderne*, Münster 2018.

5. See information on the Academy's website: ADWMainz.de