

# The beginning of British art criticism in the 1760s

Marjorie Munsterberg

Regular reviews of contemporary art first appeared in London during the 1760s, when the start of temporary public exhibitions produced both newsworthy events and interested readers. Although much scholarly attention has been devoted to these shows and their audiences, relatively little has been given to the writing they occasioned.<sup>1</sup> Since the reviews offer possible evidence of how the works might have been seen by their first viewers, they provide historians with essential material. However, the writing is bound by a variety of constraints and conventions, not all of which are readily apparent 250 years later. Furthermore, most of the criticism counts as incidental writing rather than considered essays, and almost all of the authors remain anonymous. Both qualities make the texts harder to assess. I would like to examine the reviews, concentrating on those about painting, and consider how literary and critical conventions shaped them and might affect their meaning. Even those that have been quoted most often by art historians sometimes read quite differently when considered in their original context.

In terms of the development of British art criticism, the 1760s can be seen as a self-contained period. The start of public exhibitions in April 1760 created a new opportunity for reviewers, while the first show at the Royal Academy in April 1769 gave new prominence to contemporary art and the writing about it.<sup>2</sup> The prestige of the institution made criticism more important but, it might be argued, more conventional too. Particularly influential were Sir Joshua Reynolds's *Discourses*, first delivered at the Academy in January 1769, which gave support through example to the concepts and descriptive vocabulary associated with the Academy.<sup>3</sup> This tradition informed the measured, orderly analyses that characterised serious reviews during the next decades. During the 1760s, by contrast, published response to the exhibitions ranged from absurdly fulsome verse to detailed discussions of particular works, mixed with abuse and satire. Although generalizations are difficult – only a handful of reviews appeared each year during this first decade – many critics seem to have had some training as artists. This is not surprising since they were the ones who had most experience verbally analysing the visual arts. I would like to suggest, however, that this language of analysis ultimately proved unsuitable for the task of reviewing public exhibitions of contemporary art. Late 18th-century developments in art criticism most often associated with Romanticism, notably the new emphasis on the viewer's response, were at least partly caused by the new demands created by the shows.<sup>4</sup>

Plenty of writing about painting existed in English before 1760. Contributions to aesthetics and art theory – translations from European authors as well as original work – provided the most intellectually ambitious materials. Almost all of them depend upon formal and stylistic conceptualisations and an artistic canon taken from Italian Renaissance texts, notably Giorgio Vasari's *Lives of the Artists*. This European humanist tradition, adopted as a *lingua franca* by

art academies, established a specific approach to visual analysis that dominated writing about art in the west. It depended on breaking the work of art into fixed parts – invention, expression, design, colour and handling were common elements for painting – and using historical comparisons to measure achievement in each of them. The reader was assumed to be able to call upon a mental store of images by famous artists to follow these discussions. A handful of Italian and French texts provided influential codifications of these ideas, with interpretations of the Horatian phrase *ut pictura poesis* central to many of them.<sup>5</sup>

The most important conveyers of this tradition in English in the eighteenth century were translations of Roger de Piles's edition of Charles Du Fresnoy's Latin poem *De Arte Graphica* and books about painting and connoisseurship by the painter and collector Jonathan Richardson. Du Fresnoy's poem consists of 549 hexameters about the visual arts written as a counterpart to Horace's *Ars Poetica*.<sup>6</sup> First published in 1668 after Du Fresnoy's death, the poem appeared with a French translation as well as an extensive commentary by the painter, critic, and Rubéniste Roger de Piles. John Dryden's English translation, published as *The Art of Painting* in 1695, included de Piles's commentary and added a lengthy introductory essay by the poet about painting and poetry as sister arts. The second edition of Dryden's translation, published in 1716, added a poem by Alexander Pope and a brief preface by Richard Graham as well as an appendix with lives of selected ancient and modern artists, some taken from Vasari. Thus the English version offered a reading experience that was considerably more than a sum of its parts, since each text, with its own place in the history of aesthetics and art theory, was framed and modified by all the others. Dryden's essay, for example, explored the classical doctrine of *ut pictura poesis* with which Du Fresnoy's poem began, whereas De Piles's interest in colour pulled the text and the reader in quite another way. Later translations, notably by William Mason with notes by Reynolds, kept the contributions by De Piles, Dryden, Pope, and Graham.<sup>7</sup>

Richardson's books, first published between 1715 and 1722, reached a very large audience. They remained in print through the century, in English as well as in a number of translations, and long quotations from them appeared in periodicals and other books. For example, at least one country house guide included selections about judging art as a helpful supplement.<sup>8</sup> The most influential for the development of art criticism was *An Essay on the Theory of Painting*, first published in 1719 and in a revised and expanded edition in 1725. In it, Richardson explained a version of the Academic method of pictorial analysis, dividing paintings into seven parts: expression, composition, drawing, colour, handling, and grace and greatness.<sup>9</sup> The lengthy descriptions of each quality include discussions of many older pictures. About 'Composition', for example, or the 'putting together for the Advantage of the Whole', Richardson referred to Rubens's *Descent from the Cross*:

Christ is the Principal Figure, This Body being Naked and about the Centre of the Picture wou'd have been distinguish'd as the Heightening of this Mass of Light; but not content with That, and to raise it still more, this Judicious Master has added a Sheet in which the Body is, and which is suppos'd to be Useful to deliver it down safely, as well as to carry it off afterwards, but the main design is what I am observing, and for that 'tis admirably introduc'd.

Similar extended analyses of works by Rubens, Van Dyck, Correggio and Raphael, among many others, explicate specific pictures Richardson judged to be effective. Even Van de Velde 'ought not to be forgotten, who tho' his Subjects were Ships, which consisting of so many little parts, are very difficult to fling into great Masses, has done it, by the help of spread Sails, Smoak, and the Bodies of the Vessels, and a judicious Management of Lights and Shadows'.<sup>10</sup>

Richardson's adaptation of Roger de Piles's chart for assessing paintings offered an appealingly easy means of studying pictures (albeit one that lent itself to caricature and satire). He demonstrated it in a lengthy analysis of Van Dyck's lost portrait of Frances Cecil (née Brydges), Countess Dowager of Exeter, a painting he knew from an engraving by William Faithorne in his own collection. That this was not considered a fatal disadvantage reveals a great deal about the pictorial elements Richardson considered most important, with size, paint handling, and colour clearly not high on the list (although he discussed them). Instead, considering 'in what degree the Rules of Painting have been observ'd', Richardson described how the eye was carried through the composition and led to notice and read various details. Finally, Richardson turned to the personal judgment of the pleasure the picture brought him, something where 'every Man must judge for himself'. At the end, he assigned a numerical rating on a scale of 18 to each part, making a separate column for Face because it was a portrait. Composition and Drawing in the whole only received 10s ('Mediocre'), but everything else got a 17 or 18.<sup>11</sup>

Central to all these discussions was the figure of the connoisseur. His (and it was a gendered role) mastery of the specialised language of visual analysis became a sign of authority as well as evidence of good taste.<sup>12</sup> But the persona also became the subject of much ridicule, with specific attacks on the social pretension implied and the support of foreign and older art rather than of contemporary British works. Further, there was much dispute about whether the connoisseur was in fact best qualified to judge works of art, with artists especially vocal in arguing that they held the real knowledge.<sup>13</sup> Reynolds, for example, in the first of his essays for the *Idler* published in 1759, ridiculed the former, recommending that those determined to be critics without reading or study 'assume the character of the Connoisseur... The remembrance of a few names of Painters, with their general characters, with a few rules of the Academy, ... will go a great way towards making a very notable Connoisseur'. An account of such a person talking about Van Dyck and Raphael's cartoons followed, providing a vivid satirical illustration of 'the cant of Criticism'.<sup>14</sup>

But what Reynolds called 'a few rules of the Academy' in fact informed the conventional language used to describe painting around 1760, deftly summarised – and satirised – by Laurence Sterne in *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy*. The first books of his novel, published in York in December of 1759 and in a first and then a second edition in London during the next few months, contain a special

'Virgin-Dedication' offered to 'Great Folks' – 'any one Duke, Marquis, Earl, Viscount, or Baron' – for fifty guineas. Sterne described the dedication being offered for patronage:

My Lord, if you examine it over again, it is far from being a gross piece of daubing, as some dedications are. The design, your Lordship sees, is good, – the colouring transparent, – the drawing not amiss; – or to speak more like a man of science, – and measure my piece in the painter's scale, divided into 20, – I believe, my Lord, the outlines will turn out as 12, – the composition as 9, – the colouring as 6, – the expression 13 and a half, – and the design, – if may be allowed, my Lord, to understand my own design, and supposing absolute perfection in designing, to be as 20, – I think it cannot fall short of 19. Besides all this, – there is keeping in it, and the dark strokes in the Hobby-Horse, (which is a secondary figure, and a kind of back-ground to the whole) give great force to the principal lights in your own figure, and make it come off wonderfully;<sup>15</sup> and besides, there is an air of originality in the tout ensemble.

Literary works were often discussed in the same terms as visual ones, as Dryden did in his introduction to *The Art of Painting*. But by specifically tying the novel to Richardson's version (the 'man of science' a reference to the title of his book about connoisseurship) of de Piles's scale, Sterne pushed the comparison into parody. Awarding his own design a 19 out of 20 (one point higher than any scoring in Richardson) puts his place ahead of that of the patron, despite the 'great force [given] to the principal lights' in the figure of the Lord. There is indeed an 'air of originality' in this 'tout ensemble'.

In Book III of *Tristram Shandy*, published a year later, Sterne turned to critics and 'the cant of Criticism'. In another passage addressed directly to the 'Lord', the narrator remarks that their 'heads, Sir, are stuck so full of rules and compasses, and have that eternal propensity to apply them on all occasions, that a work of genius better go to the devil at once, then stand to be pricked and tortured to death by 'em'. The first example is Garrick, whose performance was given a lengthy grammatical analysis: 'And how did Garrick speak the soliloquy last night? – Oh, against all rule, my Lord, – most ungrammatically!' Comments about a book and an epic poem follow, before coming to a 'grand picture':

– 'Tis a melancholy daub! my Lord; not one principle of the pyramid in any one group! – and what a price! – for there is nothing of the colouring of Titian – the expression of Rubens – the grace of Raphael – the purity of Domenchino – the corregiosity of Corregio – the learning of Poussin – the airs of Guido – the taste of the Carrachis – or the grand contour of Angelo, – Grant me patience, just Heaven! – Of all the cants which are canted in this canting world – though the cant of the hypocrites may be the worst – the cant of criticism is the most tormenting!

Most of this list repeats exactly what Reynolds had put in the mouth of the connoisseur at Hampton Court in his essay from 1759, reprinted in the *London Chronicle* in 1761. Sterne's only addition is the 'corregiosity' of Corregio, a word that manages to be both ridiculous and evocative at the same time. It was sufficiently memorable to be repeated by later writers.<sup>16</sup>

The practical result of all these publications was that when the first temporary exhibition of contemporary art opened in London, critics had a very familiar language available for visual analysis. They also had well-established literary forms for the reviews. One of the most popular for cultural events was a letter, often addressed to the editor of the periodical, although especially satirical ones tended to be presented as coming from a third party. The most notable precedent was Joseph Addison and Richard Steele's *Spectator*, which included many letters about London events.<sup>17</sup> Whether the

letters about later art exhibitions represent actual submissions from readers or professionals adopting that persona – and likely there were some of each type – the form pretends to a more immediate and informal address to the reader. Letters were used less often in subsequent decades as the art review developed its own sort of prose structure and the more neutral voice associated with professional critics.

The exhibition at the Society of Arts in 1760 consisted of more than 180 (since many of the 130 titles listed in the catalogue included more than one object) examples of painting, works on paper, and a range of sculptures, models, and engraved gems, displayed from 21 April to 8 May in the Great Room. The Society had moved to Little Denmark Court, across from the Beaufort Buildings on the Strand, in 1759. Although no visual records survive (and it was closed because of structural problems two years later), the exhibition room seems to have been 51 by 38 feet and 24 feet high, lit by a cupola which rested on four Corinthian columns, adding another 16 feet to its height. Judging from catalogue sales, some 20,000 people came, almost all of them in the morning since the Great Room was open only to members in the afternoon.<sup>18</sup> Paintings dominated and, judging from the titles given in the catalogue, about half were portraits (46), 11 of those specified as miniatures, followed by landscapes (17), with fewer than ten each depicting historical subjects, genre scenes and still-lives. These were supplemented by engravings, drawings of various kinds, engraved gems, and a mix of objects made of marble, plaster and wax. Ambitious artists clearly used the opportunity to display their skills. Among the painters, Francis Cotes, Joshua Reynolds, Paul Sandby and Richard Wilson showed four or five works that demonstrated their range. To the frustration of many, paintings that had been in the premium contest held by the Society earlier in the month were included in this exhibition too, which led some to think that the labeled winners had been judged best of the whole show rather than a separate competition.<sup>19</sup>

The most complete review of the exhibition appeared in a letter published in the *Imperial Magazine* in May of 1760. In what became a common opening for art reviews, the anonymous author wrote that the remarks will benefit those who were not able to see the show and will express the 'Sentiments of the Public' as well as those of the reviewer. In other words, in the contemporary battle over the appropriate judge of art, this writer carefully identified as not being a connoisseur – despite using that language. The exhibited works are discussed by medium and then alphabetically by the names of the artists, the same order used in the catalogue. Painting comes first, followed by sculpture, and then prints and drawings. Thus the review begins with Adrien Carpentiers's portraits, which show that 'he possesses, in considerable degree, the two parts of drawing and colouring' while his portrait of the painter Francesco Zuccarelli 'is the man himself, and is perfectly alive.' Charles Catton's landscape is commended for being 'touched like a master', Mason Chamberlin's portrait has 'great truth and force of character', Francis Cotes's portrait of a lady shows 'beauty and harmony of colouring', and Alexander Cozens's landscapes are 'in a very pretty manner'. The reviewer breaks from this enthusiasm only a few times. William Lawrenson's self-portrait receives a curt 'I cannot remember [it]' as do William Thomson's three portraits, and it is hoped that Samuel Wale's work will be better next time.<sup>20</sup>

The painter receiving most attention – all of it lavish praise – is Joshua Reynolds, leading Ellis Waterhouse to suggest

that the review was a puff for Reynolds.<sup>21</sup> The painter, 'whose merit is much beyond any thing that can be said in his commendation', 'obliged the public with four pieces'. The full length of the Duchess of Hamilton (Lady Lever Art Gallery, Liverpool Museums) shows the 'queen of all grace and beauty', the portrait of the Abermarle family is 'of a most happy pencil', the portrait of General Kingsley (Private collection) is 'known by every body' (ie is 'the man himself' and 'perfectly alive'), and *Colonel Charles Vernon in armour* (Museo de Arte de Ponce, Puerto Rico) 'wants nothing to be taken for a Vandyck but age only'. Considered together, they demonstrate that Reynolds was a 'perfect painter':

In these pieces you see a copious and easy invention, the most graceful attitudes, great truth, sweetness and harmony of colouring; a light bold, mellow, and happy pencil; a thorough knowledge of the magic of lights and shadows, with all the parts of the art which constitute a perfect painter: and, in short, one living proof that genius is of all ages and countries; and that Englishmen need not travel abroad to see fine things, would they but always study to cultivate and encourage genius at home.<sup>22</sup>

The conclusion, that British art deserves the support of collectors and connoisseurs, undergirds the whole of the review, since each work of quality contributes to the strength of this argument.

Despite the fluent, even elegant, use of the traditional language of art criticism, the review is oddly generic, lacking specific visual observations about any of the works discussed. Aside from references to the subjects of the paintings and (sometimes) size, almost any of the comments could be applied to any of the pictures. This combination of formulaic phrases without specific content and the almost complete avoidance of negative remarks led one modern scholar to suggest that the review was written by the novelist Tobias Smollett. Like the articles about art Smollett wrote for the *Critical Review*, a monthly he edited from 1756 to 1763, this one offers enthusiastic support for contemporary British art as well as special mention of the engraver Robert Strange, who 'is already so well known by his exquisite and invaluable labours'.<sup>23</sup> In fact, the *Critical Review* was the only periodical that regularly included articles about contemporary British art during the late 1750s. They were often about specific works, especially engravings, and stress the achievement of the British school.<sup>24</sup> It seems unlikely, however, that Smollett would have contributed a review when he was under immense pressure, writing his history of England and editing both the *Critical Review* and the *British Magazine*, especially since neither of these published reviews of the show. But his earlier writings about art may have provided a model, perhaps for one of the many writers who worked for him.

The curious vacuity of the review in the *Imperial Magazine* becomes even more striking when compared to the animated and detailed discussions published in the same periodical about the paintings that were awarded premiums by the Society of Arts, first shown in April with the other prize winners, and then – controversially – included in the larger exhibition. Most attention went to the two history paintings: Robert Edge Pine's *Surrender of Calais to Edward the Third* (first prize) and Chevalier Andrea Casali's *Story of Gunbilda* (second prize). After lengthy explanations of the historical subjects, always of paramount importance in Academic analyses, came 'Reflections' about the paintings. The comments about Pine's picture contain some very specific criticism:

First then, ... it has been remarked, that the drawing of the king might have been nobler and more elegant; that the action of the arm lifted up, is not forcible or natural enough; that the passion of the queen, is but half expressive; that the characters of the citi-

zens of Calais, are low and mean...; that many of the other personages are of an insipid cold mien, especially the prince of Wales; and lastly, that the whole is performed with a certain harshness... But...there is still merit enough in it.

Casali's picture suffered by the comparison, since 'every eye, after running over in a cursory way this painting in particular, seemed as it were fastened and rivetted to that of Mr. Pine'.<sup>25</sup>

After these unsigned articles came two letters to the editor.<sup>26</sup> The first, from 'H.S.', 'a Gentleman in London [writing] to his Friend in the Country', criticises the judges for favouring Pine over Casali, adding that 'every artist I have talked with on the subject (and I have conferred with many) express a disapprobation of the sentence'. '[T]hey could not but confess that chevalier Casali's picture was greatly superior to any of the rest; yet, as he was a foreigner, they should not hesitate ... to give their suffrages for their countryman'. The next letter was signed by 'our constant reader, G.L.', who for 'near twenty years [had] been studying the principles, and endeavouring to make myself master of the theory of art'. It offers an extended and exceptionally specific visual analysis of three of the historical pictures. Casali's picture

... was undoubtedly fine; it had what the painters call a brilliant eye, the groups were nobly disposed, the general shapes of the objects that filled the picture, had abundance of taste and were well contrasted; in the expression and colouring of the queen's face, he has been remarkably happy; I wish he had succeeded as well in that of the king's; the expression there appeared to be not perfectly intelligible, and the colouring had too great a cast of terra-vert in the lights, and umber in the shadows; the whole, together indeed, of that figure, was by no means equal to the queen's; that vermilion drapery hurt the effect of the picture, especially as the other draperies consisted, all together, of changeable and broken tints.

The basic language of this review is familiar – the disposition of groups, composition, expression, colouring, light and shadow, draperies, contrast. But the references to specific colours – terra-vert, umber, and vermilion – and to 'changeable and broken tints' bring a much finer focus to the analysis in a way that suggests the more technical language used by artists. This fits with the allusion to studio talk in explaining the term 'brilliant eye'.

After the first picture, wrote G.L, 'I shall differ from the generality of what are called connoisseurs' by choosing William Dawes's picture of Mortimer and Edward III as 'next in merit'. The analysis considers in detail how the story is told ('admirably'), the expressions ('fine'), the colouring ('fine'), the figures ('very correctly drawn'), and their attitudes ('ingeniously varied'), but there 'seemed to be a want of force, and strong opposition of light and shadow'. The last observation was discussed in relation to several parts of the picture. Finally, there 'appeared to be nothing borrow'd in this picture, but all the entire production of his own genius'. Pine's painting, by contrast, was 'far inferior'. Among other things, the figures are 'ill designed' and the heads 'very deficient both in colouring and expression', although 'there is a fine effect of the clair-obscuré' in the manner of 'that justly admired master, Rembrandt'. These discussions, like the one about Casali's painting, enrich a conventional critical language with specific visual observations and art historical references. Rembrandt, for example, although admired, was not usually on the list of canonical masters.<sup>27</sup>

Two letters about the premium pictures also appeared in the weekly *London Chronicle*. The first writer is criticised by a second in the next issue of the same magazine. As so often during this period, the writers were anonymous, but the letters read like a public airing of a private argument, with the second well aware of the identity of the first – as perhaps

were some readers. The first writer, who signed his letter 'a Gentleman', is addressed by the second as 'Mr. Anonymous', surely intended as an attack on the social pretensions of the former, presumably including his authority as a critic. Despite adopting the moniker of Gentleman, however, the first writer seems to be an artist, at least judging from the vocabulary used in the letter. The second writer, 'a constant Reader', states specifically that the letter gives 'the sentiments of a painter who has studied nature's law, and the works of the greatest masters for many years'.<sup>28</sup> The sharpness of their disagreement makes additional sense if they are both artists.

The letter from a 'Gentleman' begins with the common lament about the lack of proper encouragement given to contemporary British artists. But this writer then outlines a series of oppositions that shape the visual issues more closely than was usual:

[W]hat encouragement is there for an ingenious artist to exert himself, when the very worst things are preferred to the best? When a set of taudry, dissonant and flaring colours, which have nothing in them but distraction and confusion, can so easily influence the judgment of Connoisseurs? When a solid harmonious composition, without flutter and without any little parts, is looked upon as a thing without merit? When a labored and painful neatness, not painted but dotted and fiddled out with a pencil, gives more pleasure to judges (if such are to be called judges) than an easy freedom and firmness of hand, capable of determining all the several parts with an infallible precision which is alone to be found in great masters? When foul, starved, and hungry colours are more capable of pleasing the eye than rich, pure and delicate tincts? When the lightness with which they are placed on the canvass is no more considered than if they were laid on in the most plumbean [ie, leaden] manner?

The problem, in sum, is that the judges are enticed by all the 'worst things' and thus led to base their opinions on the 'agreeableness or disagreeableness of the composition' rather than the 'fixed and certain rules for painting and judging of a fine picture'. Knowledge of the 'requisites, both in the composition and the execution', is essential for the artist as well as the critic. In particular, knowledge of the 'executive part' is essential for distinguishing copies from originals. The prominent place given to the artist and the processes of making, like the specificity of the comments about visual things, suggest that the writer was an artist.

The letter then proceeds to a detailed analysis of the four prize-winning paintings. Pine's work has several 'very good' ideas, including the position of the major figures and expression, a 'brilliancy' in the painting, and harmony in colouring, although the drawing of the hands may not be quite correct and the 'most sublime characters' of the burghers might have been conveyed more effectively. Casali's picture is 'extremely well designed' and painted with a 'free and firm hand' which makes the 'management' of the 'pencil' (that is, brush) better, but his ideas are inferior to Pine's. All of these comments are developed in relation to particular elements in the paintings. The characterisation of the colours is especially unusual. The flesh tones are 'pale and languid', while the colours of the drapery distract the eye with a 'strong red' paired with a 'bright white' and blue with yellow.

The second half of the letter is devoted to a long discussion of the other premium-winning pictures, two landscape paintings by George and John Smith of Chichester (first and second prize respectively), unfavourably compared to two landscapes by unnamed artists. Since history painting was at the top of the Academic hierarchy as well as the competition for the premiums, this interest is unexpected (and may provide another clue to the writer's identity). Judging from this review, all four pictures were pastoral scenes, complete with

framing trees, reflecting water, and spatial recession, animated by an assortment of bridges, figures and animals. The last one 'was rejected by the majority of gentlemen Connoisseurs' – another attack on the judgment of the prize committee as well as connoisseurs. Presumably, then, it was not on display at all.

In the opinion of the writer of this letter, the pictures by the Smith brothers were not good. George Smith's picture shows 'little knowledge of the true principle of painting', by which the reviewer meant not the conception or the design ('which had the good luck to please') but the execution. A general criticism of 'an excess of labour' is followed by a long list of other problems, many involving colour. First, 'the sky next the horizon is of a reddish hue and the distances next that sky, of a cold purplish one; ... [they are] dissonant tones'. The water is 'much too light' and 'without a proper gradation of tincts', the part under the bridge 'much too light compared with the part which is forward', and the whole is 'a pale wheyish colour'. 'And yet what exclamations did I not hear during the little time I stood in the room, about the beauty of that water?' The ground is 'frittered and broke' into 'many little parts' and a small waterfall there is 'too light' and 'creates a confusion as is painful to look at'. The great trees 'most forward are almost of the same degree of strength and colour with those on the second ground', and both are 'a hard, glaring green, very stiff and lame'. There is not the 'least penciling throughout the picture, nor any firmness or liberty of hand'. The foliage of the trees is 'dotted and fiddled out, with the pencil just as one sees them on a China saucer'. Finally, the 'most forward parts of the picture are of a foul brownish yellow hue'. John Smith's painting was worse: the same faults in the distances, spots in the water that are too light, 'still fouler' brownish yellow in the foreground, 'littleness and stiffness in the penciling', and 'wooliness of painting throughout'.

The two landscapes by the unidentified artists, on the other hand, were wonderful. The first showed a landscape with a castle on a hill on the left and two trees on the right, a reflecting body of water, and a 'large' foreground. Lighting and colouring were arranged so that 'nothing offended the eye or obstructed it in looking at the farthest distances'. In the second picture, called '*Evening*', the pencil was 'free and easy' and a 'great certainty and firmness of hand manifested a master'. The design was 'agreeably imagined, and judiciously composed of great parts, painted with a strong body of colour throughout, and the figures... appear, what they ought to be, embellishments only to the picture, without giving the least disturbance to the eye surveying the landscape'. It would be tempting to identify these artists as Richard Wilson and/or Paul Sandby, both of whom would have had fair claim to prizes in landscape painting. It has been suggested that the Smiths defeated Wilson for the premiums, although records at the Society of Arts show that the latter did not compete, and may even have been on the committee that year. Sandby actually painted a companion called '*Evening*' to the picture he exhibited at the Society in 1760, but its composition does not match that described in the review.<sup>29</sup>

The second letter in the *London Chronicle* consists of a vigorous attack on the previous author, who puffed friends and 'pull'd to pieces others, with no little rage'. '[H]e has in a great measure discovered the badness of his taste and teeth at the same time, and has also endeavoured at something more, in a flourishing, pungent, puritanick way.' Contrary to the opinion of the first letter writer, Pine's pic-

ture is 'truly replete with merit' and the landscapes by the Smiths 'do honour to our country and themselves' as well as being 'the best then shewn for the late premium'. The reason for writing the letter was public good: 'I am not willing the multitude should all go with the first stream, and be drowned in his water, and form a wrong opinion of this eligible noble spirited Society, by branding them with want of understanding in any branch of science, or partiality to individuals'. Despite declaring himself a painter, the writer filled the letter with abusive assertions and almost no visual analysis.

The reviews from 1760, especially those about the premium pictures, contain a great deal of specific comment about individual paintings. Yet they are silent on many of the things that seem most interesting to us. For example, the novelty of the exhibition apparently did not inspire written analysis, although its popularity with the public indicates how much enthusiasm there was. The way in which some of the pictures seem to reflect artists taking deliberate advantage of the new public setting – as recent art historians have suggested with Reynolds's *Elizabeth Gunning, Duchess of Hamilton and Argyll* (Lady Lever Art Gallery, Port Sunlight) and Wilson's *Destruction of the Children of Niobe* (Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, Paul Mellon Collection) – also was not discussed.<sup>30</sup> Of course the absence of thoughtful remarks about big issues or new types of pictures seems reasonable enough for journalism on a deadline. But even the detailed criticism seems not to offer much useful insight into contemporary opinion, especially since most of the close analysis only makes sense if the reader already knows what the pictures look like. Finally, the works that we consider most important are not the ones most carefully examined.

To a large degree, our sense of the inarticulateness of the reviews reflects our distance from contemporary conventions of writing about art. It is interesting to compare the 18th-century criticism of Pine's history painting (quoted above) to a recent discussion of it by Martin Myrone. After likening the picture to Le Brun's *Alexander before the Tent of Darius* (as one of the 18th-century critics also did), Myrone continued:

Pine has similarly organized his composition around a central event to ensure a dramatic focus on the gesture of the most significant actor, in this case the raised hand of Edward III. In narrative terms, the king's is a decisive gesture, giving physical (and thus visually legible) expression to his decision to spare or execute his prisoners; formally, the hand occupies the apex of a triangle encompassing the king, the burghers and kneeling figure of the queen. But in a radical departure from the model of Le Brun, Pine's picture implies a critique of the king and his authority. The king is characterized as a tyrannical, almost bestial figure, with deeply set eyes. The curious, Hogarthian narrative detail of a dog sniffing his ermine-trimmed cloak must serve to suggest his repulsive personal nature. The queen is evidently pregnant and is depicted on her knees pleading desperately.

Myrone's text offers an interpretative argument based on visual characterisations that are explained convincingly for the reader in terms of what the viewer sees. But this formal and narrative structure would have been assumed by an informed viewer in 1760. For example, there would have no need to explain the importance or function of the king's 'decisive gesture', but only whether it was 'forcible or natural enough' (quoted above). Furthermore, the language the critics used relies on comparative descriptive adjectives (for example, 'nobler') that refer to pictures we no longer visualise, and we have little interest in the qualities they regarded as essential (for example, 'sublime characters'). Unable to follow these niceties of distinction, much of the criticism seems

so formulaic as to be meaningless. Finally, the anti-monarchical suggestions would not have been discussed in print, at least not directly.

Generally, the reviews that seem most vivid to us avoid the language of the academy. For example, a letter within a letter that appeared in *Lloyd's Evening Post* at the end of May in 1761 presents an account of the exhibition written by a young officer to his father. Although the framing as well as the name 'J. Candidus' suggest a fictional writer, the distinctive point of view creates a convincing sense of an actual viewer from the military. The 'dutiful son, J.B.' reported: 'When I entered the room I was at a loss where first to fix my eyes, seeing so glaring a sight; but as, dear Sir, my turn is military, you'll excuse my not keeping the order of the Catalogue' Pictures with military subjects by Scott ('the French ships on fire are finely expressed'), Reynolds (the sifter 'mixed with rage that war and the love of country can give'), and Hayman ('very humorous') are praised, while Hogarth's *Sigismunda* is called 'an exceeding fine expressive piece', an exceptionally positive opinion of that controversial picture. Hudson's portraits are fine, and 'there are several very good Landscips and Portraits'. Unlike most other writers, he then turned to sculpture, and the last third of the letter consists of an explanation of James Hill's *Emblematical Model of Britannia* 'as a Gentleman [there] explained it to some Ladies'.<sup>32</sup>

Reviews increased in number and became more specific as the years went on. By 1767, enough appeared so that differences of opinion could be the subject of an article (see below). In that year, the Society of Artists showed in the Great Room at Spring Gardens, a fashionable public space used for a variety of events, and it was honoured by the King's first visit. Although Reynolds did not exhibit, the show included: Nathaniel Dance, whose *Timon of Athens* ended up in the Royal Collection; Thomas Gainsborough, including one of his most important landscapes, *The Harvest Wagon* (Barber Institute of Fine Arts, Birmingham); a range of history paintings by Benjamin West; candlelights by Joseph Wright of Derby; and landscapes by Wilson and Sandby. There were controversies too, notably accusations that the subject of Francis Cotes's portrait of *Queen Charlotte with a Princess* (Royal Collection) had won it a particularly advantageous place in the hanging, and published rumours that John Joshua Kirby's *An Evening View at Kew Ferry* had been painted by the King.<sup>33</sup> The exhibition of the Free Society, held in Christie's auction room on Pall Mall, included a relief by Thomas Banks, three plaster models by Flaxman, and paintings by Casali, Romney, Runciman and Zuccarelli, among more than 300 works.

One of the earliest reviews was in the *Public Advertiser*, in a letter from XW (the last letters of the alphabet were a common source of pseudonyms). The article begins with remarks about the success of the exhibition promising 'that our Country will wipe off the Imputation of Incapacity to excel', and the value of a review in improving artists. The second paragraph moves directly to the art: 'On entering the Exhibition Room, the first Picture that strikes the Eye is West's *Jupiter and Semele*.' Placing the critic in the gallery and going by order of something other than the catalogue, as the dutiful son JB did, positions the writer and the reader more intimately, more immediately, at the event. Then the review turns to the painting:

The Figure of Semele is a Master-piece. The easy Gracefulness of the Attitude, the Beauty and Naturalness of the Carnation, and above all, the fine Expression of the Countenance, that Mixture of Desire, Surprise and Fear, give it a just Right to that Title. The

Effect of Light and Shade is fine, but it were to be wished the Figure of Jupiter equalled that of his rash and unfortunate Mistress.

In this review, the traditional pictorial aspects – gesture, colour, expression, light and shade – are grouped around the figure and so they seem to accumulate into something the reader can visualise. The comments about West's other pictures are similarly focused, comparing attitude, gesture and expression of the figures to nature, the antique and, in one case, David Garrick.

After the long paragraph about West's contributions, the review moves on to other artists, among them Zuccarelli ('next to Mr. West in point of stile'), Zoffany ('admirable'), Dance ('great Merit'), Wright of Derby (his candlelights 'always admired'), Stubbs ('His peculiar Excellencies is in expressing the Fur of Animals'), Paton ('great Merit'), and artists of 'the Fair Sex'. Richard Wilson is highly praised:

Mr. Wilson holds the first Rank among the landskip Painters. His View from Moor-Park [Private collection] is, in Point of Execution, capital, and may convince the World that the simple Grandeur of an extensive, richly-cultivated, wooded Plain, and the Verdure, almost peculiar to our Island, so much admired in Nature, and so much decried in Imitation, may have extraordinary Beauties in a Picture.

The review ended with Thomas Lawrenson's

... Admirable Picture of the loving Couple at Tea. The innate Stupidity and habitual Vulgarity of this happy Pair are so strongly marked, and the Action and Attitudes so finely imagined to express the true ridiculous, that not a Soul can view it without Laughing, and the World will now no longer lament the loss of a Hogarth.

The range and specificity of the critic's response is impressive, covering landscape and genre with the same confidence as history painting. Even a pictorial aspect as conventional as attitude is used to different but equally effective purpose in the discussions of West's and Lawrenson's pictures.

A few days later, the *Public Advertiser* published a vigorous attack from 'TH' on 'XW's' review, especially on the subject of Wilson's picture:

He talks of Expression, without knowing what it means; and I should be very sorry that so excellent an Artist as Mr. Wilson should be so unknown to the World, as to need a Description of his Merit from so improper an Hand. His View from Moor-Park, he says, in Point of Execution, is capital (what does the Fool mean by Execution?) and may convince the World (he continues) that the simple Grandeur of an extensive, richly cultivated, wooded Plain, &c. so much admired in Nature, and so much decried in Imitation, may have extraordinary Beauties in a Picture, that is, may be much decried in Imitation.

XW answered this letter with a brief retort that ended: 'But, to imitate him in one Respect, I'll take the Liberty to give you [the Printer] a Piece of Advice, short, but useful: – Banish from your Paper the Language of Blackguards'.<sup>35</sup> It is hard to understand what inspired the violence of this disagreement, especially because modern viewers would agree with the praise of Wilson's painting. But it is a reminder of how much remains unknown about these unsigned reviews and their anonymous authors.

Independently published pamphlets, often sold for a shilling, provided more space for detailed responses than columns in newspapers or magazines. Several appeared in 1767, including *A Critical Examination of the Pictures, Sculptures, Designs in Architecture, Models, Drawings, Prints, &c.*, which seems to have been written by an artist because of the studio talk included. Presumably it was meant to be read with the catalogue in hand, since the works are listed by number and the names of the artists are not given. The 'best picture in the room' was Nathaniel Dance's *Timon*

of Athens: 'The composition is great, the chiaro oscuro well understood, the drawing as fine as possible, the drapery free and flowing, and the characters of the heads almost equal to the antique'. Hayman's, by contrast, were the 'worst pictures in the room'. Benjamin West's are discussed at length. About *Jupiter and Semele*, praised so highly by XW, this critic wrote: 'The attitude is better in this than in the other [*Venus and Adonis*], the drawing more correct, and the outline rather more flowing, but still too hard. Jupiter looks as angry as if he was attacking the giants'. A separate paragraph is devoted to West's colouring:

What is called glazing, that is, finishing with thin, transparent colour has been long practiced, but this does not seem to be the case here [in West's work]. Much has been said of Titian's method, which is not affirmed to have been the laying over the middle tints with a kind of bitumen, called Asphaltum, in the finishing. Others propose using a kind of varnish in the lights. But these are only hints for an artist.

In general there is an ugly glare in all these pictures in the shades, as well as in the lights; and the yellow in the two last is very disagreeable.

Upon the whole, this artist has no small degree of merit, and all his pictures have great beauties. It gives us pain to mention his faults.

The writer also discussed Wilson's *View from Moor-Park*, agreeing with XW on the quality of its execution especially: 'This is a very fine landscape, executed in a most masterly manner, and well understood. The flat is admirably represented, and the keeping excellent. But the foreground is rather heavy, and the figures of the woman and child very bad.'<sup>36</sup>

The pamphlet contains comments about many other artists. At one extreme is William Peters's portrait of a lady, 'a horrible picture, and disgusting to the last degree. It has no drawing, nor any thing to recommend it, and the drapery is only a daubing of crimson'. John Singleton Copley's *Girl with Dog and Bird* (Toledo Museum of Art), which was judged by most critics much less favourably than his debut work of the previous year, receives only: 'This picture is horrible.' Gainsborough's paintings receive a mixed review. The whole length of *Lady Grosvenor* (Private collection), the sitter not identified in the review, is 'well drawn, and the attitude exceedingly graceful. The head is well painted, but the colouring of the drapery is cold and raw, and the back ground unfinished'. In the portrait of the *Duke of Argyll* (National Gallery of Scotland), on the other hand: 'The likeness is very great, as is usual with this artist, and the face well painted; but the attitude is bad, the back ground unfinished, and the sky intolerable.' And the comment about Kirby's landscape, said to have been painted by the King, is knowing: 'This cannot be the production of the artist to whom it is attributed. It is worthy only of a school-boy.' Pictures by both Wright of Derby and Zoffany are praised highly.<sup>37</sup>

But not all pamphlets offer as much specific comment about the art. Another pamphlet that appeared in 1767 was a lengthy poem called *Le Pour et le Contre*.<sup>38</sup> This verse review seems to be the one referred to by Edmund Burke in a letter to James Barry:

Jones, who used to be poet laureate to the exhibition, is prepared to be a severe and almost general satirist upon the exhibitors. His ill behavior has driven him from all their houses, and he resolves to take revenge in this manner. He has endeavoured to find out what pictures they will exhibit, and upon such information as he has got, has before-hand given a poetic description of those pictures which he has not seen. I am told he has gone so far as to abuse Reynolds at guess, as an exhibitor of several pictures, though he does not put in one. This is a very moral poet.

Although Jones was not identified further by Burke, it seems very likely to have been Henry Jones (1721–1770), an

Irishman brought from Dublin to London in 1748 by Lord Chesterfield. With the help of that introduction, Jones became a playwright and poet who nearly became the national Poet Laureate. By the 1760s, however, he had antagonised his patrons and turned to incidental writing to make a living.<sup>40</sup> These facts fit with the spirit of Burke's remarks. Excerpts from the pamphlet appeared in the *London Chronicle*, introduced by an explanation that began – as so often – with praise of the British school and its recent progress, but ended with a less common remark taken from the Preface to the published poem: 'And what must now infuse them, and add new vigour to every aspiring genius, is the exhibition at Spring Gardens having been honoured... with their Majesties gracious and encouraging inspection!' Not surprisingly, the article (perhaps by the same author as the pamphlet) includes fulsome lines from the poem about the great success of Cotes's royal portraits. About Dance, on the other hand, the language is measured, considering groupings, expression, design, and the want of 'Titian's tint'.<sup>41</sup>

At least one reader found the variety of opinions published in 1767 interesting. An article about the exhibition of the Free Society of Artists in *Gentleman's Magazine* juxtaposes comments by 'MH' with those from 'A Lover of the Arts', both first published in reviews in the *Gazetteer*.<sup>42</sup> About works by John Daniel Bond, for example, MH wrote: 'The landscapes of this artist are exceedingly good, his scenes are rural and natural, the chiara obscura pleasing, the colouring sweet, with remarkable ease and freedom of penciling'. This sounds so formulaic as to be nearly meaningless, like a variant of the comments in the *Imperial Magazine* about Reynolds's paintings having 'all the parts of the art which constitute a perfect painter'. The opinion of the other critic could not be more different: 'The distance of this landscape is very cold, ill-coloured, and is not in harmony with the colour of the sky. The leafage of his trees seem more properly adapted for tapestry-weaving than an imitation of nature, and his skies, in general, spoil the pretty effect of his smaller pictures.' The only shared observation may be that ease and freedom of handling could produce a textured surface like that of a tapestry. There was more agreement about the battle piece by Francis Casanova (better known as Francesco Giuseppe or François Joseph), brother of the adventurer. According to MH, the painting 'shews great strength of genius; the light and shadow finely managed; and was the drawing a little more correct, it might be deemed a painting of the first class'. For the other writer, 'His battle-piece is a noble design, and painted with wonderful spirit and fire.' Here the fine management of light and shadow presumably is part of what creates the 'noble design', and a spirited style of painting might well reflect 'great strength of genius' without contradicting the idea that the drawing was weak.

It happens that these reviews from 1767 can be supplemented by artists' comments which, not surprisingly since at least some of the reviewers were artists, sound like the published critics. Although Copley's *Girl with Dog and Bird* was almost ignored by reviewers, Benjamin West wrote to him at length about it:

Mr. Reynolds when he saw it he was not so much Pleased with it as he was with the first Picture you Exhibited [in 1766], that he thought you have not managed the general Effect of it so Pleasing as the other. This is what the Artists in General have Criticized, and the Colouring of the Shadows of the flesh wants transparency...

The General Effect as Mr. Reynolds justly Observes is not quite so agreeable in this as in the other; which arises from Each Part of the Picture being Equal in Strength of Colouring and finishing, Each Making too much a Picture of it self, without that Due Subordination to the Principle Parts, viz., the head and hands. ...

For in Portrait Painting those are the Parts of Most Consequence, and of Course ought to be the most distinguished. ... [I]f this is not observed the whole is Confusion ... Your Picture is in Possession of Drawing to a Correctness that is very Surprising, and of Colouring very Brilliant, though this Brilliancy is Somewhat mis-applied, as for instance, the Gown too bright for the flesh, which overcame it in Brilliancy. This made them Criticize the Shadows of the Flesh without knowing from whence this defect arose; and so in like manner the dog and Carpet too Conspicuous for Accessory things, and a little want of Propriety in the Back Ground, which Should have been Some Modern ornament, as the Girl was in a Modern dress and modern Cherce. The Back Ground should have had a look of this time.<sup>43</sup>

In this letter, West helpfully offered explanation of specific visual aspects in the course of an analysis based on the conventional Academic parts. So, for example, the problem with the 'general effect' results from each part of the composition being handled equally with respect to colour and finish, thus risking 'confusion'.

By 1767, the audience at the exhibitions had become a common subject for satirical articles. A particularly elaborate account, published in the *Public Advertiser*, was framed as instructions for the making of a critic.<sup>44</sup> As so often with this genre, the 'named' author was just passing along something he had been given. An inhabitant of Grub Street, the writer was called Nicodemus Bluntquill – the last name implying both a hack writer and one who was not very smart, and the first presumably an allusion to the Biblical figure, perhaps suggesting someone who did not have the courage of his convictions.<sup>45</sup> In any case, the name clearly flags it as a satire. The letter sent the reader to the exhibition to study what people there said, and thus learn how to talk like a critic. It divided the people into categories that were themselves humorous: 'Gentlemen who are stiled Connoisseurs', 'Ladies', persons who wear 'a Kind of green and yellow Melancholy' and walk in couples, and persons who have 'real Taste, Candour and Judgment'. This range allows the writer to skewer the language of the connoisseur as well as popular guides to its use, such as Cosmetti's *Polite Arts, dedicated to the Ladies*, published in the same year.<sup>46</sup> The critical terms given at the end of Bluntquill's letter are Grace and Greatness (the first qualities in Richardson's *Balance of the Painters*), and a jumble of others: 'Composition, Expression, Chiaro Oscuro, Force, Character, Attitude, Masses, Light, Shadow, Harmony, Keeping, Colouring, Degradation, Half-Teint perspective, Tout-ensemble, Warmth, Cold, Fore-ground, Back-ground'.

Although agreement among multiple sources can provide the basis for convincing historical generalisations, it also can be seriously misleading. In 1761, for example, a series of letters and a poem published in the *St. James's Chronicle* and then again in its *Yearly Chronicle for 1761* seem to offer safety in numbers, but the identity of two of the authors dramatically revises the meaning of the published comments. Although the texts appeared during the time of the exhibition (the one staged by the Society of Artists ran from 23 April to 20 May) and ostensibly concerned it, their subject was really the defence of Hogarth specifically and contemporary British art more generally. The fact that they appeared in the *St. James's Chronicle* is revealing. Founded in 1761 by a group that included Bonnell Thornton and George Colman, with David Garrick joining them shortly afterwards, the newspaper became a vehicle for satire and much discussion of cultural events.<sup>47</sup> In the following year, it played a very active role in the controversy about the Sign Painters Exhibition.

The first of these letters, signed 'John Oakly', was published on 23–25 April 1761 and reprinted two weeks later to

'gratify the Curiosity of the Public', because it had been 'the Subject of much Conversation (in Consequence of which the Paper has been lost out of several Coffeehouses)'. It offers a long and spirited defence of British artists: 'Our living Men of Merit should be neglected and starved, because Connoisseurs forsooth (as they are called) from Conceit and Picture-Jobbers from Interest, are leagued together to destroy all Genius, and subsequently true Taste.' It has been made 'a Matter of Ridicule to purchase any Modern Production, or encourage any English artist'. '[M]any of our Painters are laboring for a small Pittance, and many more are absolutely starving with Genius and Industry.' A few portrait painters are well rewarded because of the 'Vanity and Self-love' of those who commission the works. The hero of the letter is 'the great Original of Dramatic Painting', William Hogarth, who 'has invented Character, Fable, Incidents, &c., and has put them together in such a Masterly Manner, and with such Variety, that a writer of Comedy might paint almost exactly after him, and furnish great Entertainment for the Stage from his exquisite comic Paintings'.

And then, as it were, the fun began. A second letter by Oakly was published on May 14–16, about 'my Notions of Taste and a Tale or two into the Bargain', which turn out to be about connoisseurs leading a traveller to Italy astray. A letter from an 'Admirer, but, thank God, no Encourager of the Polite Arts' published a week later told of 'a young Fellow of easy Fortune' meeting an old school fellow, Lord Brillus, who 'had just returned from his Travels' and was off 'to despise the wretched English Dawbs at Spring Gardens'. The letter became a spirited defence of Hogarth. Oakly's second letter was answered by someone who signed himself 'Theo. Coverley' and declared that 'for one good Picture there are at least ten bad ones' in the exhibitions. Furthermore, he expected that 'the Party formed in support of the modern Painters... are likely to carry their Admiration of their contemporary Countrymen to as ridiculous an Extreme as ever was done by the Connoisseurs in favour of the ancient Foreigners'. That in turn was answered by someone who signed the letter 'Your humble servant, BLANK' and 'was sure that Mr. Coverley loves a Foreigner from his Heart'. On the same page was a letter from 'An Admirer, and thank God an Encourager, of the Polite Arts, by being a Member of the Society of the Arts'. Finally, a translation of a French poem 'by an Eminent Artist' that had been published on 14 May appeared in a translation by 'a real Lover of the Beaux Arts, to a Connoisseur' on May 26.<sup>48</sup>

Extant records identify John Oakly as David Garrick.<sup>49</sup> In fact, contemporary audiences might well have associated the two since Garrick played a character of that name in early 1761 as the leading man in George Colman's successful play *Jealous Wife*.<sup>50</sup> The other sure identification is the writer of the poem, given in the *Yearly Chronicle of 1761* as the recently deceased sculptor Louis-François Roubiliac.<sup>51</sup> The names of the other letter writers, all still unknown, evoke a variety of contemporary references. Anyone named Coverley surely suggested Sir Roger Coverley, the landed country gentleman created for Addison's and Steele's *Spectator*.<sup>52</sup> 'Your humble servant, BLANK' sounds like a joke on anonymity, using a phrase that closed letters in contemporary periodicals.<sup>53</sup> Lord Brillus is the name of a character in Fulke Greville's hugely popular *Maxims, Characters, and Reflections, Critical, Satirical, and Moral*, first published in 1756. Brillus, wrote Greville, is 'a man of the world, he dresses well, but without study, and ... all awkwardness is repugnant to his nature, he was born polite, easy, and what



the French so emphatically call placé'.<sup>54</sup> In other words, although scholars have treated some of these letters as serious historical evidence, contemporary readers probably understood them as humorous from the start.

Apparently written by the same group or, at least, advocating very similar opinions, is a 44-page pamphlet that appeared in May of the same year. It's likely revealing of its authorship that the entire section about contemporary artists was reprinted in the *St. James's Chronicle* on 9–12 May. The pamphlet is titled in full: *A Call to the Connoisseurs, or Decisions of Sense, with respect to the Present State of Painting and Sculpture, and Their several Professors in these Kingdoms. Together with A Review of and Examination into their Comparative Merits and Excellencies. Intended to vindicate the Genius and Abilities, of the Artists of our own Country, from the Malevolence of pretended Connoisseurs, or interested Dealers. Recommended to the Perusal of every true Judge and impartial Critic in Great Britain, previous to a View of the present Exhibitions of the Modern Artists, T.B. Esq.* A number of historians have suggested that the author was Bonnell Thornton, one of the original proprietors of the *St. James's Chronicle*. He is best known to art historians for the Sign-Painters exhibition, announced for 1761 but delayed until 1762, when it opened in Thornton's apartment.<sup>55</sup> The initials may represent his own reversed, or the initials of the publisher of the newspaper, or any other combination – pseudonyms were picked up and dropped quickly by these writers, and did not always signify anything of importance.

As the title suggests, *A Call to the Connoisseurs* consists of an extended polemic against those who bought Old Masters instead of British artists and a concluding section that praises contemporary artists by name. The style of the prose varies, with that used in the argumentative sections quite different from the laudatory comments at the end. Some of the former seem close in tone to Hogarth's own writing, notably the text he may have written during these years, perhaps intended to become a book called *An Apology for Painters*. There is even mention of something that sounds remarkably like what Hogarth told Horace Walpole he was writing: 'I am collecting Materials for a History of the English Painters, in which the Artists now living will make so shining a Part ...'<sup>56</sup> But other biographical hints do not correspond to Hogarth's life and there seems to be no overlap in actual wording between this text and anything known to be written by him.

*A Call to the Connoisseurs* begins with a spirited defence of artists as the proper judges of works of art: '[T]he same Laws of Composition, the same Harmony of Colours, the same Degree of Opposition and Contrast, of Light and Shadow, Force and Faintness, are alike requisite to Corregio and Wovermans; Raphael and Campadeglio. Every Painter is therefore in great Measure a proper Judge of his Brother.' By contrast, 'an ordinary Spectator [is Judge] only of a Part, and that generally a very small one, and a modern Connoisseur, for whom this is chiefly intended, no Judge at all'. But bad as connoisseurs were, dealers were worse, a sentiment expressed in language resembling that used by Hogarth as far back as Britophil's letter in 1737:

The former at worst are weak, these are wicked; one is contemptible, the other detestable; the former likes or dislikes from no Motive but Caprice, the latter culminates one Set of Gentlemen in order to cheat another; the Picture Dealer is generally some Painter or Engraver, whose utmost Abilities amount to the daubing of Window Blinds, or graving of Tankards; and not being able to live on his own wretched Productions.

As a result of their interest in sales, 'nothing modern must pass uncensored: mention the Force and Colouring of Thomson, they will answer he's incorrect; ... and if Reynolds is deservedly prais'd for his perfect Skill in Composition, his admirable Distribution of Light and Shadow, and elegant Variety; he must be deny'd Colouring, and all the rest must be Trick, Glazing, and Varnish.'<sup>57</sup>

The last pages consist of a few enthusiastic sentences about each of 14 contemporary artists. Hogarth, for example, is discussed after Hussey and Hudson:

Mr. Hogarth is the most perfect Master of all the Characters and Passions, expressed by the Human Countenance, that ever existed; this makes his Conversations inimitable and inestimable; and indeed was he to paint historical Subjects of the same Size, it is my Opinion he would be still more, what he is already, the Wonder of the World.

Remarks about some of the other artists, notably Reynolds, are even more positive.<sup>58</sup> The context as well as the excess of enthusiasm indicate that the remarks cannot be taken as evidence of any sort of measured opinion. As a notice about the publication in the *Monthly Review* remarks sarcastically: 'T.B. Esq. ... talks criticism at a prodigious rate, and expiates on the excellence of the works of our own Artists, in such a manner, as almost persuades us that he himself is a Connoisseur'.<sup>59</sup>

Another example of apparently serious comments about contemporary art really concerning other issues is the sustained attack on work exhibited by the Irish portrait painter William ('Blarney') Thomson (or Thompson) in 1764. In that year, Thomson exhibited four paintings at the Society of Artists: two whole lengths of gentlemen, a half length of a lady, and a picture called *Jupiter and Leda*. A generally very positive review by 'A Connoisseur' in the *Gentleman's Magazine* places Thomson, who 'has something very great', with Reynolds and Cotes as the best among portrait painters. This accords with other published opinions of his work, including the brief mention quoted above in *A Call to the Connoisseurs*.<sup>60</sup> But in 1764, that first notice was followed by a string of negative comments, including four letters in the *Public Advertiser*. First, on 2 May came some remarks at the end of a review signed 'Cynthio'. Proceeding in order of the catalogue, the writer begins with Barret's landscapes, 'striking Proofs of his great and happy Genius. There is a Richness in his colouring, and a Sublimity in his Design, which is truly admirable'. After discussing Francis Cotes ('His Portraits may justly vie with those of Reynolds'), Zoffany, West and Stubbs, with single remarks about Gainsborough and George James's *Death of Abel*, the writer came to 'Mr. Thompson's *Green Man*, [which] is so happily hit off, that I must say, he is the greenest Artist I have ever yet seen. His *Jupiter and Leda* few Eyes could look upon; it caused Chastity to blush, and even Obscenity itself disowned it'. He ended with a remark about Thomson wanting to include a quotation in Greek with the classical subject, something that sounds like a joke based on private knowledge.

Two days later in the *Public Advertiser*, 'Rusticus' reported a lengthy conversation with someone at the exhibition about the 'naked Cook Maid going to kill a large Goose' with an aside about the missing Greek motto, as well as 'the Sign of the Green Man at Barnet, Dogs and all. I am unfortunately apt to be a little absent sometimes, ... for I immediately fancied myself before the Inn Door, and called in a loud Voice, for Will Hopkins the Ostler to take care of my Horse'. The reference presumably is to the Green Man Inn in Barnet, a posting house on the road north of London.<sup>61</sup> On 7 May, a list of 'Resolutions' from a 'Committee of the Society of

Dilatanti' [sic], signed by 'Facilis Risor, Secretary' (ie gentle critic) considers the various reviews of the exhibition, and relates abuse of 'the most modest Representation of Jupiter and Leda' to 'a personal Dislike to the Painter', 'a similar Instance of the Lubricity of Wives in his own Family, and whose Head has undergone an unlucky Shake on that account'. A letter from 'S.F.' about these Resolutions appeared a week later, suggesting that it was Thomson himself who was writing these letters, to draw attention to his work. The joke about the Green Man and Barnet continued in a few short notices about the Green Knight and his Barnet Cousin and a Grecian Goose. The address of the first was given as Warwick Court, Holborn, which was the one listed for Thomson in the catalogue.<sup>62</sup>

To become the target of such a coordinated attack in one year is surprising enough, but these same paintings by Thomson appeared as the subject of yet another letter published two years later in the *Public Advertiser*. It was presented as one of a number of visits to studios by someone using the name Da Vinci:

Once a Quarter I never fail to visit our celebrated Artists in Painting and Sculpture; Reynolds's Gallery has ever something new to charm me; Coates's [sic] glowing Colours and graceful Attitudes breathe in the Canvass; and at my Friend Wilton's I am sure to meet with some curious Antique, or well-finished Statue of his own, to remind me of the work of an elder Praxiteles. In the last Round I made, Chance brought me acquainted with a second Raphael; an Artist whose Abilities are as eminently great, as they are undeservedly unknown: I mean an accomplished Painter, whose Pencil drew the luxuriant Leda, the whole Length Figure of Lord B – y [ie Cadwallader Blayney, 9th Baron Blayney, exhibited in 1765], and several other curious Pieces heretofore exposed in the public Exhibitions...

Whoever took a View of last Year's Exhibition of Pictures at Spring Garden, must remember the full Length I have already mentioned. What a noble Fierceness beamed from that Portrait; how light and burnished was the Armour; how rich the Drapery; how masterly the back Ground! Nor was the Painter's Powers solely expended on the human Figure, the large white Dog described in the same Piece had equal Merit, notwithstanding some purblind Virtuosi, who took it for a Greenland Bear.

Exert your Recollection further: Who can forget his Leda, in whom all that Delicacy of Shape, and plump Fulness, characteristic of the Medicean Venus, was happily depicted; and here again the Artist's Capability in drawing Birds as well as Beasts, was strongly apparent: Leda was never won by a more beautiful Bird; how Immortal the Whiteness of his Feathers; how arched his Neck; how perfect his Shape in every Part! Michel Angelo attempted this Piece, and so have many others, but none of them, in my Opinion so gloriously succeeded in painting the Swan.

So from being a peer of Reynolds and Cotes, Thomson became a contemporary Raphael and the equal if not superior of Michelangelo. The last marks it clearly as satirical rather than simply excessive in serious praise.

Thomson was a contentious figure with a colourful life, including twice marrying women with fortunes which he then lost, two stints in debtor's prison, and anecdotes that testify to him being a *bon vivant* in all sorts of London gatherings, including some run by the notorious Irishwoman Theresa Cornelys in Carlisle House, Soho Square. He also had a hand in *The Conduct of the Royal Academicians*, published in 1771, which details grievances against many of the artists active in the Society of Artists, where he was identified with the rebels. Surely these activities explain the criticism of his paintings more than anything found in the pictures themselves. Existing mezzotints of three of his portraits suggest reasonable competence, and he received commissions in the competitive London market. Whether because of the politics or other issues in his complicated life, Thomson apparently ceased painting about 1780. His later activities include writing a serious treatise about beauty, published in 1798.<sup>64</sup>

To find that the art criticism of the 1760s is fundamentally shaped by larger issues in the art world is not surprising. But the reviews present the historian with a more basic problem. They are remarkably unhelpful in letting us know what the pictures actually looked like and, by extension, how the original audiences saw them. We read the titles in the catalogues and imagine works in colour, of a certain size and paint surface, hanging in a specific physical relationship to us and to one another, within a specific space. Even the frames matter. Yet these aspects were almost never discussed during the 1760s. Most astonishing is the small number of comments about colour, even for paintings where it seems essential to us. There also are few references to size or surface. Handling of paint is rarely explained beyond a general characterisation of the brushwork as 'neat' or 'spirited'. This relative absence of comments about the works as physical objects, I would like to suggest, reveals the intellectual heritage of the academic critical tradition as much as the plentitude of comments about drawing, gesture, and expression. It also relates to larger developments in the history of 18th-century descriptive prose. And the more frequent mention of these things by the end of the century reflects the demands of new readers as well as new styles of writing.

Most surprising from our point of view is the neglect of colour. The problem wasn't an absence of adequate descriptive terms in English, as guides to painting techniques and heraldry show. Many and varied words also appear in 18th-century poetry.<sup>65</sup> It is revealing that when the poet William Shenstone wrote to a friend about a portrait painting he had commissioned, he was more particular in his explanation of its colour than an art critic would have been: 'The colour of the gown, a sea-green; waistcoat and breeches, buff-colour; stockings, white, or rather pearl-colour; curtain a terra-sienna, or rich reddish-brown'.<sup>66</sup> Not only did Shenstone describe the colours, but he twice modified his comments to be more precise, with white becoming a pearl-colour and terra-sienna a rich reddish-brown. The problem also is not that 18th-century viewers gave richer meaning than we might to the same words. Including the phrase 'one of her majesty's bridesmaids' in the title of Reynolds's portrait of Elizabeth Keppel (Woburn Abbey), exhibited in 1762, makes it clear that she wore a white dress, but that fact doesn't convey the rich visual effect described by the painter Charles Robert Leslie a hundred years later:

The picture is of the pearliest colour, warmed by wreaths of clustering flowers, the sheen of satin and silver ribbons, the sparkle of diamonds against the white neck and in the soft hair and rose-tipped ears of the beautiful bridesmaid, the dusky upturned face of the negress, the crimson awning pendant from the tree that overhangs the statue, the reflected lights in the bronze tripod crowned with its flickering flame.

Similarly, nothing in West's letter to Copley about *Young Lady with a Bird and Dog*, which criticizes the colour of the painting as too brilliant, gives even a hint of its variety: 'The girl, in a sherbert-pink dress with gold neckline and wearing teal shoes, is set before a lemon-yellow damask chair of English design. In her left hand she holds a blue ribbon tied to the chair ... A column draped in vermilion-red fabric is behind her'.<sup>68</sup>

The reticence of the reviews about colour surely reflects the problematic place it held in Western traditions of writing about art, involving issues of perception and linguistics far beyond the scope of this article.<sup>69</sup> But it also reflects the secondary place colour had in academic traditions of visual analysis. From the fifteenth century, drawing and light and shadow were emphasized over colour, which had a changing

place in the list of visual aspects to be considered. This became a clear opposition between colour and drawing during the seventeenth century in France, when the so-called Rubénistes argued with the Poussinistes in the Academy. Despite the importance in England of writings by the leading coloriste Roger de Piles, as well as the commanding reputation of Rubens and Anthony Van Dyck, colour remained less often discussed than other qualities. Furthermore, colour might even be understood as morally suspect, an idea advanced in Renaissance writing that came to have particular resonance in 18th-century England.<sup>70</sup>

More generally, the lack of comments about colour, like the absence of those about size and surface, reflects the academic convention of analysing paintings in isolation from both their surroundings and their physical characteristics. In Italian Renaissance writing, this partly comes from the bias of authors such as Vasari toward the 'immaterial nature' of fresco instead of the physically separate easel oil painting, enclosed in its own space.<sup>71</sup> It also results from the desire to redefine painting as one of the liberal arts instead of a craft. Attention to the paint and its place on the pictorial surface brought unwelcome notice to the physical labour of making.<sup>72</sup> Finally, the traditional language of visual analysis described paint and brushstroke with difficulty. As a result, the so-called rough manner of the Venetians and 17th-century Northern artists acquired its own kinds of description.<sup>73</sup>

Art criticism also belongs to the history of prose description in English. As Cynthia Wall has argued at length, 18th-century prose generally and novels specifically did not construct settings out of objects located firmly in space. Only slowly did writers consistently place narratives in the sort of tangible interiors assumed during the nineteenth century.<sup>74</sup> In these developments, art is just another type of object to be reconceptualised in terms of physical characteristics and presentation in time and space. Guidebooks to the art collections of great houses show this shift, with new attention given by the 1790s to the qualities that academic pictorial analysis minimised, particularly colour, surface and size.<sup>75</sup> Writing about art in exhibitions changed in a similar way.

Although the reviews from the 1760s may seem frustratingly silent on what we consider the most interesting questions, perhaps this is to mistake the problem. Perhaps instead what the criticism shows is how unsuited the academic concepts and methods of visual analysis were to the new situation. As presented in the Renaissance and adopted by art academies, traditional criticism was intended to explain how pictures worked visually, using the same terms with which painters had been educated. But the new experience of art as something presented in a public exhibition for an interested but amateur audience created new demands on writers. It was not the abstracted and idealised picture presented by academic analysis that readers wanted, but a substitute for having been there, a vivid evocation of the experience of seeing. This was particularly true for contemporary art, which could not be assumed to resemble any of the older works familiar as measures of achievement. And conveying appearance depended on describing the most obvious visual characteristics of the physical objects. For paintings, colour, size and surface were more important than most of the traditional categories, especially the intellectual attributes associated with the liberal arts.

By the turn of the century, a new type of art criticism had abandoned a measured analysis of the parts of a work for a discussion of its impact as a whole on the viewer. When William Hazlitt wrote about seeing the Orleans collection in

1799 (albeit in an essay published in 1822), he described a profound and total experience: 'I was staggered when I saw the works there collected, and looked at them with wondering and with longing eyes. A mist passed away from my sight: the scales fell off. A new sense came upon me, a new heaven and a new earth stood before me.' Not surprisingly, he had no use for the standard pairing of adjectives with the names of Old Masters parodied by Reynolds and Sterne (among many others): 'We had all heard of the names of Titian, Raphael, Guido, Domenichino, the Caracci – but to see them face to face, to be in the same room with their deathless productions, was like breaking some mighty spell – was almost an effect of necromancy! From that time I lived in a world of pictures.' Horace Walpole, by contrast, also described feelings of wonder and longing when he revisited Houghton Hall in 1761, writing about 'enchantment'. But he moved to a much more traditional language when he turned to the pictures themselves, remarking that 'the majesty of Italian ideas almost sinks before the warm nature of Flemish colouring'. And it was 'Guido's ideas' that had inspired his 'young imagination' – an abstracted and generalised category not so different from 'Guido's airs' mentioned by Reynolds and Sterne.<sup>76</sup>

Matthew Pilkington's *Gentleman's and Connoisseur's Dictionary of Painters* provides a useful measure of these changes in writing about art. A remarkable work when first published in 1770, quickly becoming a standard resource that was used well into the nineteenth century, the book appeared in a revised edition in 1798 and then again, extensively altered by the painter Henry Fuseli, in 1805.<sup>77</sup> The modifications made to the entry on Rubens are instructive. In the original edition, Pilkington used the categories of traditional analysis to present an artist of extraordinary achievement:

He is by all allowed to have carried the art of colouring to its highest pitch; for he so thoroughly understood the true principles of chiaro-scuro, and so judiciously and happily managed it, that he gave the utmost roundness, relief, and harmony to each particular figure, and to the whole together; and his groups were disposed with such accurate skill, as to attract, and indeed generally compel the eye of the spectator to the principal object. His draperies are simple, but grand, broad, and well placed; and his carnations have truly the look of nature, and the warmth of real life. The greatest excellence of Rubens appeared in his grand compositions; ... it is however generally allowed, that he wanted correctness in his drawing and design, his figures frequently being too short and too heavy, and the limbs in some parts very unexact in the outline.

All of the expected parts are here, from colour and chiaroscuro to composition and drapery, and they are used to explain both artistic strengths and weaknesses. Assumed is a familiarity with Rubens's work, which an informed 18th-century reader would have been able to call up from a mental store of images.

Fuseli's lengthy note to Pilkington's entry about Rubens subverts this tidy order. It is not so much that the pictorial elements are different, because Fuseli also used the language of the Academy, but that the text suggests what the pictures look like rather than explains how the parts function. About Rubens's drawing, for example, Fuseli wrote:

It was not to be expected that correctness of form should be the principal object of Rubens, though he was master of drawing, and even ambitious in the display of anatomic knowledge: but there is no mode of incorrectness except what generally militated against breadth and fullness, of which his works do not set an example. His male forms, generally the brawny pulp of slaughtermen, his females, hillocks of rosy flesh, in overwhelmed muscles, grotesque attitudes and distorted joints, are swept along in a gulf of colours, as herbage, trees and shrubs, are whirled, tossed, and absorbed by inundation.

This is very far from the careful measure of Pilkington's discussion about the 'correctness' of the drawing and design, or from Walpole's comment about the 'warm nature of Flemish colouring'. Swept up like Rubens's figures, Fuseli's readers are caught in a magical spell like that found in Hazlitt's 'world of pictures'. It is hard for the modern reader not to prefer this vivid evocation of Rubens's style, but that affinity should not blind us to the strengths of traditional criticism. When asked appropriate questions, it too can be eloquent.

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- 1 Two books are fundamental to any work on this subject: Iain Pears, *The Discovery of Painting. The Growth of Interest in the Arts in England, 1680–1768*, New Haven and London 1988, and David H. Solkin, ed, *Art on the line: the Royal Academy exhibitions at Somerset House, 1780–1836*, New Haven and London 2001.
- 2 The history of the exhibitions held in London during the 1760s is well known, and I will not rehearse it here. Much of it is discussed in Matthew Hargraves, *'Candidates for Fame': The Society of Artists of Great Britain, 1760–1791*, New Haven 2005.
- 3 The development of this tradition is discussed in the classic text by Rensselaer W Lee, *Ut pictura poesis; the humanistic theory of painting*, New York 1967. The standard edition of the *Discourses* is Robert R Wark, ed, *Discourses on Art. Sir Joshua Reynolds*, New Haven 1975.
- 4 The ways in which criticism developed in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, especially as it concerned JMW Turner, is the subject of my current research.
- 5 For 'ut pictura poesis', see Lee, op cit n3, and Jean H Hagstrum, *The sister arts; the tradition of literary pictorialism and English poetry from Dryden to Gray*, Chicago 1958. For a historical survey of the language used in the Academies, see Carl Goldstein, *Teaching Art. Academies and Schools from Vasari to Alpers*, Cambridge 1998.
- 6 For a detailed examination of the text and its vicissitudes, see Charles-Alphonse Du Fresnoy, trans and with essays by Christopher Allen, Yasmin Haskell, and Frances Muecke, *De arte graphica* (Paris 1668), Geneva 2005.
- 7 The editions are CA Du Fresnoy, *De arte graphica. The art of painting*, tr John Dryden, with essay by him, 'A parallel betwixt painting and poetry', London 1695, and London 1716, and *The art of painting of Charles Alphonse Du Fresnoy*, trans William Mason and Sir Joshua Reynolds, London 1783.
- 8 See *Aedes Pembrochianae: or a critical account of the statues, bustos, relievos, paintings, medals, and other antiquities and curiosities at Wilton House ... to which is prefixed, An Extract of the Rules to judge of the Goodness of a Picture; and The Science of a Connoisseur in Painting, by Mr Richardson*, London 1774, ppi–xviii. The example is given by John Harris, 'English Country House Guides, 1740–1840' in *Concerning Architecture: Essays on Architectural Writers and Writing Presented to Nikolaus Pevsner*, ed John Summerson, Baltimore 1968. The best study of Richardson is Carol Gibson-Wood, *Jonathan Richardson: Art theorist of the English Enlightenment*, New Haven 2000.
- 9 Jonathan Richardson, *An Essay on the Theory of Painting*, London 1725, p37f.
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- 11 Richardson, *Two Discourses. I. An Essay on the Whole Art of Criticism as it relates to painting. II. An Argument in behalf of the science of a connoisseur*, London 1719, vol 1, pp57–70.
- 12 A recent study of the connoisseur that covers much of this material is Harry Mount, 'The Monkey with the Magnifying Glass: Constructions of the Connoisseur in Eighteenth-Century Britain', *Oxford Art Journal*, vol 29.2 (2006), pp167–84.
- 13 The question was not a new one. For one relevant historical precedent, see Anna Tummer, 'The Painter versus the Connoisseur? The Best Judge of Pictures in Seventeenth-Century Theory and Practice' in Anna Tummers and Koenraad Jonckheere, *Art Market and Connoisseurship: A Closer Look at Paintings by Rembrandt, Rubens and Their Contemporaries*, Amsterdam 2008, pp127–67.
- 14 *The Idler*, No. 76, 29 Sept 1759. The essays were reprinted in the *London Chronicle* in 1761, 12–14 May.
- 15 Laurence Sterne, *The life and opinions of Tristram Shandy, gentleman*, London 1760, Book I, Chap IX.
- 16 Sterne, op cit n15, Book III, Chap XII. And for 'corregiosity' see, for example, 'In the Academy of the Fine Arts at Philadelphia', *Burton's Gentleman's Magazine*, vol 5 (1839), p82, and John Addington Symonds, 'Culture: Its Meaning and Its Uses', *The New Review*, vol 7 (1892), p105.
- 17 The popularity of the letter for fiction as well as non-fiction is discussed in Frank Gees Black, *The Epistolary Novel in the late Eighteenth Century*, Eugene, OR, 1940. Its use in the *Spectator* for art is discussed in Brian Cowan's 'The Curious Mr. Spectator: Virtuoso Culture and the Man of Taste in the Works of Addison and Steele', pre-publication draft, [http://www.academia.edu/454918/THE\\_CURIOUS\\_MR\\_SPECTATOR\\_Virtuoso\\_culture\\_and\\_the\\_man\\_of\\_taste\\_in\\_the\\_works\\_of\\_Addison\\_and\\_Steele](http://www.academia.edu/454918/THE_CURIOUS_MR_SPECTATOR_Virtuoso_culture_and_the_man_of_taste_in_the_works_of_Addison_and_Steele).
- 18 Brian Allen, 'The Society of Arts and the first exhibition of contemporary art in 1760', *RSA Journal*, vol 139 (March 1991), p266.
- 19 For a summary of this controversy as well as a characterization of the exhibition as a whole, see Hargraves, op cit n2, pp23–26.
- 20 'An Account of the late Exhibition of Pictures', *Imperial Magazine or Complete Monthly Intelligencer*, vol 1 (1760), pp244–48 (May).
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- 26 *Imperial Magazine*, vol 1 (1760), pp206–8 (April).
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- 28 *London Chronicle*, 12–15 April 1760, pp362–63, and 17–19 April 1760, p378.
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- 31 Martin Myrone, *Bodybuilding: Reforming Masculinities in British Art, 1750–1810*, New Haven and London 2006, p40, as well as in his article 'Patriotism, Virtue, and the Problem of the Hero: The Society's Promotion of High Art in the 1760s' in Susan Bennett, ed, *Cultivating the human faculties: James Barry (1741–1806) and the Society of Arts*, Bethlehem, PA, 2008, p56.
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- 36 *A Critical Examination of the Pictures, Sculptures, Designs in Architecture, Models, Drawings, Prints, &c*, London 1767, pp8 and 18–20.
- 37 *A Critical Examination*, op cit n36, pp14, 7, 9, 11, and 21–22.
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- 40 For a biography of Henry Jones, see 'Account of Henry Jones', *The Annual Register, or a View of the History, Politics, and Literature for the Year 1794*, London 1799, pp284–97.
- 41 *London Chronicle*, 5–7 May 1767; and *Le Pour et Le Contre*, pp8–9.
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- 53 See, for example, *The Repository: or Treasury of Politics and Literature, for MDCCLXX*, London 1771, vol 1, p59, reprinted from the *London Packet*, 15 November 1769.
- 54 Fulke Greville, *Maxims, Characters, and Reflections, Critical, Satyrical, and Moral*, 2nd ed, London 1757, pp109–10.
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- 56 *A Call to the Connoisseurs, or Decisions of Sense, with respect to the Present State of Painting and Sculpture, and Their several Professors in these Kingdoms. Together with A Review of and Examination into their Comparative Merits and Excellencies. Intended to vindicate the Genius and Abilities, of the Artists of our own Country, from the Malevolence of pretended Connoisseurs, or interested Dealers. Recommended to the Perusal of every true Judge and impartial Critic in Great Britain, previous to a View of the present Exhibitions of the Modern Artists, by T.B. Esq*, London 1761, p37. For Hogarth's text see Michael Kitson, 'Hogarth's 'Apology for Painters'', *Walpole Society*, vol 41 (1966–8), pp46–111.
- 57 *Connoisseurs*, op cit n56, pp7–9 and 24–27. Hogarth's letter was published in *St. James's Evening Post*, 7–9 June 1737, reprinted *London Magazine*, vol 6 (July 1737), pp385–86.
- 58 *Connoisseurs*, op cit n56, p38, quoted in the *St. James's Chronicle*, 9–12 May 1761, p2.
- 59 *Monthly Review*, vol 24 (1761), p353.
- 60 *Gentlemen's Magazine*, vol 34 (1764), p223 (May); and *Connoisseurs*, op cit n56, p40.
- 61 *Public Advertiser*, 1764, 2 May, pp1–2, and 4 May, p2, and for the Green Man, Edward Walford, *Greater London: a narrative of its history, its people, and its places*, London 1883–84, vol 1, p324.
- 62 *Public Advertiser*, 1764, 7 May, pp1–2; 14 May, p2; 16 May, p2; 18 May, p2; 19 May, p2.
- 63 *Public Advertiser*, 19 December 1766, p2.
- 64 For the mezzotints, see <http://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/person/mp57561/william-thomson> and <http://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/person/mp88036/cadwalader-blayney-9th-baron-blayney?search=sas&text=blayney>. Biographical sources include Edward Edwards, *Anecdotes of painters, who have resided or been born in England*, London 1808, pp69–70, and Leslie Stephen, *The life of Sir James Fitzjames Stephen, Bart., K.C.S.I. A Judge of the High Court of Justice by his brother*, London 1895, pp5–6.
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- 75 Wall, op cit n74, pp192–94.
- 76 William Hazlitt, '[On the Pleasure of Painting.] The Same Subject Continued', *The Collected Works of William Hazlitt*, ed AR Waller and Arnold Glover, London 1903, vol 6, p14, and Horace Walpole, letter to George Montagu, 25 March 1761, *The Yale Edition of Horace Walpole's Correspondence*, New Haven 1937–1983, vol 9, p348.
- 77 For a detailed account of Pilkington and the importance of his dictionary, see Barbara Bryant, 'Matthew Pilkington and the Gentleman's and Connoisseur's Dictionary of Painters of 1770: a landmark in art history', in A Laing, *Clerics and Connoisseurs: the Rev Matthew Pilkington, the Cobbe Family and the Fortunes of an Irish Art Collection through Three Centuries*, London 2001, pp52–62.
- 78 The Revd M Pilkington, *The Gentleman's and Connoisseur's Dictionary of Painters*, London 1770, pp535–36, and the Revd M Pilkington, *A Dictionary of Painters*, revd Henry Fuseli, London 1805, pp480–82.