

The Jacobean Grand Tour: Early Stuart Travellers in Europe

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This is a self-consciously old-fashioned treatment of an unaccountably neglected chapter in the history of travel which should be placed alongside such classics as John Stoye's *English Travelers Abroad, 1604–1667*, whose first edition was published as long ago as 1952, rather than more recent treatments by Chloe Chard and Rosemary Sweet.⁽¹⁾ Indeed, one might go as far as saying that this is less a history of travel and more a history of collecting and of connoisseurship. However, given that the field is now dominated by studies which focus so much on travel *writing* (that is, narratives, their style and their conventions) rather than what is actually being written about (though Sweet, to her considerable credit, manages to avoid this besetting tendency in her excellent book), this is no bad thing, particularly given the fact that the authors clearly know so much. Readers of this book will undoubtedly come away with a much better sense of how British interest in classical art and more recent Italian painting came about, although ideally they will have at hand the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* in order to keep track of the countless names of often closely-related aristocrats which sometimes make the text difficult to follow.

That said, the protagonist of the book is clear enough and he stares out confidently at you from the book's dust jacket in a very fine, recently discovered portrait dating from 1611 by the leading Venetian portraitist of his day, Domenico Tintoretto, which is described as: 'a landmark in the history of the portrayal of the English, particularly the English in Italy' (p. 232). He is Sir John Finet (1570/71–1641), who was appointed as tutor and guardian to Robert Cecil's son and heir Lord Cranborne on the latter's two trips to the continent (to France in 1608–10) and to Italy (in 1610). Having successfully concluded his duties, on Salisbury's death in 1612 Finet became assistant to Sir Lewis Lewknor, master of ceremonies at the court of James I; whose duties were essentially to receive and entertain visiting diplomats. He was knighted by the king in 1616 so as to be able to fulfil his role, (at least that was Finet's own self-deprecating explanation). The main narrative of the book is provided by an account of Cranborne's two itineraries: a longer one that took in France from Paris to the Mediterranean and a shorter one that took in briefly Turin and Milan before proceeding to Venice. To this reader at least, the account of the first tour was more of an eye-opener than the second – just as it was clearly enjoyed more by Cranborne himself, who was merely one of the first in a long line of reluctant sons of the English aristocracy packed off to pick up a bit of polish and *savoir faire* on the European mainland.

Of Italian ancestry, Sir John's great-grandfather, Giovanni Finetti was Sieneese and had accompanied the papal legate Cardinal Campeggio to England in 1518. In chapter two, Chaney and Wilks do an intelligent job of reconstructing Finet's 'lost years' travelling in France and Italy in the early 1600s. Chapter three is based much less on conjecture and is the first of four which recount in some detail the progress of Cranborne's 'Grand Tour de France' (which the authors illustrate with their own photos of places and buildings visited *en route* together with well-chosen contemporary engravings). What makes this tour of more than mere passing, antiquarian interest is the fact that also in the party was Inigo Jones (1573–1652) and throughout these chapters the authors make excellent use (and give numerous photographs) of Jones' annotated copy of Palladio's *Quattro libri dell'Architettura* now held in Worcester College, Oxford. As Chaney and Wilks point out: 'Just as the impact in the first half of the eighteenth century of the Greek remains in Sicily, as distinct from those in Greece itself, has tended to be overlooked by historians of taste, so the impact in the early seventeenth century of the plentiful Roman remains in mid- and southern France, as distinct from those in Italy, seems to have been likewise underestimated' (p. 89). However, they might have made more use of the work of Peter Miller on Peiresc, (his monograph of 2000 is cited in the extensive bibliography, but not, surprisingly, 2011's *Peiresc's History of Provence and the Discovery of a Medieval Mediterranean* [\(2\)](#), which would have nuanced the authors' conclusions derived from their more or less exclusive focus on the classical remains). As is evident from Jones' later designs for court masques, numerous details from buildings he saw on this tour made their way into his own creative work, although the authors make the important point that 'his drawings were rarely the record of direct observation but were usually based on engravings and drawings of others' (p. 93). Chaney and Wilks throughout make good use not only of contemporary guide books and local histories, but also of manuscript material, although their frequently discursive footnotes, which don't always do what footnotes are meant to do (that is, tell the reader where a particular quotation has come from) sometimes make things difficult for the reader. Here, as elsewhere, they deserved better editing. By the time that Cranborne found himself on his second tour, this time of Northern Italy with the firm destination of Venice, his natural indolence seems to have reasserted itself in the form of a sulky depressive illness which ensured that this eldest son of James I's first minister, Salisbury, did not make it to Florence where the Grand Duke eagerly awaited the party, hoping to oil the wheels of diplomacy prior to negotiations for the marriage of his sister-in-law to Prince Henry, James's first born.

This account of Cranborne's second tour suffers, more than the first, from the ease with which the authors are distracted by other Englishmen sent 'to lie abroad' in Italy at this time, such as the purported author of this phrase, the colourful Venetian ambassador Sir Henry Wotton, for whom art, its gifting and exchange, was the very lifeblood of diplomacy itself. Among the most engaging of these characters were Anne Gerrard, wife of Sir Dudley Carleton, Wotton's successor as ambassador to Venice, and Aletheia Talbot, wife of Thomas Howard, Earl of Arundel. Both women appear to have played a significant role in breaking

down the impression that Venetians had of England as a place as much lacking in civility as in sunshine. The Countess of Arundel, for example, was unafraid to demand an audience with the Doge to counter rumours that she had conducted possibly treasonous conversations in her palace. Nor was she slow to demand the arrest of the artist Tizianello, who had taken money from the Countess but then defaulted on his undertaking to accompany her to England.

We have been waiting for almost 30 years for Edward Chaney to write a comprehensive history of the early Grand Tour to Italy – ever since his excellent Ph.D published as *The Grand Tour and the Great Rebellion: Richard Lassels and 'The Voyage of Italy' in the Seventeenth Century* in 1985.⁽³⁾ Since that date he has tantalised us with a succession of learned essay collections, such as the *Evolution of the Grand Tour: Anglo-Italian cultural relations since the Renaissance* and *The Evolution of English Collecting: receptions of Italian art in the Tudor and Stuart periods* ⁽⁴⁾, and most recently he has acted as a consultant editor of the Adam Matthew digital resource *Grand Tour* (2009).⁽⁵⁾ Reading between the lines, it would appear that we owe this volume, which at the authors' own confession had its origins in two talks, to the gentle persuasion, patience and perseverance of Chaney's co-author, Tim Wilks. It is most definitely not a comprehensive treatment of its theme: not even of its first period. There is too much contextual information taken for granted and too much detail of people and places which distracts both the reader (and the authors) from a more balanced and bigger picture; nor do they offer anything approaching a real conclusion. But it will have to do us for now and, as I hope has become clear from what is written above, there is much to enjoy, learn from and reflect upon in this erudite, generously illustrated and very reasonably priced volume.

Notes

1. Chloe Chard, *Pleasure and Guilt on the Grand Tour: Travel Writing and Imaginative Geography, 1600–1830* (Manchester, 1999); Rosemary Sweet, *Cities and the Grand Tour: the British in Italy, 1690–1820* (Cambridge, 2012).[Back to \(1\)](#)
2. Peter Miller, *Peiresc's Europe: Learning and Virtue in the Seventeenth Century* (New Haven, CT, 2000); *Peiresc's Orient: Antiquarianism as Cultural History in the Seventeenth Century* (Farnham, 2011).[Back to \(2\)](#)
3. Edward Chaney, *The Grand Tour and the Great Rebellion: Richard Lassels and 'The Voyage of Italy' in the Seventeenth Century* (Geneva, 1985).[Back to \(3\)](#)
4. Edward Chaney, *Evolution of the Grand Tour: Anglo-Italian Cultural Relations Since the Renaissance* (London, 1998) and *The Evolution of English Collecting: receptions of Italian art in the Tudor and Stuart periods* (New Haven, CT, 2003).[Back to \(4\)](#)
5. *The Grand Tour* < <http://www.amdigital.co.uk/m-collections/collection/the-grand-tour/> [2]> [accessed 11 March 2015].[Back to \(5\)](#)

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Times Higher Education

<https://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/books/the-jacobean-grand-tour-early-stuart-travellers-in-europe-by-edward-chaney-and-timothy-wilks/2012080.article> [3]

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