

“In the Midst of the Jovial Crowd”

Young James Boswell in London, 1762–1763



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An exhibition at The Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University

April through mid-October 2013

Curated by James J. Caudle, The Associate Editor,

Yale Editions of the Private Papers of James Boswell



John Miller (1715–1790) after Samuel Wale (d. 1786), *James Boswell, Esqr. in the Dress of an Armed Corsican Chief*. Etching with stipple and engraving, published 1769. 769.09.00.03

“I am indulging the most agreeable reveries imaginable, I am thinking of . . . composing some elegant Work which shall be much read, and much admired. I am thinking of the brilliant Scenes of happiness that I shall enjoy in the Guards, How I shall be acquainted with the Grandeur and Politeness of a Court, be entertained with all the elegance of dress and Diversions, become a favourite of Ministers of State, and the adoration of Ladies of Quality, Beauty & Fortune. How many parties of Pleasure shall I have in Town! How many fine jaunts to the noble Seats of Dukes, Lords and members of Parliament. I am thinking of the perfect knowledge that I shall acquire of men and manners, of the many ingenious and learned Men whose Intimacy I shall be honoured with, Of the many literary amusing Anecdotes which I shall pick up, and of the magnificent Letters which I shall write to You.”

James Boswell to Andrew Erskine, 8–9 May 1762



ABOVE George Townshend (1724–1807), *We are all a Coming, or, Scotch Coal for ever*. Etching, published 1761. 761.00.00.05+ Impression 1



BELOW Artist Unknown, *Scotch Paradise: a View of the Bute[eye]full Garden of Edenburg*. Etching, published February 1763 by E. Sumpster. 763.02.00.01+

James Boswell (1740–1795), Scottish laird, lawyer, and author, was best known from the 1790s until the 1920s as the biographer and transcriber of the conversations of the great man of letters Samuel Johnson (1709–1784). Boswell’s greatest published work was the *Life of Samuel Johnson* (1791), which is still considered a landmark in the development of modern biography. However, in the wake of the recovery and publication of his private papers from the 1920s onward, Boswell is now studied in his own right as a master of autobiography and biography; and he is read with pleasure by non-academics as a clever and amusing teller of tales of life in Britain in the late eighteenth century.

Boswell was born in Edinburgh into a very old baronial Scottish family from the county of Ayrshire. For two generations they had been advocates (lawyers) in Edinburgh, and his father, Lord Auchinleck, was a judge on the benches of the two highest courts in Scotland. Early on, young “Jamie” Boswell felt confined and trapped by his provincial background. Rejecting the future dictated by family tradition — to be a country estate’s resident laird in Auchinleck and a lawyer in Edinburgh — he instead traveled south to seek fortune and celebrity in London. Boswell wrote of himself in May 1761 as “[a] young fellow whose happiness was always centered in London.” He recalled this lifetime’s obsession to one of his sons in October 1794: “LONDON has for these thirty years and upwards been the object of my wish as my scene of exertion.” In March 1760, without telling any of his friends or family, he had fled to London, where he tried to live until his father traveled south and took him back home three months later. His better-known journey between 19 November 1762 and 5 August 1763, chronicled in his “London Journal” and celebrated in this exhibition, was actually his *second*—and better-planned—expedition to the city.



Smith after Samuel Collings (d. 1793), *The Citizen at Vauxhall*. Etching and engraving with hand coloring, published 1 July 1784 by Harrison & Co. 784.07.01.01

On 13 June 1763, Boswell noted, “At night, Lord Eglintoune...carried us to Vauxhall, which was quite delicious” (Journ.). Boswell, solidly placed in the upper provincial gentry, could adopt a certain amount of confidence and even snobbery toward less well-born Londoners. A “Citizen” or “Cit” was a member of the London merchant or middling classes whose social aspirations were an easy target for lampoons. Here the citizen’s doting wife adjusts his neckwear as an army officer snickers and points at the Cit. Various flirtations and pick-ups are going on around the oblivious couple, novices to the amusements.

There would have been no need to explain to someone living in Edinburgh in 1762 why a young man with ambitions for national eminence and a glorious career would wish to migrate to London. The largest city in Britain, London was building new neighborhoods and pushing its way toward a million inhabitants; it was one of the handful of largest cities on the planet, and the largest outside East Asia. The political capital of Great Britain (Scotland having lost her secular parliament and royal court in the Union of 1707), London was the home of the Parliament as well as the royal court. The offices of the slowly growing state, with their Crown patronage jobs and places, were located there. Advancement in the professions of law, medicine, and the military was best gotten in London. Since it was the center of the British economy, anyone wishing to succeed in business, like Boswell’s brother David or his publisher Alexander Donaldson, would find it prudent to move there. As Johnson roughly joked, “Sir, I believe the noblest Prospect that a Scotsman ever sees, is the road which leads him to England” (Journ. 6 July 1763).

Beyond the utilitarian reasons to live in London, its attractions as a capital of pleasure and fashion were surely to be considered. During “The Season,” provincial aristocracy and gentry flocked there. The national theaters of Covent Garden and Drury Lane as well as the Royal Opera House offered new works like David Mallet’s *Elvira* and Thomas Arne’s *Artaxerxes* alongside the classics. The great pleasure gardens of Vauxhall and Ranelagh and promenades such as the Mall offered places to see and be seen, meet and be met. The great urban houses like Northumberland House offered salons and evening “routs.” For those of more modest income, there were middle-class diversions: poring over books such as *Epistle to Hogarth* and Hume’s *History* and *Fingal* at a bookseller’s, looking at the new political prints against Lord Bute and



Mathias Finucane (active 1797), *The Chop House*. Etching and stipple with engraving, published 1 August 1797 by Laurie & Whittle. 797.08.01.03

As Boswell's pudgy and double-chinned silhouette revealed, he enjoyed a good meal. The Georgian chop house, like the twentieth-century American diner, provided plentiful plain food at cheap prices. The bill of fare in this print offers a meat-heavy menu. On the table are cruets for oils, vinegars, and sauces, as well as a decanter with a bottle ticket reading "port." Boswell recorded his impressions: "I went by myself & dined in a Chophouse... My spirits grew better there. Realy good sustenance dispells the vapours... I grudge even a shilling for dinner" (Journ. 16 Mar 1763).

the Scots immigrants at a printseller's, eating a filling meal at a chop-house, enjoying coffee and conversation at a coffee-house, and drinking moderately (or, as often, heavily) at a tavern or punch-house. For those who were not squeamish, there were cockfights, the judicial drama of trials at the Old Bailey, and public executions at Tyburn.

Even as London offered career opportunities and amusements in the same place, emerging information technologies were making the city accessible, rendering it legible. Books like Rivington's *Complete Guide* and *Harris's List* as well as maps like the *London Directory* took the chaos of the sprawling city and made it intelligible to newcomers and even natives. The city was created and sustained by print culture. Before Boswell even got to London, he knew it from the many accounts in fiction and nonfiction, novels and plays.

Although the metropolis for most Londoners was a place of unending drudgery and the struggle to make a living, for a young gentleman of Boswell's social rank, it was a place of dreams. It certainly fired Boswell's ambition and imagination. "Surely I am a man of Genius. I deserve to be taken notice of. O that my Grandchildren might read this character of me. — James Boswell a most amiable Man. He improved and beautified his paternal estate of Auchinleck: made a distinguished figure in parliament; had the honour to command a Regiment of footguards, and was one of the brightest Wits in the court of George the Third." (Journ. 7 Feb. 1763).

There were several career paths Boswell might have taken in setting himself up in London. The Earl of Eglinton advocated Boswell's seeking a commission in the Army. This path was the scheme that Boswell most systematically followed in 1762–63, and he eventually sought and found help from Eglinton, the Duke of Queensberry, and the Countess of Northumberland in pursuing his Guards commission.



Thomas Rowlandson (1756–1827) after Samuel Collings (d. 1793), *Imitations at Drury-Lane Theatre*. Etching, published 20 June 1786 by E. Jackson. 786.06.20.01+

Eighteenth-century theater audiences were often raucous and rowdy. Though outbursts by audience members were not inevitable, they ranged from juvenile noisemaking, to pelting the performers with oranges, to hissing the play or an actor, to demanding that the manager apologize, or even to tearing up the theater in a riot.

In this scene, Boswell amuses and appalls his mentor Hugh Blair, the Scottish clergyman and professor of rhetoric, by imitating a cow. Having been cheered by the London crowd for his mooing, Boswell discovers to his disappointment that his other barnyard impressions are not as highly appreciated. Boswell recorded this embarrassing story in the published Hebrides journal (1785) as a memory, but it was one of the many events he neglected to mention or suppressed in the 1762–63 London Journal.

Thomas Sheridan encouraged him to enter the English legal profession and helped him to be registered at the Inner Temple. His father, Lord Auchinleck, wished for him to stay at home or go to Holland and train in the ancestral profession of the Scottish Law.

But Boswell was not solely concerned with business. Once arrived, he wanted to experience the social life of the megalopolis. He went to the brightly lit outdoor pleasure gardens of Vauxhall and Ranelagh, and to the great theaters at Drury Lane and Covent Garden. Religious practice was another part of his plan. Rather than tying himself to one parish church, he set himself a program of visiting a new chapel or Church of England service every Sunday, although notably, these were all genteel churches of fashion. He frequented several booksellers' shops and newspaper offices, both to buy books, magazines, and newspapers, and to ask some of them to publish his works. And of course, much of London life depended on drinking and dining: chop houses for the food, coffee houses for the conversation, punch houses for the fashionable cocktails, taverns for long conversations with friends over drinks. Although he initially planned to abstain from prostitutes, by the end of his stay he fell into old bad habits from an inability to resist London's plethora of streetwalkers.

One of the most common sentiments expressed by Boswell about London is its *muchness*, its seemingly inexhaustible plenitude, its copiousness. He thought of London in April 1775 as “a high entertainment of itself. I see a vast museum of all objects, and I think with a kind of wonder that I see it for nothing”; and in March 1773 he invoked “the agreeable prospect of being in London, which includes so many interesting and favourite objects.”

The city presented a variety of faces to everyone who visited. Boswell explained to the readers of his *Rampager* essays in November 1771 the



William Dickinson (1746/7–1823) after Henry William Bunbury (1750–1811), *Patriots / St. Eustatia*. Etching with stipple in reddish-brown ink, published 15 October 1781 by W. Dickinson. 781.10.15.06+

This print portrays the type of experience Boswell described at Child’s Coffee House: “It is quite a place to my mind; dusky comfortable & warm with a Society of Citizens & Physicians who talk politics very fully & are very sagacious & sometimes jocular . . .” (Journ. 11 Dec. 1762). Coffee houses usually provided newspapers for their customers, and the central group in this print gathers anxiously around the late-breaking news in a *Gazette Extraordinary*. “St. Eustatia” refers to the Dutch colony of Saint Eustatius, which was captured by the British Army and Navy on 3 February 1781, but lost again by November.

allure of London, “that great emporium of men and manners, news and nonsense, politics and playhouses, and all other subjects of entertainment.” In the *Life of Johnson*, he wrote:

I have often amused myself with thinking how different a place London is to different people. They, whose narrow minds are contracted to the consideration of some one particular pursuit, view it only through that medium. A politician thinks of it merely as the seat of government in its different departments; a grazier, as a vast market for cattle; a mercantile man, as a place where a prodigious deal of business is done upon 'Change; a dramattick enthusiast, as the grand scene of theatrical entertainments; a man of pleasure, as an assemblage of taverns, and the great emporium for ladies of easy virtue. But the intellectual man is struck with it, as comprehending the whole of human life in all its variety, the contemplation of which is inexhaustible.

When Boswell was tired of London, he was tired of life. Yet in the early 1760s, he was quite far from exhausting its contemplation. As he noted in January 1763 (writing of his 1760 voyage), this was “the time when I was first in London, when all was new to me, when I felt the warm glow of youthfull feeling, and was full of curiosity and wonder.”

Suggestions for further reading

James Boswell, *London Journal, 1762–1763*, ed. Gordon Turnbull (2010).

James J. Caudle, “James Boswell (H. Scoticus Londoniensis),” in Stana Nenadic, ed., *Scots in London in the Eighteenth Century: Patronage, Culture and Identity* (2010), 109–138.

James Caudle, “Young Boswell and the London Stationers,” in John Hinks and Catherine Armstrong, eds., *Book Trade Connections from the Seventeenth to the Twentieth Centuries* (2008), 93–113.

David Hankins and James J. Caudle, eds., *The General Correspondence of James Boswell, 1757–1763* (2006).

Sheila O’Connell, with Roy Porter, Celina Fox, and Ralph Hyde, *London 1753* (2003).

Liza Picard, *Dr. Johnson’s London: Everyday Life in London, 1740–1770* (2000).

John Rocque, cartographer, *The A to Z of Georgian London* [“Rocque’s Map”], with an introduction by Ralph Hyde (1982).



Exhibition checklist in order of installation

Unless otherwise noted, all items are in the collection of the Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University.

Checklist items printed in color are illustrated.

INTRODUCTION

Thomas Rowlandson (1756–1827) after Samuel Collings (d. 1793)
The Journalist: with a View of Auckinleck or the Land of Stones
Etching and engraving with stipple
Published 15 May 1786 by E. Jackson
786.05.15.04+

Robert Pollard (1755–1838) and Francis Jukes (1745–1812) after Thomas Rowlandson (1756–1827)
Vaux-hall

Aquatint and etching with hand coloring
Published 28 June 1785 by J.R. Smith
785.06.28.01

Smith after Samuel Collings (d. 1793)
The Citizen at Vauxhall
Etching and engraving with hand coloring
Published 1 July 1784 by Harrison & Co.
784.07.01.01

LONDON SOCIAL LIFE

William Dickinson (1746/7–1823) after Henry William Bunbury (1750–1811)
Patriots / St. Eustatia
Etching with stipple in reddish-brown ink
Published 15 October 1781 by W. Dickinson
781.10.15.06+

Thomas Rowlandson (1756–1827) after Samuel Collings (d. 1793)
Imitations at Drury-Lane Theatre
Etching
Published 20 June 1786 by E. Jackson
786.06.20.01+

James Sayers (1748–1823)
A Peep Behind the Curtain at Drury Lane
Etching and aquatint
Published 14 January 1789 by Thos. Cornell
789.01.14.01

Henry William Bunbury (1750–1811)
Known Characters in a Chop House
Etching with hand coloring
Published ca. 1800
800.00.00.150+ Impression 1



Mathias Finucane (active 1797)
The Chop House
 Etching and stipple with engraving
 Published 1 August 1797 by Laurie & Whittle
 797.08.01.03

Thomas Rowlandson (1756–1827)
A Brace of Blackguards
 Aquatint and etching with hand coloring
 Published 20 June 1789 by Mrs. Lay
 789.06.20.01

Artist Unknown
An Evenings Invitation; with a Wink from the Bagnio
 Mezzotint with hand coloring
 Printed January 1773 for Carington Bowles
 773.01.00.02+



William Hogarth (1697–1764)
"Royal Sport" Pit Ticket
 Engraving
 Published 5 November 1759
 759.11.05.01++

CURRENT EVENTS

Artist Unknown
Décoration du Feu d'artifice Tire à Londres en Rejouissance de la Paix en 1763
 Etching with hand coloring
 Published 1763 by Mondhare
 763.00.00.127+



William Hogarth (1697–1764)
The Bruiser C. Churchill..., state 4
 Etching with engraving
 Published 1 August 1763
 Kinnaird 77k(b)

Artist Unknown
The Bruiser Triumphant: a Farce
 Etching with engraving
 Nineteenth-century restrrike, first published 1763
 763.08.00.01.1



George Townshend (1724–1807)
Sawney Discover'd, or, The Scotch Intruders
 From *A Political and Satirical History of the Years 1756–1762*, no. 103
 Etching
 Published after 1760
 761.00.00.03.1

George Townshend (1724–1807)
We are all a Coming, or, Scotch Coal for ever
 Etching
 Published 1761
 761.00.00.05+ Impression 1

Artist Unknown
*Scotch Paradise: a View of the Bute[eye]
full Garden of Edenburg*
Etching
Published February 1763 by E. Sumpter
763.02.00.01+

Artist Unknown
*A Prophecy. The Coach Overtur'd, or,
the Fall of Mortimer*
Etching and engraving
Published 1762
762.00.00.29

PEOPLE

John Kay (1742–1826)
*Major Andrew Fraser, the Honorable
Andrew Erskine, and Sir John Whitefoord*
Etching, drypoint, and aquatint
Published 1785
785.00.00.94

Artist Unknown, after a miniature by
James Tassie (1735–1799)
George Dempster, Esq.
Plate from *European Magazine*,
September 1793
Engraving
Published 1 August 1793 by J. Sewell
Portraits D389 no. 1

Edmund Scott (ca. 1746–1810) after
Robert Stewart (active 1776–1786)
Thomas Sheridan

Stipple engraving
Published 4 July 1789 for Charles Dilly
Portraits Sh552 no. 1

James Heath (1757–1834) after Joshua
Reynolds (1723–1792)
*Samuel Johnson from the Original Picture
in the Possession of James Boswell*
Engraving
Published 1791
Yale Center for British Art, Paul
Mellon Collection
B1977.I4.10033

Artist Unknown
*Monument Design'd for the Marquis
of Granby*
Etching
Published 18 October 1770
770.10.00.10

John Miller (1715–1790) after Samuel
Wale (d. 1786)
*James Boswell, Esqr. in the Dress of an
Armed Corsican Chief*
Etching with stipple and engraving
Published 1769
769.09.00.03

John Kitchinman (ca. 1740–1781) after
Robert Edge Pine (1730?–1788)
John Wilkes, Esqr.
Mezzotint
Published 23 May 1768 by M. Darly
768.05.23.01++

Charles Spooner (1720–1767) after
William Hoare (1707/8–1792)
The Right Honble. William Pitt, Esqr.
Mezzotint
Printed 19 October 1761 for John Smith
Portraits P68 no.1

Artist Unknown, after Allan Ramsay
(1713–1784)
George III, King of Great Britain
Engraving on chine collé
Published 1771
Portraits G347 no. 2

SOCIAL LIFE

Harris's List of Covent-Garden Ladies
London: H. Ranger, 1764
646 764 H24

*The London Directory, or, A new &
Improved Plan of London, Westminster &
Southwark*
London: Robert Sayer, 1774
Hand-colored map
File 15 782s++

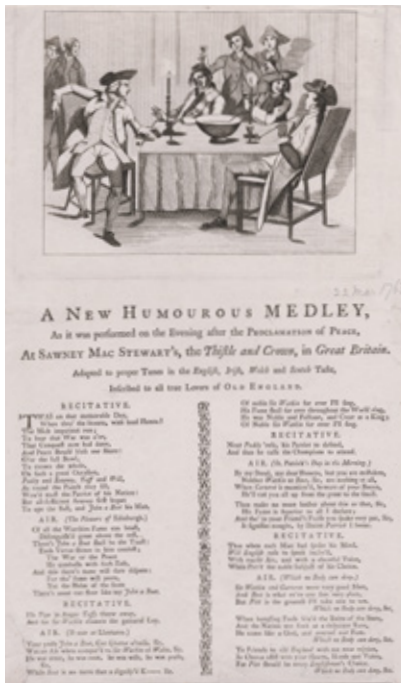
*A Complete Guide to All Persons who
Have any Trade or Concern with the City
of London, and Parts Adjacent, 9th ed.
with large additions and alterations*
London: J. Rivington [etc.], 1763
646 763 C73

Anonymous (James Boswell
[1740–1795])
The Cub, at New-market: a Tale
London: Printed for R. and J. Dodsley,
1762
Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript
Library
1971 304

James Boswell (1740–1795), Andrew
Erskine (1740–1793), and George
Dempster (1732–1818)
*Critical Strictures on the New Tragedy of
Elvira, Written by Mr. David Malloch*
London: Printed for W. Flexney, near
Gray's-Inn, Holborn, 1763
Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript
Library
Tinker 311

James Boswell (1740–1795)
“Journal from the time of my leaving
Scotland 15 Novr. 1762” (J 2.1)
Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript
Library
Boswell Collection, GEN MSS 89,
Box 19

James Boswell (1740–1795)
“London Memoranda” (J 3)
Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript
Library
Boswell Collection, GEN MSS 89,
Box 37, Folders 932–33



James Boswell (1740–1795)
 “Scheme of living written at the White
 Lyon Inn Waterhouse, Fleetstreet the
 morning after my arrival in London,”
 1762 (M 259)
 Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript
 Library
 Boswell Collection, GEN MSS 89,
 Box 58, Folder 1233

EVENTS AND PEOPLE

James Boswell (1740–1795)
 “Letter XLII, London, Nov. 20, 1762”
*Letters between the Honourable Andrew
 Erskine, and James Boswell, Esq.*
 London: Printed by Samuel Chandler;
 for W. Flexney, near Gray’s-Inn-Gate,
 Holborn, 1763
 Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript
 Library
 Tinker 312

The Barber. A New Song
 Slip Song
 Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript
 Library
 Boswell Collection, GEN MSS 89,
 Oversize, Box 71, Folder 1462

The Thane of Bute. A New Song, 1762
 Slip Song
 Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript
 Library

Boswell Collection, GEN MSS 89,
 Box 65, Folder 1352
*The Grumblers of Great Britain: a
 New Humorous Political Song. By a
 Grumbletonian*
 Etching with hand coloring
 Published 15 September 1762 by W.
 Tringham
 762.09.15.01.1

*A New Humorous Medley: As It Was
 Performed on the Evening after the
 Proclamation of Peace,...*
 Broadside
 London: J. Williams, 1763
 763.03.22.01.1+

[A] List of the General and Field-Officers
 London: J. Millan, 1763
 Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript
 Library
 144 A2 Ar5 763

David Hume (1711–1776)
The History of England
 London: A. Millar, 1759–1762
 53 H882 754b

The History of Jack and the Giants
 Nottingham: Printed for the running
 stationers, [1800?]
 Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript
 Library
 Ib94 t2 3-3

Charles Churchill (1731–1764)
An Epistle to William Hogarth
Printed 1763 for the author, and sold by
J. Coote
Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript
Library
Ik C475 764g

The North Briton
London: Printed for G. Kearsly,
[1762–1763]
53 W65 762

James MacPherson (1736–1796)
Fingal, an Ancient Epic Poem...
London: T. Becket and P.A. De Hondt,
1762
53 M24I 762

AFTERMATH

Items in this section are lent by James
J. Caudle unless otherwise stated.

Frederick A. Pottle (1897–1987), editor
Boswell's London Journal 1762–1763
New York, London, and Toronto:
McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1950
The Lewis Walpole Library
535 950

Frederick A. Pottle, editor
Boswell's London Journal 1762–1763
New Haven and London: Yale
University Press, 1992

Frederick A. Pottle, editor
Boswell's London Journal 1762–1763
An Ace Book
London: Harborough Publishing, 1958

Frederick A. Pottle, editor
Boswell's London Journal 1762–1763
A Signet Book
New York: The New American Library,
1956

Frederick A. Pottle, editor
Boswell's London Journal 1762–1763
Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1966

Frederick A. Pottle, editor
Boswell's London Journal 1762–1763
New York, London, and Toronto:
McGraw-Hill, n.d.

Frederick A. Pottle, editor
Boswell's London Journal 1762–1763
Second edition with Foreword by
Peter Ackroyd
Yale Nota Bene
New Haven and London: Yale
University Press, 2004

Gordon Turnbull, editor
James Boswell, London Journal 1762–1763
London: Penguin Books (Penguin
Classics), 2010

James L. Clifford (1901–1978)
“Young Mr. Boswell Goes to London”
The New York Times Book Review
November 5, 1950

“Boswell's London Journal”
Omnibook. Bestseller Magazine
March 1951

Leonard Bacon, “A Candle on a
Naughty World”
Saturday Review of Literature
4 November 1950

Harold Tucker Webster (1885–1952)
“After Reading Boswell's London
Journal (1762–1763) Mr. Milquetoast
burns the diary he kept in his youth,”
 (“The Timid Soul”)
New York Herald Tribune, 9 April 1951
Courtesy of Yale Boswell Editions
Press Files

Paul Darrow (b. 1921)
“Are You Sure it's all Boswell”
Photographic reproduction of cartoon
The New York Times Book Review
22 May 1955

*Boswell's London Journal. A Reading
by Anthony Quayle*
Album cover
New York: Caedmon Records, 1960

R. Crumb (Robert Crumb [b. 1943])
“A Klassic Komic: Excerpts from James
Boswell's London Journal 1762–1763,”
Eric Reynolds (b. 1971), editor, *The
Complete Crumb: The Early '80s &
Weirdo Magazine*
Second edition
Seattle, Washington: Fantagraphics
Books, 2008

Designed and set in Caslon typefaces by
Rebecca Martz, Office of the Yale University Printer
Printed by GHP in West Haven, Connecticut

Yale UNIVERSITY LIBRARY