

‘Substituting an approach to historical evidence for the vagueness of speculation’: Charles Lock Eastlake and Johann David Passavant’s contribution to the professionalization of art-historical study through source-based research¹

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Figure 1 Sir Francis Grant, *Sir Charles Eastlake*, 1853. Pen, ink and wash on paper, 29.3 x 20.3 cm. London: National Gallery, H202. © The National Gallery, London

Figure 2 Johann David Passavant, *Self-Portrait in a Roman Landscape*, 1818. Oil on canvas, 45 x 31.6 cm. Frankfurt am Main: Städel Museum, no. 1585. © Städel Museum – Artothek

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Introduction

After Sir Charles Eastlake (1793-1865; Fig. 1) was appointed first director of the National Gallery in 1855, he spent the next decade radically transforming the institution from being a treasure house of acknowledged masterpieces into a survey collection which could tell the story of the development of western European painting. To this end, he worked hard to acquire hitherto unrepresented schools of painting, and implemented new ways to conserve, display and catalogue the collection. Eastlake was able to enact these changes in part because of the knowledge he had accumulated as an art-historian and connoisseur, which, in turn, was indebted to his interactions with leading figures of the art world of his day, especially on the Continent. This article explores, as a case-study, one such early friendship with Johann David Passavant (1787–1861, Fig. 2), focusing in particular on their unpublished yet illuminating correspondence, especially of 1846, which has been pieced together here for the first time from letters preserved in Frankfurt University Library and the National Art Library, London.² We will show how their scholarly discussion increased their understanding of the origins and early development of oil painting, an issue that was of much interest during the mid-nineteenth century – a time of growing nationalism across Europe and a time when public art galleries were emerging and many were starting to arrange their collections within historical and geographical frameworks. Traditionally, great emphasis had been placed on the contribution to the history of western European art by Italian painters who were seen to have brought to perfection the technique of tempera and fresco painting. Consideration had also been given to the sister art of oil painting, which opened up systematic investigation of early Northern European art. The work of the brothers Hubert and Jan van Eyck had always been held in high esteem but connoisseurs, curators and collectors became increasingly interested to contextualize their oeuvre. We will explore Eastlake and Passavant's attempts to shed more light on the origins of European oil painting and their desire that their findings might be useful to colleagues in Britain and Europe engaged with similar questions. We will also explore how their exchanges made them very aware of the provisional nature of scholarly findings – whether those of others or their own. This viewpoint, which they shared with a group of leading continental scholars,

² We are grateful to Ceri Brough, former Assistant Archivist at the National Gallery, London for drawing our attention to the group of letters from J.D. Passavant to C.L. Eastlake in the National Art Library, Victoria & Albert Museum, London: MSL/1922/416/19-26. The related correspondence is in the University Library, Frankfurt am Main: Ms. Ff. J.D. Passavant A II e, Nr. 159-72. Diekamp briefly mentioned the letter from C.L. Eastlake to J.D. Passavant, dated 20 April 1846, now in Frankfurt, in Busso Diekamp, 'Johann David Passavant und die Bibliothek des Städelschen Kunstinstituts', in Hildegard Bauereisen and Margret Stuffmann, *Von Kunst und Kennerschaft. Die Graphische Sammlung im Städelschen Kunstinstitut unter Johann David Passavant 1840 bis 1861*, exh. cat. (Frankfurt am Main, Städelsches Kunstinstitut), Frankfurt am Main: Städelsches Kunstinstitut und Städtische Galerie, 1994, 239-63, here 254, note 59.

Avery-Quash and Meyer 'Substituting an approach to historical evidence for the vagueness of speculation' ...

continued to affect their own art-historical methods of working, where only proven facts were stated as such and unanswered questions clearly signposted. Their methodology would have a bearing, we shall argue, both in the short term on Eastlake's pioneering book, *Materials for a History of Oil Painting* which would be published in 1847, and in the longer term on Eastlake and Passavant's work as museum directors of London's National Gallery and Frankfurt's Städelsches Kunstinstitut (today Städel Museum), respectively, in relation to the pictures they acquired and how they chose to catalogue and display them. Additionally, their methodology of what we have termed 'provisionality' would help to shift critical thinking more generally within the nascent discipline of art history.

Eastlake and Passavant's interconnections in the nineteenth-century art world

If people know anything about the friendship between Eastlake and Passavant it may be from Lady Eastlake's (1809-1893) memorably offhand comments, published in her *Journals and Correspondence*. 'Old Passy', as she nicknamed him there, is caricatured as spending every possible moment at the British Museum and as being awkward and fussy – with Eastlake trying 'to find out the logic of his way of feeding himself, and [hoping] he [would] put on a proper coat when there [was] a dinner party, as he [came] down in a kind of great coat to [their] dinner.'³ She was keener on their other German art-world friend Gustav Friedrich Waagen (1794-1868), whom she approved of as 'a plain old man, but with far more in him than Passavant', opining that this was because he had been 'educated at Hamburg, [where] he imbibed many English habits.'⁴ Lady Eastlake's lopsided sketch fails to record the high regard in which Eastlake held Passavant's scholarship, something which deserves to be better known and which we hope this article will demonstrate. We contend that their friendship was important on account of it being, arguably, the earliest of Eastlake's significant scholarly relationships. It also set the standard for a handful of later significant and longer-lasting ones with other leading European scholars, notably Waagen in Germany and Giovanni Morelli (1816-1891) and Giovanni Battista Cavalcaselle (1819-1897) in Italy – all pioneers in different ways of modern art history and thus important figures in the historiography of western art.

The briefest outline of Eastlake and Passavant's lives reveals two men with noticeably similar trajectories; doubtless the related types of work they engaged in and their mutual interests and friendships encouraged the building of lasting connections between them. They were contemporaries; Passavant, born in 1787, was six years older than Eastlake. Both aspired initially to become great painters and so

³ C.E. Smith, ed, *Journals and Correspondence of Lady Eastlake*, London: J. Murray, I, 247. See further comments about his stay with the Eastlakes in May 1850, 247-8.

⁴ Smith, *Journals and Correspondence*, I, 248, 249. Lady Eastlake's initial impression of Passavant when they first met in 1848 had been more favourable; she described him as 'a dapper, smart, handsome old bachelor (...) I remembered with contrition, that we had always called him "Old Passy", and had abused him like a pickpocket.' Smith, *Journals and Correspondence*, I, 217.

followed a traditional training – Eastlake in London first under Benjamin Robert Haydon and then at the Royal Academy and Passavant in Paris under Jacques-Louis David and, later, Baron Gros.⁵ Both aimed for a Raphaelesque beauty and Titianesque colouring in their works, whether religious pictures, landscapes of the Roman Campagna or genre scenes. Furthermore, both chose to live and work in Rome for an unusually extended period – Eastlake arrived in 1816 and departed fourteen years later, while Passavant came a year after Eastlake and stayed for seven years. It is probable that the pair first met in Rome;⁶ certainly both, independently, became intimate, among the international group of artists resident in Rome, with the German Nazarene painters, especially Peter Cornelius and Friedrich Overbeck, as well as with other important figures in the Roman art world, including the Prussian Consul, General Bartholdy.⁷ Eastlake and Passavant spent increasing

⁵ On Eastlake see: Susanna Avery-Quash and Julie Sheldon, *Art for the Nation: The Eastlakes and the Victorian Art World*, London: National Gallery Publishing, 2011; Susanna Avery-Quash, 'The Travel Notebooks of Sir Charles Eastlake', *The Walpole Society*, 73, 2011; David Robertson, *Sir Charles Eastlake and the Victorian Art World*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1978; Smith, *Journals and Correspondence*; William Cosmo Monkhouse, *Pictures by Sir Charles Eastlake; with a Biographical and Critical Sketch of the Artist*, London, 1876; Charles Lock Eastlake, *Contributions to the Literature of the Fine Arts by Sir C.L. Eastlake: Second Series. With a Memoir by Lady Eastlake*, London: J. Murray, 1870; W.F. Rae, 'Sir Charles Eastlake', *The Fine Arts Quarterly Review*, N.S. 1, July-October 1866, 52-79. On Passavant see: Corina Meyer, *Die Geburt des bürgerlichen Kunstmuseums – Johann Friedrich Städel und sein Kunstinstitut in Frankfurt am Main (Berliner Schriften zur Museumsforschung, 32)*, Berlin: G+H Verlag, 2013, published PhD dissertation, TU Berlin 2013; Nina Struckmeyer, 'Passavant, Johann David', in Bénédicte Savoy and France Nerlich, eds, *Pariser Lehrjahre. Ein Lexikon zur Ausbildung deutscher Maler in der französischen Hauptstadt. Vol. I: 1793-1843*, Berlin-Boston: de Gruyter, 2013, 222-5; Jochen Sander, *Niederländische Gemälde im Städel 1400-1550*, ed Klaus Gallwitz and Jochen Sander, Mainz: von Zabern, 1993 (and 2nd edn, 2002), 17-25; Jochen Sander, 'Die Altmeistersammlung im Städel Museum', in Jochen Sander and Max Hollein, eds, *Alte Meister 1300-1800 im Städel Museum*, Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2011, 12-21; Elisabeth Schröter, 'Raffael-Kult und Raffael-Forschung. Johann David Passavant und seine Raffael-Monographie im Kontext der Kunst und Kunstgeschichte seiner Zeit', *Römisches Jahrbuch der Bibliotheca Hertziana*, 26, Tübingen: Wasmuth, 1990, 303-98; Bauereisen and Stuffmann, *Von Kunst und Kennerschaft*; Martin Sonnabend, 'Raffael, Passavant und das Städelsche Kunstinstitut', in Joachim Jacoby and Martin Sonnabend, eds, *Raffael. Zeichnungen*, exh. cat. (Frankfurt am Main, Städel Museum), Munich: Hirmer, 2012, 57-75; Ernst Osterkamp, 'Raffael-Forschung von Fiorillo bis Passavant', *Studi Germanici*, 38:3, Rome, 2000, 403-26; Michael Thimann, 'Eine antiklassizistische Programmschrift aus Rom. Johann David Passavants "Ansichten über die bildenden Künste und Darstellung des Ganges derselben in Toscana" (1820)', in Alexander Rosenbaum et al., eds, *Johann Heinrich Meyer – Kunst und Wissen im klassischen Weimar (Ästhetik um 1800, 9)*, Göttingen: Wallstein, 2013, 301-24; see also Bénédicte Savoy and Robert Skwirblies, eds, *Johann David Passavant in Paris und Rom. Kommentierte Edition des Briefwechsels 1807-1824*, 2 vols (forthcoming, 2018).

⁶ They may have been introduced by a mutual friend like Baron Bartholdy or one of the Nazarenes. Adolph Cornill, *Johann David Passavant. Ein Lebensbild*, 2 vols., Frankfurt am Main: Selbst-Verl. des Vereins für Geschichte und Alterthumskunde, 1864/65.

⁷ Overbeck took Passavant to Bartholdy's residence to see the Nazarenes' recently completed frescoes; Eastlake translated Baron Bartholdy's *Memoirs of Secret Societies of the South of Italy*,

amounts of time pursuing scholarly endeavours, originally conceived as complementing their artistic interests; their first publications comprised essays on artistic matters for journals during the early 1820s. Ultimately, both became pioneering art administrators in major public galleries. Passavant was appointed Inspector of the Städelches Kunstinstitut in 1840,⁸ while Eastlake's association with the National Gallery started in 1843. That year he was appointed its keeper, before becoming, in 1850, a trustee (an ex-officio position on the back of his appointment as President of the Royal Academy) and finally, in 1855, its first director. They continued to move in the same circles, sharing friends in common, including Ludwig Gruner and Sir Robert Peel as well as Lady Eastlake, who had translated into English Passavant's *Tour of a German Artist in England* in 1836, some thirteen years before she married Eastlake.⁹

Before their exchange of letters under review here, which started in April 1846, Passavant and Eastlake had published positive comments about each other's work, which doubtless made their getting in touch in the 1840s a pleasant and straightforward process. Passavant's largely positive assessment of Eastlake's paintings, where he called him 'this most sterling of English historical painters'¹⁰ had appeared in his 'General Survey of Art in England', which concluded his *Kunstreise durch England und Belgien*, originally published in German in 1833. Seven years later, in 1840, Eastlake reviewed Passavant's monograph on *Rafael von Urbino und sein Vater Giovanni Santi* for the *Quarterly Review*, in very favourable terms, as

particularly the Carbonari, London, 1821. For Eastlake's relationship with the Nazarenes, see Avery-Quash and Sheldon, *Art for the Nation*, 13, 14, 40, 41, 44, 95, 103; Robertson, *Eastlake*, 10, 33, 440; Charles Lock Eastlake, 'The Advantages and Disadvantages of Rome, as a School of Art; with descriptive criticism on the French, Italian and German artists in Rome (...)', *London Magazine*, 1:1, January 1820, 42-8. For Passavant's relationship with the Nazarenes, see Meyer, *Die Geburt des bürgerlichen Kunstmuseums*; Struckmeyer, 'Passavant'; Thimann, 'Eine anticlassizistische Programmschrift'. On Bartholdy, see bibliography in Peter Vignau-Wilberg, 'Die Lukasbrüder um Johann Friedrich Overbeck und die Erneuerung der Freskomalerei in Rom', *Kunstwissenschaftliche Studien*, 168, Berlin-München: Dt. Kunstverl., 2011.

⁸ During his time in Rome, Passavant was commissioned by the Städel to acquire pictures on that institution's behalf, see Corina Meyer, "'(...) denn gute Gemälde hatte ich versprochen, gute habe ich geliefert, aber, aber (...)"'. Ein folgenreicher Streit um die Erwerbung eines Filippino Lippi im Städelchen Kunstinstitut um 1820', *RIHA Journal*, 57, October 2012, without pagination, published online: <http://www.riha-journal.org/articles/2012/2012-oct-dec/meyer-lippi-streit>.

⁹ See letter from C.L. Eastlake to J.D. Passavant, 13 July 1849, University Library, Frankfurt am Main: Ms. Ff. J.D. Passavant A II e, Nr. 166, fol. 277v^o: 'I should be glad to know whenever you are thinking of coming to England. I can now promise you a double welcome as I find you are acquainted with my wife, who desires to be kindly remembered to you.' The Eastlakes got married in 1849.

¹⁰ J.D. Passavant, *Tour of a German Artist in England: With Notices of Private Galleries, and Remarks on the State of Art*, London: Saunders and Otley, 1836, II, 251-333 (251); see also 265. Passavant notes Eastlake's debt to the Old Masters: 'His correct drawing is censured as hard; his natural tones as colourless; and the whole is summed up with the invariable exclamation, "See to what the study of the old Italian masters tends!"' (Passavant, *Tour*, II, 253).

we shall see later. Yet the reason why Eastlake got in touch with Passavant in 1846 was not over Raphael or Italian Renaissance art but rather early Northern art. Since 1841, Eastlake, at the request of Prince Albert and the then Prime Minister Sir Robert Peel and on account of his 'professional talent, knowledge of the subject, and character',¹¹ had been Secretary of the new Commission on the Fine Arts which had oversight of the internal artistic decoration of the newly-built Palace of Westminster. Once it had been established that British-based painters should be employed to create murals in fresco pertaining to British history and literature, one of Eastlake's tasks was to find out about best practice from the present and past to facilitate the work in this unfamiliar technique. His original investigations concerned the technique of fresco painting and in this connection he got back in touch with Peter Cornelius,¹² whose fresco cycles, produced with other Nazarene painters in Rome and Munich, were well known. From his research, Eastlake published papers on fresco painting for the Fine Arts Commission from 1842, his first such report coming out in April that year.

Eastlake expanded his research to encompass the technique of oil painting. He amassed enough material to produce a substantial book about its origins and early development in Northern Europe, which was published in 1847 as *Materials for a History of Oil Painting*.¹³ His related account of the history of oil painting in Italy would be published posthumously, on the basis of his notes, by Lady Eastlake, in 1869.¹⁴ While the earlier publication was officially intended 'to promote the objects of the Commissioner on the Fine Arts', the research it contained related closely to Eastlake's interests as an artist and art historian in the history of painters' materials and techniques. Eastlake's stated objective was not to assess the relative merits of substances or techniques but to note down historic materials and methods for the record. As Eastlake explained to a friend, 'It matters not how good or how bad the vehicle was which the old fellows used. The historian's duty is to get at it, as a mere fact, if he can.'¹⁵

Eastlake and Passavant's correspondence of 1846

This aim to plot the technical history of oil painting via published sources led Eastlake to turn to Passavant, knowing that early Northern oil painting was a subject with which Passavant was 'so well acquainted',¹⁶ and on which he had

¹¹ Robertson, *Eastlake*, 61.

¹² Robertson, *Eastlake*, 59-60.

¹³ Charles Lock Eastlake, *Materials for a History of Oil Painting*, London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1847.

¹⁴ Charles Lock Eastlake, *Materials for a History of Oil Painting*, vol. II, London: Longmans, Green and Company, 1869, with a preface by Lady Eastlake.

¹⁵ Letter from C.L. Eastlake to Seymour Kirkup, 6 April 1849, quoted in Robertson, *Eastlake*, 70.

¹⁶ Letter from C.L. Eastlake to J.D. Passavant, 20 April 1846. University Library, Frankfurt am Main: Ms. Ff. J.D. Passavant A II e, Nr. 163, fol. 271r^o.



Figure 3 Petrus Christus, *The Virgin Enthroned with Christ and Saints Jerome and Francis*, 1457 (dated 1417 in the year 1846). Mixed media on oak, 46.7 x 44.6 cm. Frankfurt am Main: Städel Museum, no. 920. © Städel Museum, Frankfurt am Main

published various articles in the *Kunstblatt* and other leading German art-history journals.¹⁷ Eastlake was also aware that Passavant owned a key piece of visual evidence: Petrus Christus's *The Virgin Enthroned with Christ and Saints Jerome and Francis*, which was then believed to be dated 1417 (Fig. 3).¹⁸ Passavant had acquired it from the famous collection of early Northern art amassed by Carl Aders¹⁹ and he would donate it to the Städel later in 1846. It was in part about this painting that

¹⁷ See J.D. Passavant, 'Beiträge zur Kenntniß der alt-niederländischen Malerschulen bis zur Mitte des sechzehnten Jahrhunderts', *Kunstblatt*, 54, 6 July 1843, 225, where Passavant mentions his publications on early Netherlandish art in previous issues of the journal in 1833 and 1841; see also Passavant's mention of his Petrus Christus *Virgin and Child* in *Kunstblatt*, 55, 11 July 1843, 230.

¹⁸ On the painting, see Sander, *Niederländische Gemälde*, 154-74, where it is noted (157) that the third number of the inscription 'fecit 14?7' is no longer legible due to retouching. It could never have read '17' as today we have evidence that Petrus Christus's earliest dated painting was produced far later – in 1446.

¹⁹ Passavant had seen the painting in Aders' collection on his earlier travels through England, after which he attributed it to Jan van Eyck ('es scheint ein Jugendwerk zu seyn') and mentioned it in his book: Johann David Passavant, *Kunstreise durch England und Belgien*, Frankfurt am Main: Siegmund Schmerber, 1833, 92. After buying the painting himself, having had it cleaned and reattributing it to Petrus Christus, he published it in *Kunstblatt*: Johann David Passavant, 'Beiträge zur Kenntniß der alt-niederländischen Malerschulen des 15ten und 16ten Jahrhunderts', *Kunstblatt*, 4, 14 January 1841, 15-6. See Sander, *Niederländische Gemälde*, 154-74, esp. 158-9. On Carl Aders, see Jennifer Graham, *Inventing*

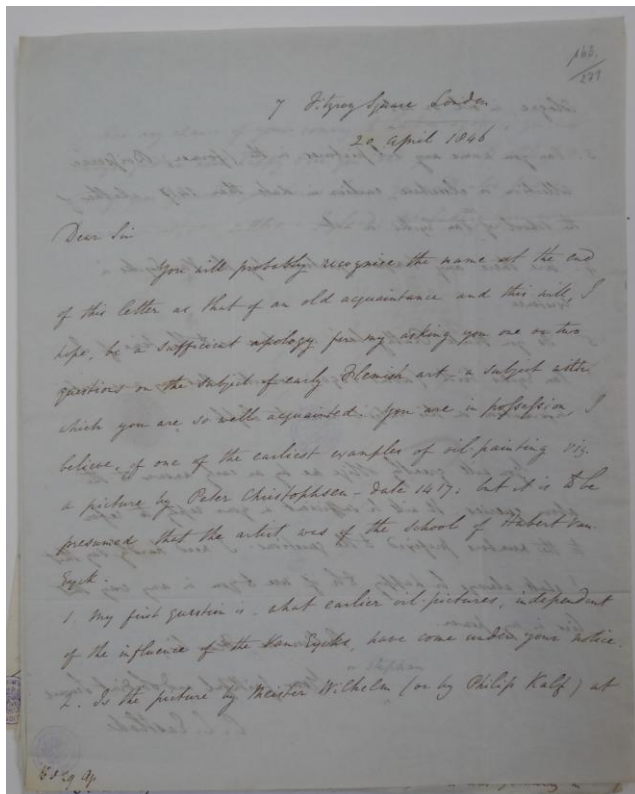


Figure 4 Extract from letter from Charles Lock Eastlake to Johann David Passavant, 20 April 1846. University Library, Frankfurt am Main: Ms. Ff. J.D. Passavant A II e, Nr.163, fol. 271r° © Photograph: Corina Meyer

Eastlake got in touch with Passavant on 20 April 1846 (Fig. 4). This letter led on to what became a lengthy and significant exchange between Eastlake and Passavant in which they grappled together with the complexities of dates, artists, and methods implicated in the oil painting debates.

Eastlake's first letter in the series started off with a list of five research queries relating to the origins of oil painting:

You are in possession, I believe, of one of the earliest examples of oil-painting viz. a picture by Peter Christophsen – date 1417; but it is to be presumed that the artist was of the school of Hubert van Eyck.

1. My first question is – what earlier oil-pictures, independent of the influence of the Van Eycks, have come under your notice.²⁰

He went on to pose four more related questions to Passavant:

Van Eyck: The Remaking of an Artist for the Modern Age, Oxford: Berg, 2007, 62-9; Kathryn Bonomi, 'Aders, Carl', in Jane Turner, ed, *The Dictionary of Art*, New York: Grove, 1996, I, 153-4; Marie-Luise Baum, 'Carl Aders, Ein vergessener Wuppertaler', in *Romerike Berge. Zeitschrift für Heimatpflege, Volkskunde, Kunst, Museumswesen, Denkmalpflege und Naturschutz im Bergischen Land*, 14, 1964-65, 1-10; M.K. Joseph, *Charles Aders. A Biographical Note*, Auckland: Auckland Univ. College, 1953.

²⁰ Letter from C.L. Eastlake to J.D. Passavant, 20 April 1846, University Library, Frankfurt am Main: Ms. Ff. J.D. Passavant A II e, Nr. 163, fol. 271r°.

2. Is the picture by Meister Wilhelm (or by Philip Kalf) at Cologne, in oil or not?
3. Can you name any oil-pictures in the (former) Boisserée collection or elsewhere, earlier in date than 1417 – whether of the school of the Van Eycks or not?
4. Are there any tempera pictures by the Van Eycks in existence?
5. Do you think Rathgeber's conjecture as to the time of J. Van Eyck's birth (about 1390) correct – has any more certain information on this subject come to light?²¹

In order to evaluate Passavant's replies to Eastlake it is useful to summarize the *status quaestionis* at the time about the invention of oil painting.²² Despite the fact that many scholars across Europe presented evidence to prove that oil painting had existed in their respective countries well before the time of the van Eycks, the

²¹ Letter from C.L. Eastlake to J.D. Passavant, 20 April 1846, University Library, Frankfurt am Main: Ms. Ff. J.D. Passavant A II e, Nr. 163, fol. 271r^o-v^o.

²² For an understanding of what was known then on the subject, see Jilleen Nadolny, 'The first century of published scientific analyses of the materials of historical painting and polychromy, circa 1780-1880', *Reviews in Conservation*, 4, 2003, 39-51; Jilleen Nadolny, 'A Problem of Methodology: Merrifield, Eastlake and the use of oil-based media by medieval English painters', in I. Verger, ed, *ICOM-CC Preprints, 14th Triennial Meeting, The Hague, 12-16 September 2005*, London: James & James, 2005, II, 1028-33; Marika Spring and Rachel Morrison, 'Jan van Eyck's technique and materials: historical perspectives and contemporary context', in C. Currie, B. Franssen, V. Henderiks, C. Stroo and D. Vanwijnsberghe, eds, *Van Eyck Studies. Papers presented at the Eighteenth Symposium for the Study of Underdrawing and Technology in Painting, Brussels, 19-21 September 2012*, Leuven: Peeters Publishers, 2017, 195-220; and Elise Effmann, 'Theories about the Eyckian painting medium from the late-eighteenth to the mid-twentieth centuries', *Reviews in Conservation*, 7, 2006, 17-26; Stephan Kemperdick, 'Die Geschichte des Genter Altars', in Stephan Kemperdick and Johannes Rößler, *Der Genter Altar der Brüder van Eyck: Geschichte und Würdigung*, exh. cat. (Gemäldegalerie, Berlin), Petersberg: Michael Imhof, 2014, 8-69, esp. 50-60. On recent scholarship into early Northern oil painting, see Jo Kirby, 'Aspects of Oil: Painting in Northern Europe and Jan van Eyck', in Marc De Mey *et al.*, eds, *Vision & Material: Interaction between Art and Science in Jan van Eyck's Time* (conference at Koninklijke Vlaamse Academie van België voor Wetenschappen en Kunsten, Brussels, 24-26 November 2010), Brussels: Koninklijke Vlaamse Academie, 2012, 255-78; Ashok Roy, 'Van Eyck's Technique: The Myth and the Reality, I', in Susan Foister *et al.*, eds, *Investigating Jan van Eyck*, Turnhout: Brepols, 97-100; Raymond White, 'Van Eyck's Technique: The Myth and the Reality, II', in Foister, *van Eyck*, 101-5; Till-Holger Borchert and Paul Huvenne, 'Die Erfindung der Ölmalerei. Van Eyck im Spiegel italienischer Kunstliteratur', in Till-Holger Borchert, *Jan van Eyck und seine Zeit. Flämische Meister und der Süden 1430-1530*, Stuttgart: Belser, 2002, 221-5; Lorne Campbell, 'Introduction: Netherlandish Painting in the Fifteenth Century', in Lorne Campbell, *National Gallery Catalogues: The Fifteenth-Century Netherlandish Paintings*, London: National Gallery Company, 1998, 18-35; Stephan Kemperdick and Friso Lammertse, 'Painting around 1400 and Jan van Eyck's Early Work', in Stephan Kemperdick and Friso Lammertse, *The Road to Van Eyck*, Rotterdam: Museum Boijmans van Beuningen, 2012, 89-108; Till-Holger Borchert, 'Jan van Eyck – The Myth and the Documents', in Kemperdick and Lammertse, *Road to Van Eyck*, 83-8.

opinion of the sixteenth-century Italian art writer Giorgio Vasari had become so firmly rooted that it was only in the twentieth century that his myth concerning the origins of oil painting was finally debunked for good. Vasari in his well-known and highly-respected *Vite* of 1550, within his biography of Antonello da Messina, had stated that Jan van Eyck had invented oil painting.²³ Authors in succeeding centuries generally followed this lead, thus cementing Vasari's myth. Guicciardini, who knew the *Ghent Altarpiece* which was attributed to Jan and his elder brother Hubert van Eyck, was the first author to give a date for the invention of oil painting – in a publication of 1567, he stated that the year had been 1410. This date found its way into Vasari's second edition of his *Vite*. Karel van Mander followed Vasari in his *Schilder-Boeck* of 1604, which, being a popular work, helped to entrench the view that the van Eycks were the founding fathers of Netherlandish painting, a fact then crystallized in the general perception when Jean-Baptiste Descamps illustrated the episode in his *Vie des peintres* in 1753. Authors who held other views were not paid any significant attention. For instance, Aubertus Miraeus, who as early as 1608 had argued that oil painting had been used by Netherlandish painters before the van Eycks, was not widely read and so exerted no great influence.²⁴ It was the German dramatist and art critic Gotthold Ephraim Lessing who, referring in 1774 to a twelfth-century treatise by Theophilus Presbyter describing various medieval arts that he had discovered preserved in the Library at Wolfenbüttel, raised serious objections to Vasari's and van Mander's accounts.²⁵ Yet Lessing's subsequent essay where he demonstrated that oil painting had been in use earlier than the time of the van Eycks managed only to dent rather than destroy the legend.²⁶

In relation to research on the subject that had been undertaken specifically in England, there were various scholars during the eighteenth century who had demonstrated that oil had been employed in the production of some English medieval painting – evidence which once again refuted Vasari's claim about Jan van Eyck being the inventor of oil painting.²⁷ Such investigations had started with Horace Walpole – and so were very well known – and continued in the early nineteenth century with the work of Christopher Barber and John Haslam, who discovered documents relating to the purchase of oil for painting in Westminster

²³ Vasari's reference to the invention of oil painting by the van Eycks appears in his biography of Antonello da Messina in the second edition of his work: *Le Vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori ed architettori* (...), R. Bettarini, ed, Verona, 1966–87, III, 1971, 301–10. See Stephan Kemperdick, 'Die Geschichte des Genter Altars', in Kemperdick/Rößler, *Genter Altar*, 8–69, esp. 50–60.

²⁴ Kemperdick, *Die Geschichte des Genter Altars*, 57. The relevant passage is reprinted in W.H. James Weale, *Hubert and John van Eyck*, London: John Lane, The Bodley Head, 1908, xcii–xciii.

²⁵ Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Vom Alter der Ölmalerey aus dem Theophilus Presbyter*, Braunschweig: Fürstl. Waysenhaus, 1774.

²⁶ Kemperdick, *Die Geschichte des Genter Altars*, 60. The Germans Rudolph Raspe and Franz Lothar Ehemant worked at the same time as Lessing on that question, as discussed in Nadolny, 'Scientific analyses', 40; Effmann, 'Theories'.

²⁷ The information concerning the attitudes to English medieval painting is derived from the work of Jilleen Nadolny and Marika Spring. We are grateful to Marika Spring for pointing us to this discussion.

Abbey, London. Such evidence, backed up by an increasing body of early attempts at scientific analysis in the UK and Europe, was transmitted in lectures and also published widely. The painter Thomas Philips, for instance, noted in a lecture at the Royal Academy as early as 1827 that van Eyck had not been the first to mix colours with oil.²⁸ Interestingly, by the 1840s, when Eastlake got involved, the debate in England had become concentrated – and divisive – especially over *where* oil had been used. Eastlake's contention that oil had been used before the time of the van Eycks only for decorative purposes (polychromy) rather than fine art put him in one camp.²⁹ That Eastlake chose to take a particular view on certain historic documents (pertaining to the decoration of Westminster Abbey), a position that led to him making rather brief reference in his book of 1847 to the different scholarly interpretation of people like Barber and Haslam, should not blind us to the fact that he consistently pursued and promoted as a principle a careful consideration of the evidence and gave reasons for his particular interpretation.

Eastlake's *modus operandi* was to go back to check the sources to see what fact-based evidence could be brought to bear on the subject of the history of oil painting. His stance can be seen in relation to what he says about Vasari's account. He was keen to tackle Vasari's work head on and immediately, given that it had been, as we have seen, the basis for so much subsequent scholarship. In Eastlake's opinion:

The evidence of Vasari, in all technical questions, is of great value. His details relating to the history and works of artists are, also, generally to be relied on; he is, however, frequently at fault in dates, and therefore, before quoting his account of Van Eyck's invention and of the introduction of oil painting into Italy, it will be necessary to establish, as far as possible, some leading epochs in the events of which he treats.³⁰

To check out Vasari's information and to correct inaccurate information where necessary became one of Eastlake's research objectives. To do this he started to gather relevant data, especially primary archival documentation, in the belief that '[t]he want of a sufficiently extensive investigation of original authorities relating to the early practice of oil painting [had] led to various contradictory theories'.³¹ By the time he wrote to Passavant on 6 May 1846, he was able to report: 'I have had access to some mss. [manuscripts] not before published and by a long comparison also of the printed materials that exist I am enabled to offer some new facts'.³² When he published *Materials* the following year Eastlake noted at the start of its preface that

²⁸ Nadolny, 'Problem of methodology'.

²⁹ The opposing group believed that paintings had also been produced using colours mixed with oil. This is a viewpoint accepted today given that high quality paintings such as the Westminster Retable are recognized as having been painted in oil.

³⁰ Eastlake, *Materials*, 184; see also 264.

³¹ Eastlake, *Materials*, v.

³² Letter from C.L. Eastlake to J.D. Passavant, 6 May 1846, University Library, Frankfurt am Main: Ms. Ff. J.D. Passavant A II e, Nr. 164, fol. 274r°.

his book professed 'to trace the recorded practice of oil painting from its invention'.³³

A major source to which Eastlake turned in his hunt for relevant information was Passavant. His colleague answered his initial letter of enquiry within nine days, responding on 29 April 1846 at great length and in great detail, sharing what he knew.³⁴ It is pertinent in the present enquiry, concerned as it is with investigating Eastlake and Passavant's working practices, to note especially the *type of information* that Passavant supplied and the *manner* in which he delivered it. Even the most superficial glance at his letter back to Eastlake demonstrates that rather than offering opinions or glosses, Passavant supplied pages and pages of examples, both in terms of primary documentation and works of art, supplying dates wherever he had the evidence. For instance, in order to answer Eastlake's first query regarding the date of the earliest oil painting that he knew of, Passavant started by listing the earliest documented use of oil with pigment. He noted that since the tenth century artists had mixed pigments with oil when coating external masonry or panelled walls and ceiling in interiors as proof that craftsmen knew how to mix paint with oil as a vehicle at a much earlier date than when the van Eycks were thought to be working. Various German scholars in the late eighteenth century had undertaken research from which they concluded that some early wall paintings in Germany were in oil but Passavant does not mention any of this work in his letter.³⁵ As his evidence, Passavant instead focused on early primary documentation, citing the twelfth-century manuscript by Theophilus – Lessing's source – as well as other accounts of the early application of oil paint in various contexts in the Netherlands, Germany and England.³⁶ Yet another source that Passavant told Eastlake about was the so-called *Tresslerbuch*, which comprised accounts of the city of Königsberg (today Kaliningrad) dating to about 1400, and which was kept at the town's archive.³⁷ It would appear that Passavant had not seen this manuscript in person, for when Eastlake asked more about it, Passavant told him that he knew of it only from a reference in the *Kunstblatt*.³⁸

³³ Eastlake, *Materials*, v.

³⁴ Letter from J.D. Passavant to C.L. Eastlake, 29 April 1846, National Art Library, Victoria & Albert Museum, MSL/1922/416/21, no pagination.

³⁵ Passavant's letter mentions neither Raspe's nor Ehemant's earlier work. See the table in Nadolny, 'Scientific analyses', 44.

³⁶ Letter from J.D. Passavant to C.L. Eastlake, 29 April 1846, National Art Library, Victoria & Albert Museum, MSL/1922/416/21, no pagination.

³⁷ Erich Joachim, ed, *Das Marienburger Tresslerbuch der Jahre 1399-1409*, Königsberg i.Pr: Thomas & Oppermann, 1896.

³⁸ See letter from C.L. Eastlake to J.D. Passavant, 6 May 1846, University Library, Frankfurt am Main: Ms. Ff. J.D. Passavant A II e, Nr. 164, fol. 273v^o, and letter from J.D. Passavant to C.L. Eastlake, 15 May 1846, National Art Library, Victoria & Albert Museum, MSL/1922/416/22, no pagination. In Eastlake's library there are copies of the texts by Vasari, Guicciardini, Lessing, van Mander, as well as the whole run of *Kunstblatt*, but he was not aware of the *Tresslerbuch* until Passavant mentioned it, referring Eastlake to the following article: C.U. Hagen, 'Zur Geschichte der Ölmalerei', *Kunst-Blatt*, 105, 31 December 1835, 439-40.



Figure 5 Rogier van der Weyden, *Virgin and Child* ('Medici Madonna'), c.1460-64. Oil on oak, 61.7 x 46.1 cm. Frankfurt am Main: Städel Museum, no. 850. © Städel Museum, Frankfurt am Main

Passavant's response to Eastlake not only lists relevant, if little-known, archival sources but also countless works of art with which he had become familiar as a result of his decades-long intensive inspection of important public and private collections. Thus one part of Passavant's reply concerns pupils and artists from other countries who he considered had used van Eyck's technique; Passavant compiled a list of painters who fell into this category, as material evidence for Eastlake to reflect on. He listed paintings by the Netherlandish-based painters Petrus Christus (active 1444; d.1475/6), Hans Memling (active 1465, d.1494) and Rogier van der Weyden (c.1399-1464), including the latter's *Virgin and Child*, the so-called 'Medici Madonna', which was at the time of writing in the Städel (Fig. 5).³⁹

³⁹ Letter from J.D. Passavant to C.L. Eastlake, 29 April 1846, National Art Library, Victoria & Albert Museum, MSL/1922/416/21, no pagination. The painting referred to is Rogier van der Weyden, 'Medici Madonna', c.1460-64, Frankfurt am Main, Städel Museum, inv. 850. See Klaus Gallwitz and Jochen Sander, *Niederländische Gemälde im Städel, 1400-1550*, Mainz: von Zabern, 1993 (2nd edn, 2002), 316-35; <https://sammlung.staedelmuseum.de/de/werk/medici-madonna> (accessed 20 February 2018). Certain scholars, including Lorne Campbell, believe

Antonello da Messina's name is also mentioned as the person who had brought the technique of oil painting to Venice while King René of Anjou is said to have brought it to Southern France. In relation to Germany, Passavant noted there were no oil paintings produced there before the middle of the fifteenth century, and he gave Eastlake the names of the first German artists who had used the technique: Martin Schongauer (active 1469, d. 1491), Friedrich Herlin aus Nördlingen (c.1425-30, d.1500), and Israhel van Meckenem (c.1440-45, d.1503) – all of whom he believed to have been either van Eyck's pupils or associated with his school.⁴⁰ In Passavant's opinion, then, the van Eycks had influenced painters all over Europe.

Returning to Eastlake's core question about the date of the first painting ever to have been produced completely with oil as its medium, Passavant noted that he had not found any evidence before van Eyck's time, so that regarding Vasari's statement that oil painting had been invented by Jan van Eyck in 1410, he '[did] not doubt that fact'.⁴¹ Regarding verifiable dates, Passavant added, 'I do not know any earlier oil painting with a date than *The Virgin Enthroned with Christ, St Jerome and Francis*⁴² by Peter Christophsen from 1417.'⁴³ He went on to supply two relevant later dates to enrich the discussion, the first derived from a document, the second from a dated work of art: firstly, that van Eyck had shown a painting to the painter's guild in Antwerp in 1420 and, secondly, that van Eyck's painting of *The Enthronement of Saint Thomas à Becket*, then in the Duke of Devonshire's collection, being inscribed 1421, was the earliest *dated* van Eyck known to Passavant.⁴⁴ Here we can see Passavant gathering information from a mixture of written and visual

that the Frankfurt panel is by the workshop of Rogier van der Weyden (private correspondence from Lorne Campbell to the authors, 16 January 2018).

⁴⁰ Letter from J.D. Passavant to C.L. Eastlake, 29 April 1846, National Art Library, Victoria & Albert Museum, MSL/1922/416/21, no pagination. The name of the engraver van Meckenem was then associated with many early German paintings.

⁴¹ Letter from J.D. Passavant to C.L. Eastlake, 29 April 1846, National Art Library, Victoria & Albert Museum, MSL/1922/416/21, no pagination.

⁴² See Sander, *Niederländische Gemälde*, 154-74.

⁴³ Letter from J.D. Passavant to C.L. Eastlake, 29 April 1846, National Art Library, Victoria & Albert Museum, MSL/1922/416/21, no pagination.

⁴⁴ Letter from J.D. Passavant to C.L. Eastlake, 29 April 1846, National Art Library, Victoria & Albert Museum, MSL/1922/416/21, no pagination; and C.L. Eastlake's answer to J.D. Passavant, 6 May 1846, University Library, Frankfurt am Main: Ms. Ff. J.D. Passavant A II e, Nr. 164, fol. 275r^o; letter from J.D. Passavant to C.L. Eastlake, 15 May 1846, National Art Library, Victoria & Albert Museum, MSL/1922/416/22. Both pieces of evidence were subsequently discarded: (1) The spurious nature of the 1420 Antwerp document was first demonstrated by the Belgian archivist Alexandre Pinchart in his 'Annotations' in the French edition of Crowe and Cavalcaselle, *Les anciens peintres flamands* of 1862-3, cxci (2nd English edn of their book, *The Early Flemish Painters*, London: J. Murray, 1872, 41-2.). (2) The Chatsworth/Dublin painting's signature turned out to be false, being based on that on the frame of the National Gallery's Van Eyck, *Portrait of a Man (Self Portrait?)*; NG 222); for further details, see Campbell, *Netherlandish Paintings*, 212. See also Julien Chapuis, 'Early Netherlandish Painting: Shifting Perspectives', in *From Van Eyck to Brueghel: Early Netherlandish Painting in the Metropolitan Museum*, eds Marian W. Ainsworth and Keith Christiansen, New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1999, 9.

sources then available to him – and at the time believed to be genuine – with the aim of shedding further light on a theory or question.

Passavant's reply to Eastlake did not fail to discuss the materials he believed van Eyck had employed to make his paint since he realized the focus of Eastlake's study was on historical painting techniques. In his opinion, what was novel about Jan van Eyck's technique was his use of heated linseed oil or oil varnish to finish his paintings, painting this over an under-layer of egg tempera. Passavant suggests that it was this combination of an egg tempera undercoat with a final layer of oil which provided van Eyck's colours with a previously-unknown depth and warmth.⁴⁵

Having examined the type of information that Passavant garnered for his English colleague, it is also worth noting the manner in which the information was both given and received. Throughout the exchange of letters in 1846, far from feeling the need to reach definitive conclusions, Passavant presents as much material evidence as possible and then lets it speak for itself. For instance, as discussed, Passavant stated that he had never seen either in Germany or Italy an oil painting earlier or that had been produced simultaneously but independently of van Eyck's work than his *Petrus Christus* of 1417. What is important to note here is that Passavant does not say: 'the picture of *The Virgin Enthroned* ... was the first oil painting', but rather that he did not know of any earlier dated example – which exemplifies his method of sharing evidence. What this suggests is that he was advocating an empirical methodology based on facts, even if those facts might turn out to be incomplete or open to development in the future. This open-ended and ever-questioning approach was embraced by Eastlake, who was not shy in his replies to Passavant to press him on certain points in order to seek clarification or to ask for further proof about the reliability of his sources if he felt that Passavant had not provided sufficient evidence in the first instance.

We have already seen that Eastlake asked for more information about the *Tresslerbuch*. A later exchange in October 1847 highlights Eastlake's persistent refusal to take things as given. In one place he picks up on the fact that Passavant had stated something as a fact without citing his evidence:

There is a communication of yours in the *Kunst-Blatt* of 1841 no. 59
respecting a criticism on some former statements by you on the subject of the

⁴⁵ To use Passavant's phrase: 'damit gab er seinen Farben in den Lasuren eine Tiefe und Wärme, die vorher nicht bekannt war' – see letter from J.D. Passavant to C.L. Eastlake, 29 April 1846, National Art Library, Victoria & Albert Museum, MSL/1922/416/21, no pagination. See Effmann, 'Theories'. It is difficult on this matter, as in others, to determine the source of Passavant's ideas for he does not mention Raspe or Ehemant in his letter nor does he add footnotes to back up his statements. The belief that van Eyck used a mixed technique of this kind, or a variation of it such as a mixed emulsion, has persisted and is still a matter of debate today, even with the availability of modern scientific analyses, since interpretation of the evidence continues to evolve and is challenging for the complex natural products encountered as binding media. For an overview of this matter, see Spring and Morrison, 'Van Eyck'. We are grateful to Marika Spring and Stephan Kemperdick for discussing this matter with us.

altar-piece by Hugo van der Goes in S. Maria Nuova at Florence. You there observe: 'In der That weiß ich (...) dass er [Folco Portinari] für den Altar der Hospitalkirche ein Madonnenbild von Cimabue fertigen liess.' Will you be so kind as to tell me what is your authority for saying that Folco employed Cimabue. Is it in Richa? I shall be much obliged by your answer to this question. I have not yet been able to prove, by any researches in Florence, that the second Folco was an agent of the Medici in Flanders. Have you any further evidence on this subject?⁴⁶

The immediate problem for Eastlake was that 'many writers – Rathgeber, Michiels &c [had] adopted the tradition as a fact from your statement.'⁴⁷ A larger issue was also at stake, which Eastlake made clear when he told Passavant that his conclusion was 'by no means improbable, but history must rest on a surer foundation'.⁴⁸ Passavant's response is interesting. He informed Eastlake that he had derived his information from a variety of places – 'old sources from Florence, from Richa, and from verbal communication', and confessed that he had therefore 'assumed' that certain things had been the case when it came to writing up his results.⁴⁹ Having admitted as much, he was, however, keen to stand up for himself and contrast his laborious activity with that of writers like Rathgeber and Michiels who, as far as he was concerned, had not conducted enough research to secure their results, and had been content merely to put things together to form a 'pleasant and readable book' but had not been able to distinguish between 'hard and verifiable fact and false or conjectured notions'.⁵⁰ Even though on occasion Passavant might forget to leave a precise paper-trail of the sources of his facts, what he was reminding his friend of were his credentials as a scholar given his in-depth primary research involving trips to the archives, close study of works of art and conversations with other experts. Reflecting on their letters, what is, we contend, of prime importance is the fact that they shared information and discussed what might constitute 'best practice', which included an acceptance that for any number of reasons an answer may have to be regarded as provisional.

⁴⁶ Letter from C.L. Eastlake to J.D. Passavant, 12 October 1847, University Library, Frankfurt am Main: Ms. Ff. J.D. Passavant A II e, Nr. 165, fol. 275v°-276r°.

⁴⁷ Letter from C.L. Eastlake to J.D. Passavant, 12 October 1847, University Library, Frankfurt am Main: Ms. Ff. J.D. Passavant A II e, Nr. 165, fol. 276r°.

⁴⁸ Letter from C.L. Eastlake to J.D. Passavant, 12 October 1847, University Library, Frankfurt am Main: Ms. Ff. J.D. Passavant A II e, Nr. 165, fol. 276r°.

⁴⁹ Letter from J.D. Passavant to C.L. Eastlake, 18 October 1847, National Art Library, Victoria & Albert Museum, MSL/1922/416/23, no pagination: '[n]ach diesen und auch noch andern mündlichen Angaben musste ich annehmen, daß (...)'.
⁵⁰ Letter from J.D. Passavant to C.L. Eastlake, 18 October 1847, National Art Library, Victoria & Albert Museum, MSL/1922/416/23, no pagination: 'nur Nachschreiber [seien], ersterer als Compiler, letzterer als Litterat[,] der ein angenehm zu lesendes Buch schreiben will. Beide können das Wahre und Sichere vom Falschen und nur Vermutheten nicht gehörig unterscheiden, was freilich eine oft schwierige Sache ist und selbst den Einsichtsvollsten nicht immer gelingt'.

Avery-Quash and Meyer 'Substituting an approach to historical evidence for the vagueness of speculation' ...

Eastlake's *Materials for a History of Oil Painting* of 1847 and his debt to Passavant

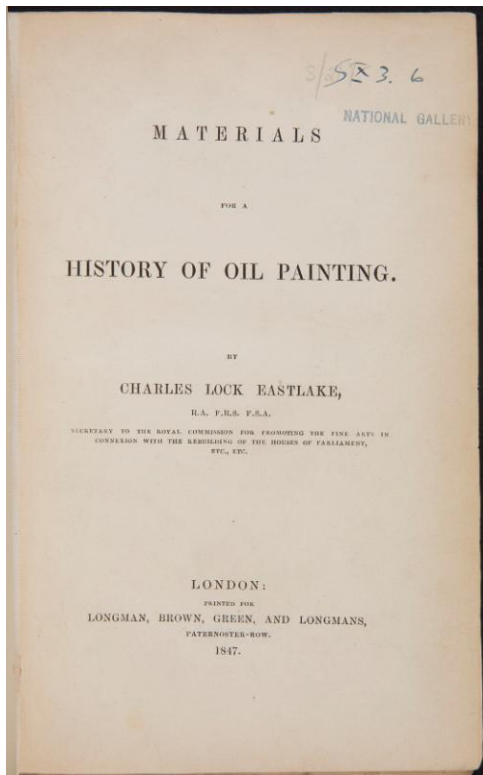


Figure 6 Title page of Charles Lock Eastlake, *Materials for a History of Oil Painting*, London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1847. London: National Gallery Library, 108863. © National Gallery, London

Eastlake's *Materials for a History of Oil Painting* (Fig. 6) sought to elucidate the origins and development of oil painting in the Netherlandish School, and consequently to nuance Vasari's myth about Jan van Eyck. To do so, Eastlake based his investigation on a close analysis of the primary documentary sources on materials and technique, and on a close investigation of the paintings under review. A characteristic comment that summarizes the importance in which Eastlake held this source-based approach is as follows: 'without accuracy and industry (...) there can be no extensive knowledge of facts and details, which are the *pabulum* of judgment, and the only true groundwork of theory.'⁵¹ While sorting out certain biographical facts, Eastlake also looked into Jan van Eyck's technique, seeking in particular to learn more about the nature and quality of his binding medium. Working from the premise that it was based on oil, he defined its major properties as being drying, nearly colourless and 'of a consistence (...) which allowed of the most delicate execution', and devoted much space to discussing methods for preparing or clarifying oil described in documentary sources, as well as historic recipes concerned with enhancing the siccative properties of oil.⁵² As a result of his investigations, Eastlake concluded that the van Eycks deserved credit not for inventing the technique of oil painting, but for being the first to realize its full potential and demonstrating its full capacity.⁵³ This, in turn, had the effect of demonstrating beyond doubt firstly that what modern

⁵¹ Eastlake, *Contributions*, 181.

⁵² Spring and Morrison, 'Van Eyck', 197-9.

⁵³ Eastlake, *Materials*, 199-201.

painters sometimes heralded as new inventions were anything but, given that Eastlake could cite paintings or documents clearly witnessing the use of particular materials or methods in past times.⁵⁴ Secondly, he was able to put paid to the persistent myth that the esteemed masters from the past had employed some secret method and that if only modern painters could discover what it was all the ills they currently faced in relation to rapidly deteriorating paintings would be solved. Eastlake was categorical in his rebuttal of this, suggesting that the advantage was with modern painters given that they had a wider range of materials and scientific knowledge at their disposal than their forebears. He also stated that the remarkable permanency of paintings produced by Jan van Eyck was down to the care with which he had prepared his support, pigments and vehicle and the attention he had paid to his process of application.

Much of the information that Eastlake had been supplied with by Passavant in his letters found a second, more public, home in the final published text of his book. For instance, among the various paintings that Eastlake drew to his readers' attention were some that he had discussed with Passavant. He highlighted the Petrus Christus picture of 1417, emphasizing its importance in the history of oil painting as the 'earliest work extant, painted in the method'.⁵⁵ Furthermore, Eastlake utilized information supplied by Passavant about various documentary sources. For instance, he referred to the *Tresslerbuch*,⁵⁶ the manuscript mentioned above, whose existence and importance he had originally been made aware of by Passavant. More significantly, as he himself explained to Passavant, 'You will see that I have taken notice of the Strassburg ms. – unquestionably an important document'.⁵⁷ The document in question is an artist's recipe book, whose content dates to the beginning of the fifteenth century, and which is believed to be the oldest German-language source for the study of Northern European painting techniques. It was one of two key sources which Eastlake was the first to refer to when discussing oil media in northern painting – the other being the so-called De Ketham mss, then in the British Library.⁵⁸ In their 1846 exchange, Eastlake had asked about 'the nature of the tempera which was used by the Cologne and Bohemian school before V. Eyck's

⁵⁴ See, for instance, Eastlake's comment: 'It has sometimes reappeared, like many of the early methods, as a supposed modern discovery.' Eastlake, *Materials*, 337.

⁵⁵ Eastlake, *Contributions*, 190.

⁵⁶ Eastlake, *Materials*, 79: 'The application of oil painting to ordinary purposes, at the close of the fourteenth century, is exemplified by a document found at Königsberg. It relates to the painting in oil of the cover or door of a diptych; the picture within being probably executed in tempera.'

⁵⁷ Letter from C.L. Eastlake to J.D. Passavant, 12 October 1847, University Library, Frankfurt am Main: Ms. Ff. J.D. Passavant A II e, Nr. 165, fol. 275r^o. The National Gallery preserves the only extant copy of this manuscript, which Eastlake had made, as the original was destroyed in a fire. For further details, see Spring and Morrison, 'Van Eyck', 197, 199; and Sylvie Neven's online article <http://recipes.hypotheses.org/tag/strasbourg-manuscript>. Neven's PhD dissertation was on the Strasbourg group of MSS; it was subsequently published as *The Strasbourg Manuscript: A Medieval Tradition of Artists' Recipe Collections (1400-1570)*, Archetype Publications, 2016.

⁵⁸ Spring and Morrison, 'Van Eyck', 197.

time' and the fact that it appeared 'less hatched (*weniger gestrichelt*) than the works of the Italians – Sandro Botticelli perhaps excepted'.⁵⁹ As a result of writing to Passavant and further investigations of his own, a nuanced explanation about the development of a slow-drying vehicle by early northern European painters, in part derived from information in the Strasbourg manuscript, is presented in his book. The relevant passage is worth quoting in full because it demonstrates the sort of detail that Eastlake wished to – and was able to – go into on the back of his research, including input from Passavant:

Such was the nature of the Italian tempera properly so called. On walls, and for coarser work, warm size was occasionally used; but the egg vehicle, undiluted, was preferred for altar pictures on wood. Thus used, and drying quickly, it was difficult to effect a union of tints in the more delicately 'modelled' parts of a work, – for instance, in the flesh, – without covering the surface with lines (*tratteggiare*; Anglice, hatching) in the manner of a drawing: Vasari indeed assumes that tempera pictures could not be executed otherwise. Examples of works, painted with the egg vehicle, being rounded and duly finished without this laborious process, are certainly not common in Italy. The pictures of Gentile da Fabriano and Sandro Botticelli are among the rare exceptions; an early specimen of Perugino, in the National Gallery, exhibits the dryer method. The productions of the still older Rhenish painters, on the contrary, are softened and rounded with scarcely any appearance of this hatching: the ancient altar-piece in the cathedral of Cologne, by Meister Stephan, may be cited as an example. It had been long concluded that the painters whose works in tempera exhibit this union of tints must have employed a vehicle which did not dry rapidly, but allowed time to blend the colours at will.⁶⁰

The various types of sources noted throughout *Materials* – not only historic artists' treatises and manuals and original paintings but also reliable secondary literature and scholarly opinion – mirror the range discussed in Eastlake's correspondence with Passavant the previous year with the notable addition that a scientific experiment is recorded as having been undertaken at Eastlake's request to help verify certain facts. Eastlake had had an experiment conducted to find out more about drying agents for vehicles and the employment of calcined bones in this connection – something that the review in *Blackwood's Magazine* picked up on.⁶¹ Apparently Eastlake had got in touch with the eminent British scientist Michael Faraday, FRS, over another related chemical investigation but he did not include

⁵⁹ Letter from C.L. Eastlake to J.D. Passavant, 6 May 1846, University Library, Frankfurt am Main: Ms. Ff. J.D. Passavant A II e, Nr. 164, fol. 273v^o-274r^o.

⁶⁰ Eastlake, *Materials*, 102-3.

⁶¹ John Eagle's anonymous review was published in *Blackwood's Magazine*, 62, September 1847, 301-11 (308). This experiment relates to the Strasbourg MS recipe for *oleum preciosum*, in which Eastlake was very interested. See Nadolny, 'Scientific analyses', 43, who discusses this analysis and places it in context.

mention of the results in *Materials*, concentrating instead on an analysis of documentary sources.⁶²

The major difference between the earlier correspondence and later book is not so much the quality of the sources as the quantity of them which reflects in part the expanded geographical and temporal parameters of the book given that Eastlake's scope was now more ambitiously comprehensive – he wished his publication to trace not only the origins of the oil painting technique but also to show its adoption and development across continental Europe as well as in Britain, and down the centuries from its first adoption to the comparatively recent times of Joshua Reynolds. The number of sources reflects the number of people whom Eastlake consulted while conducting his research. It is for this reason that Passavant's name appears as just one among many in the acknowledgements. We find 'Director Passavant of Frankfort' thanked, alongside 'Dr Waagen and Professor Schlessinger of Berlin (...) Mr Andrew Wilson of Genoa, Mr Kirkup of Florence and Mr Penry Williams of Rome' for their 'ready attention to [Eastlake's] applications'.⁶³ Within the text, we find Eastlake directly citing Passavant's work, notably a number of his *Kunstblatt* articles. Alongside Passavant's publications, Eastlake points to other relevant references, whether journal articles or weightier monographs concerning early northern oil painting that had been appearing in increasing numbers over the past few years, especially by German authors. Thus, in relation to the scholarly literature about the van Eycks' artistic oeuvre, Eastlake offered the following booklist in a note:

On the works of the Van Eycks compare Dr. Waagen Ueber Hubert und Johann van Eyck, Breslau, 1822; Schnaase, Niederländische Briefe, Stuttgart und Tübingen, 1834; Hotho, Geschichte der deutschen und niederländischen Malerei, Berlin, 1842-43, zweiter Band; and Alfred Michiels, Histoire de la Peinture Flamande et Hollandaise, Bruxelles, 1845-46. The fourth and concluding volume of this work is not yet published.⁶⁴

Elsewhere, the work of other non-German writers is cited including that of Michiels (again) as well as Louis de Bast and Prosper Mérimée. Interestingly, a few works by British scholars are cited, notably the recent publication of the *Mappae Clavicula* by Albert Way, the director of the Society of Antiquaries; the new translation in 1844 of Cennino Cennini's *Tratatto della Pittura* by Mary Merrifield; and John Gage Rokewood's annotated records concerning medieval English painting from Ely Cathedral and Westminster Abbey published in places like

⁶² Nadolny, 'A Problem of Methodology', 1030-2; and Nadolny, 'Scientific analyses' throughout. Although best known for his contributions to the study of electromagnetism and electrochemistry, Faraday was associated with Eastlake over various episodes concerning the conservation of the National Gallery's painting collection. For further details, see Susanna Avery-Quash, 'The Art of Conservation II: Sir Charles Eastlake and conservation at the National Gallery, London', *Burlington Magazine*, 157, December 2015, 846-54, esp. 850.

⁶³ Eastlake, *Materials*, x.

⁶⁴ Eastlake, *Materials*, 187 (note).

Antiquities of Westminster (1807). Given the nationalistic agendas associated with many of nineteenth-century attempts to find the origins of oil painting, it may seem surprising that Eastlake did not push the English story any more than he did but his catholicity of taste, strongly European outlook, and intention that his book should cover the history of oil painting across western Europe may help to explain why he acted and wrote in the way he did.

Just as the range of sources referred to in the letters between Eastlake and Passavant and in *Materials* is very similar, so too is the manner of presenting the data, albeit the scholarly apparatus is presented in a more polished way in the publication as printed. In the book's preface, Eastlake noted that the 'object' of the book was 'to supply, as far as possible, the facts and authorities which have hitherto been wanting',⁶⁵ and that in relation to opinions he had deliberately gone back to the primary source in order to verify them, or, as he put it he had been constantly desirous 'of verifying statements relating to practical details by documentary evidence.'⁶⁶ He thought such balances and checks were all the more necessary whenever he presented a fact that was either new or contested: 'The minuter circumstances and descriptions adduced are to be regarded as connecting links in a chain of evidence which, especially when novel or differing from received opinions, it was essential to fortify.'⁶⁷ In a similar vein, Eastlake is careful to give full bibliographical details, and whenever he uses quotations translated into English he is careful to give the original – whether Latin, Greek, Italian and so on – in an accompanying note. As he explained in the book's preface: 'As regards the interpretation of the various documents which have been brought together, the author has been careful, in all technical points, and indeed in all apparently questionable cases, to give the original passages together with his translations.'⁶⁸ Furthermore, he readily puts names to opinions. For instance, he records of the Strasbourg manuscript: 'The handwriting of the treatise is of the fifteenth century; but older authorities are quoted, and the practice generally described may belong even to the early part of the fourteenth century', and in a note adds that the fifteenth-century dating of the handwriting was 'the opinion of Director Passavant of Frankfort.'⁶⁹ In this regard Eastlake was in step with the increasing number of colleagues who also relied heavily on first-hand knowledge or reliable scholarly opinions.

Despite there being no final part to the book called 'conclusion' or something analogous, summarizing Eastlake's analysis it is fair to suggest that the information

⁶⁵ Eastlake, *Materials*, vi. Eastlake noted (footnote, 265-6): 'Those who have set out with the impression that van Eyck discovered something, and that the "secret" is now lost, have each thought it necessary to advance some hypothesis; and various absurd conjectures have been the result. Of the writers whose conclusions have been based on facts and the careful examination of pictures, Merimée may be considered the most rational. His treatise, already quoted, was translated into English by W.B. Sarsfield Taylor, 1839.'

⁶⁶ Eastlake, *Materials*, vii.

⁶⁷ Eastlake, *Materials*, vii.

⁶⁸ Eastlake, *Materials*, vii.

⁶⁹ Eastlake, *Materials*, 105-6. For current opinion on its dating, see Neven, *Strasbourg Manuscript*.

he highlighted about historic materials and methods helped to demythologize Vasari's account of Jan van Eyck and to debunk the traditional 'secret method' conspiracy. Along the way, he was able to highlight hitherto little-known schools of art and thereby to present a richer, more interesting, more truthful, if more messy account. In relation to Jan van Eyck, for example, whereas Vasari had presented him as a pedestalled and isolated hero, Eastlake was happy not only to show his clay feet (he points out what he perceives as his shortcomings) but also to show him in relation to his predecessors, peers and successors, an exercise which brought his older brother Hubert, among others, back into the frame:

The superior mechanical secret is always supposed to be in the hands of the greatest genius, and an early example of sudden perfection in art, like the fame of the heroes of antiquity, was likely to monopolise and represent the claims of many. It is apparent that much has been attributed to John Van Eyck which was really the invention of Hubert; and both may have been indebted to earlier painters for the elements of their improved process. It would be useless now to attempt to divide these claims (...).⁷⁰

The way that this passage opens things up is related to another aspect of the book: Eastlake's highlighting of gaps in knowledge where further scholars might step in and work to good effect. For instance, in one passage, Eastlake suggests that an examination of a particular painting in the Accademia in Venice might be useful in relation to deepening an understanding of the use of honey in the manufacture of oleo-resinous vehicles either side of the Alps, given that the altar-piece, inscribed 'Johannes de Alamania et Antonius de Murano', was clearly painted by an Italian and a German.⁷¹ In another passage, he posits the idea that there might be further technical treatises to be recovered – specifically 'various German or Flemish manuscripts on oil painting (belonging to the middle or latter half of the fifteenth century)', whose contents might help resolve remaining 'uncertainty (...) respecting the early practice of oil painting'.⁷²

Apart from such suggestions for further research, another way in which the book hints at Eastlake's awareness that his offering is part of a larger whole is its title. He gave his book the modest title, 'Materials for a history of Oil Painting,' rather than anything more categorical like '... the history of Oil Painting'. The choice of title and suggestions for future research suggest that Eastlake was well aware that knowledge increased over time, and as such that any fresh data would necessarily modify the (temporary) conclusions he had reached. The place in *Materials* where Eastlake discusses his approach most directly and extensively is the 'Preface'. In one passage there he includes the following phrase to explain his underlying approach for the book as a whole which usefully summarizes his mature methodology –

⁷⁰ Eastlake, *Materials*, 266-7.

⁷¹ Eastlake, *Materials*, 110-1. The artists referred to here are Giovanni d'Alemagna and Antonio Vivarini.

⁷² Eastlake, *Materials*, 315; see 31-2, 122-3 for further examples.

hence the decision to use it in the title for the current article: 'substituting an approach to historical evidence for the vagueness of speculation'.⁷³

We find Eastlake continuing to discuss such methodological principles with Passavant in letters subsequent to the appearance of his book, which is only appropriate given that, as contested in this article, it was largely through their earlier correspondence that such methodological ideas and their importance had been grappled with in practice. It is worth teasing out what he says on the topic to Passavant in 1847 as his comments are arguably the clearest articulation we have of Eastlake's thinking on art historical methodology, and, as we shall see, they would have implications for his work at the National Gallery. We find two inter-related points being highlighted. The first concerns the idea of the advent of a new dispensation where speculation and conjecture no longer have any place and where empirical research is taking their place. The second point is about the nature of scholastic endeavour and that students in any field are never working in splendid isolation and that the work they produce is the result of predecessors' efforts and that it will, in turn, assist scholars of the future – ideas circling round a larger notion of what we would like to call 'provisionality'.⁷⁴ A letter that brings both concepts together is that dated 12 October 1847, where Eastlake wrote to Passavant regarding *Materials*:

I hope that the light which this [the Strasbourg manuscript] & other mss. of the 15th century which I have noticed have thrown on the early Flemish & German practice in painting will induce the lovers of art to make a further search – The age of conjecture on these subjects is past – it is evident that materials for a history exist if we look for them.⁷⁵

He had started his letter by checking whether Passavant had received a copy of *Materials* posted to him a few months previously. Clearly a copy did reach its intended recipient for one, with a dedication to Passavant from Eastlake, is preserved in the library of the Städel Museum.⁷⁶ This gifting of his book to Passavant may be seen as Eastlake's putting into practice his notion of what constituted best practice in relation to an exchange of scholarly information. In all of this, if Eastlake was doing something that was arguably fairly new for British art history, he was also acting very much in line with what others elsewhere were

⁷³ Eastlake, *Materials*, vii.

⁷⁴ See Meyer and Avery-Quash, 'Connecting links', forthcoming (note 1).

⁷⁵ Letter from C.L. Eastlake to J.D. Passavant, 12 October 1847, University Library, Frankfurt am Main: Ms. Ff. J.D. Passavant A II e, Nr. 165, fol. 275r°-v°.

⁷⁶ Passavant owned copies of Eastlake's *Materials* and *Contributions to the Literature of the Fine Arts* (1848); the former bore the dedication, 'Director Passavant with the author's kind regards' (Städel Museum Library, inv. no. 1939, Passavant Bequest, Sig. 15/535 8°). See Busso Diekamp, 'Johann David Passavant und die Bibliothek des Städelischen Kunstinstituts', in Bauereisen and Stuffmann, *Kunst und Kennerchaft*, 254, footnote 57. Passavant also owned a copy of Elizabeth Eastlake's translation of Kugler's *Handbuch der Geschichte der Malerei*; his copy has a dedication written by the editor: 'Dr. Passavant. With Mr Murray's & Mr Scharf's compliments & thanks. January 1851'. See Diekamp, 254, footnote 58.

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doing when viewed through a wider lens. Arguably, Eastlake was simply catching his own country up with developments that were apace in Continental Europe, not least in relation to ideas of empiricism and provisionality.

Eastlake and Passavant's approach to the writing of art history in relation to wider European developments

From the 1820s onwards, there was a shift in educational philosophy which affected leading European universities, especially in Germany and France. A pioneering method of research emerged in the natural sciences which was adopted by the humanities, and which 'led a decisive step away from the philosophical historiography formed by idealism, and propounded instead an inductive philological approach – the historical-critical method – based on the study of primary written sources.'⁷⁷ This important new approach, initially taken up by historians, philosophers and linguists, notably the Berlin University historians Georg Niebuhr and Leopold von Ranke, was also a tool that came to be used by art historians once courses in art history started to be offered from 1830, in conjunction with the creation of new professorial posts in the discipline.⁷⁸ Among the most important figures of the first generation of professors of art history were Johann Dominico Fiorillo, who, in his role within the philosophy department at the University of Göttingen, had given art history lectures from as early as 1799; Ernst Hagen who, having been Professor at Königsberg University in German languages and literature, took up the first chair there in art history in 1830; and Rudolf von Eitelberger who was among the first to promote art history as a discipline in Vienna.⁷⁹ The type of research that such men started to undertake fitted into the

⁷⁷ Matthew Rampley, *The Vienna School of Art History: Empire and the Politics of Scholarship, 1847-1918*, University Park, Penn: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2013, 18-9. See also Stefan Jordan, *Geschichtstheorie in der ersten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts. Die Schwellenzeit zwischen Pragmatismus und Klassischem Historismus*, Frankfurt am Main-New York: Campus, 1999; Friedrich Jaeger and Jörn Rüsen, *Geschichte des Historismus. Eine Einführung*, Munich: Beck, 1992, 21, 45, 81-6; Michael Podro, *The Critical Historians of Art*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1982; Heinrich Dilly, *Kunstgeschichte als Institution. Studien zur Geschichte einer Disziplin*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1979; Waetzoldt, *Deutsche Kunsthistoriker*; Locher, *Kunstgeschichte*, 203-97.

⁷⁸ On the 'Berlin School', see Gabriele Bickendorf, 'Gustav Friedrich Waagen und der Historismus in der Kunstgeschichte', *Jahrbuch der Berliner Museen*, N.F. 37, 1995, 23-32; Gabriele Bickendorf, 'Die "Berliner Schule": Carl Friedrich von Rumohr (1785-1843), Gustav Friedrich Waagen (1794-1868), Karl Schnaase (1798-1875) und Franz Kugler (1808-1858)', in Ulrich Pfisterer, ed, *Klassiker der Kunstgeschichte. Bd. 1: Von Winckelmann bis Warburg*, Munich: Beck, 2007, 46-61.

⁷⁹ For more on the 'Vienna School', which was not dissimilar in its aim or approach to the 'Berlin School', see Rampley, *Vienna School*. See also Wolfgang Cortjaens, 'Modelllandschaft Rhein-Maas? Topographische und kulturpolitische Ordnungskriterien in der preußischen Kunstgeschichte des Vormärz: Karl Schnaase, Franz Kugler und Franz Mertens und die Konstruktion nationaler und regionaler Schulen', in Wolfgang Cortjaens, Jan de Maeyer und Tom Verschaffel, eds, *Historismus und Kulturelle Identität im Raum Rhein-Maas. Das 19.*

historical-critical method noted above; their basic methodology was the acquiring of authenticated primary material both visual and written, accumulated usually through huge amounts of labour in public and private art collections and archives across Europe. A major new type of publication emerged in consequence which foregrounded primary sources,⁸⁰ whether works of art themselves or archival documents, which superseded the traditional speculative universal accounts of the arts, classic examples of which include Johann Joachim Winckelmann's wide-ranging account of the Hellenistic art and Séroux D'Agincourt's survey of the art of the Middle Ages.

An early example of this new turn in the history of art is Carl Friedrich Rumohr's *Italienische Forschungen* of the late 1820s, where he used written sources to critique Vasari's *Vite*, thereby demonstrating that there had been no great break between the art of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance in the way that Vasari had claimed. In relation to the specific study of the work of northern European artists, we can highlight Waagen's equally early study of the van Eyck brothers of 1822, in which he adopted a similar philological approach. What is particularly relevant to the current investigation is Waagen's praising of certain writers, including Vasari and Karel van Mander, for their use of primary sources (even if sometimes it is not quite clear from where they got their facts), and his criticism of others, such as Joachim von Sandrart and Rumohr's teacher Fiorillo, for their lack of first-hand knowledge of the paintings they discussed and their reliance on other people's judgments.⁸¹

Jahrhundert im Spannungsfeld von Regionalismus und Nationalismus, Leuven: Leuven Univ. Press, 2008, 95-111.

⁸⁰ Such publications continued to appear throughout the rest of the century. In relation to historical textual sources, Eitelberger, for instance, was responsible during the 1870s and 1880s for producing a range of texts from a critical edition in German of Cennino Cennini's *Libro dell'arte* and Condivi's *Life of Michelangelo*, to an essay on the theory of art by Alberti and a volume of Michelangelo's letters. See Rampley, *Vienna School*, 26. Some of the resulting publications were part of a broader project of nineteenth-century nation building, including such multi-volume and multi-authored initiatives as the *Monumenta Germaniae Historica* in Germany and the *Archives de l'art français* project in France.

⁸¹ Locher, *Kunstgeschichte*, 229, note 56. For more on Rumohr, see Wilhelm Waetzoldt, *Deutsche Kunsthistoriker*, vol. I, Leipzig: F.A. Seemann, 1921; Udo Kultermann, *Geschichte der Kunstgeschichte*, Munich and New York: Prestel, 1996; Schönwälder, *Ideal und Charakter*; Gabriele Bickendorf, 'Die ersten Überblickswerke zur "Kunstgeschichte": Jean-Baptiste-Louis-Georges Séroux d'Agincourt (1730-1814), Luigi Lanzi (1732-1810), Johann Domenico Fiorillo (1748-1821) und Leopoldo Cicognara (1767-1834)', in Ulrich Pfisterer, ed, *Klassiker der Kunstgeschichte. Vol. I: Von Winckelmann bis Warburg*, Munich: Beck, 2007, 29-45; Jürgen Schönwälder, 'Johann Dominik Fiorillo und Carl Friedrich von Rumohr', in Antje Middeldorf Kosegarten, ed, *Johann Dominicus Fiorillo. Kunstgeschichte und die romantische Bewegung um 1800. Akten des Kolloquiums 'Johann Dominicus Fiorillo und die Anfänge der Kunstgeschichte in Göttingen'*, 1994, Göttingen: Wallstein-Verl., 1997, 388-401; Pia Müller-Tamm, 'Rumohrs Verhältnis zur Kunst seiner Zeit', in Bernadette Collenberg-Plotnikov, ed, *Musealisierung und Reflexion: Gedächtnis – Erinnerung – Geschichte (Kunst als Kulturgut, 3)*, Paderborn: Fink, 2011, 87-98; Regine Prange, 'Gegen die eigene Welt der Kunst. Zu Carl Friedrich von Rumohrs kunsthistorischer Restitution des klassizistischen Ideals', in Johannes

Passavant and Eastlake became aware of these initiatives early on, perhaps partly due to the fact that they were living at the relevant period in Rome, the city where key figures in the movement were also then resident, notably Niebuhr who was a Prussian ambassador to the Holy See between 1816 and 1823, and Rumohr who was there as part of his second Italian tour (1816-21) in which he undertook lengthy explorations of archives in Rome as well as in Florence, Milan, Siena, Perugia and Mantua. Although then pursuing careers as painters, both Eastlake and Passavant independently developed a side-line in art historical studies, both of them learning to do so in ways compatible with and reflective of the new empirical approach based on first-hand study of objects and historical records. Passavant learnt the hard way for his first book *Ansichten über die bildenden Künste*, published in 1820,⁸² received a scathing review by none other than Rumohr, in the *Kunstblatt* in 1821.⁸³ The critic judged his arguments to be 'ahistorical' and hence of little lasting value. From his ongoing exchange with Rumohr (and others too) from the 1820s, Passavant learned to see the scholarly worth of documents and facts.

Both Passavant and Eastlake visited vast numbers of collections to study pictures and make notes. Even when Passavant was being educated as a painter in Paris he had started visiting the Musée Napoléon. In letters from Italy, he gave accounts to friends in Frankfurt about having seen up to a thousand works of art in a week. Eastlake likewise took every opportunity to visit important public and private art collections, starting with a youthful visit to the same Parisian museum in 1815, and likewise noted down what he saw in notebooks. Both men continued this practice of note-keeping for the rest of their lives.⁸⁴ This way they built up a memory-bank of images and series of detailed notes on which they could draw in the future. Both liked to inspect a painting at close range, taking exact measurements and accurate transcriptions of any inscriptions, dates, signatures, monograms and ciphers, and investigating the way in which the artist had prepared paint and applied it to the panel or canvas, believing that painting technique revealed distinctive, 'signature' traits. Additionally, they came to understand the value of working closely with archival documents as a secure basis from which to develop scholarship. From his travel diaries we know that Eastlake occasionally worked in archives.

Nor did they neglect the slowly increasing secondary literature that was becoming available, in addition to collecting copies or published versions of

Grave, Hubert Locher, Reinhard Wegner, eds, *Der Körper der Kunst. Konstruktionen der Totalität im Kunstdiskurs um 1800*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007, 183-218; Gabriele Bickendorf, 'Luigi Lanzis "Storia pittorica della Italia" und das Entstehen der historisch-kritischen Kunstgeschichtsschreibung', *Jahrbuch des Zentralinstituts für Kunstgeschichte München*, 2, 1986, 231-72.

⁸² Johann David Passavant, *Ansichten über die bildenden Künste und Darstellung des Ganges derselben in Toskana*, Heidelberg, Speier: Oswald, 1820.

⁸³ Rumohr's review of Passavant's book was published in *Kunst-Blatt*, 32, 19 April 1821, 125-8.

⁸⁴ Passavant's travel notebooks are preserved in the Städel Museum Archive (classmark: Sign. 8° 818); Eastlake's are in the archive of the National Gallery, London; see Avery-Quash, 'Travel Notebooks', 20-7.

primary sources. There is evidence from the 1820s and 1830s of both Eastlake and Passavant making efforts – an unusual activity at that time – to build up comprehensive art-historical libraries. The resulting libraries came to include many of the titles mentioned in this article. In Eastlake's case the volumes he acquired were for his own use, even though ultimately its holdings of 2,000 volumes became the nucleus of the National Gallery's library when his book collection was bought by the trustees of the Gallery in 1870 from the widowed Lady Eastlake. As for Passavant, as a student in Rome he had started to buy books for his own private library. Furthermore, he assisted with the establishment of an art history library for artists and scholars in the city,⁸⁵ and in the 1820s he recommended his friend Johann Friedrich Böhmer, an administrator of the Städel from November 1822, to buy certain books for the institute's nascent library.⁸⁶ Once director of the Städel from 1840/41, Passavant enlarged the library's holdings of 160 books over the following two decades. He did this partly through purchase and partly through donations, which included his own gifts. His first big donation occurred in 1843 when he gave 178 books from his own collection to boost the library's holdings of material relating to – among others – European public and private collections,⁸⁷ the second occurred on his death, when a generous bequest supplemented the library's holdings by another 360 works.⁸⁸

Having developed scholarly protocols during the 1820s and 1830s, the publications that Passavant and Eastlake went on to produce were models of this type of new research-based art history. In 1839 Passavant published his authoritative book on Raphael in German, which Eastlake brought to the attention of the English-speaking world through a long review of it, which was published, as noted above, the following year.⁸⁹ His response was significant because it drew attention to Passavant's new research about Raphael to a largely monoglot English audience and because it furnished Eastlake with the chance to explain and endorse the new type of scholarship that Passavant had come to employ, which meant that his study on Raphael was objective, source-based and analytic and thus very different from his first book of twenty years earlier. Eastlake hailed Passavant's book as the latest manifestation of this new scholarly approach:

⁸⁵ Busso Diekamp, 'Johann David Passavant und die Bibliothek des Städel'schen Kunstinstituts', in Bauereisen and Stüffmann, *Kunst und Kennerchaft*, 239-63, esp. 244-6.

⁸⁶ See Meyer, *Geburt*, 253; Diekamp, 'Passavant', 241-2.

⁸⁷ Diekamp, 'Passavant', 251-2.

⁸⁸ Throughout his time in office, Passavant was diligent at ordering up relevant texts – his 'shopping lists' from 1840 until his death in 1861 are preserved (Diekamp, 'Passavant', 246); he wrote a hand-written catalogue in 1843, which he thereafter regularly updated (248); the first index of the Städel Library was published in 1852 by Passavant's assistant Georg Maß (247).

⁸⁹ Johann David Passavant, *Rafael Von Urbino und Sein Vater Giovanni Santi: In Zwei Theilen mit vierzehn Abbildungen*, Leipzig: F. A. Brockhaus, 1839. Charles Lock Eastlake, review of J.D. Passavant, 'Rafael von Urbino und sein Vater Giovanni Santi', *Quarterly Review*, 66, June 1840, 1-48; it was reprinted in Eastlake, *Contributions*, chapter ix.

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The same spirit of accurate research, the same conscientious principle as to actual inspection, a still more practised eye, and a still more artist-like feeling, are united in Passavant with a more cautious indulgence of particular opinions and impressions. In philosophic criticism he is, perhaps, inferior to Rumohr; his laborious and well-arranged book might be rendered still more complete and accurate even in its facts, but on the whole it may safely be said that no production of the kind has approached it for copiousness and originality of information.⁹⁰

By the time of their correspondence, then, Passavant was, thanks to this monograph on Raphael, an acknowledged connoisseur of Italian painting and Eastlake was heading in that direction for he had produced an annotated edition in English of the part of Franz Kugler's *Handbuch der Geschichte der Malerei* (Berlin, 1837) which concerned the Italian schools.⁹¹ It was one of the numerous compendiums being produced from the 1830s (for instance, Karl Schnaase and Anton Springer also authored such handbooks)⁹² which attempted to understand art history not as an aggregate of separate details but as a coherent organic whole, and to reach a fuller understanding of the development of art by studying its history from its very origins.⁹³ Furthermore, Eastlake would have read – and endorsed – Kugler's belief that research was an ever-evolving and unfinished business. As Kugler on one occasion pithily put it: '[t]he interaction of forces creates much greater profit than if we try to accomplish things in splendid isolation; we are capable of reaching our goal only by mutual cooperation. The stone which we carry

⁹⁰ Eastlake, 'Rafael von Urbino', 2.

⁹¹ Franz Kugler, *Handbuch der Geschichte der Malerei von Constantin dem Großen bis auf die neuere Zeit*, Berlin: Duncker und Humblot, 1837. Eastlake's edition appeared as F.T. Kugler, *Handbook of the History of Painting: Part I: Italian Schools*, London: J. Murray, 1842. Lady Eastlake contributed significantly to later editions of Kugler's work; see esp. (1) F.T. Kugler, *Handbook of Painting in Italy, Part 1: Italian Schools, Translated by a Lady. Edited with notes, by Sir Charles L. Eastlake (...)* Second Edition, thoroughly revised with much additional material, 2 vols, London 1851, and (2) *Kugler's Handbook of Painting. The Italian Schools (...)* Edited, with notes, by Sir Charles L. Eastlake (...) New Edition. Fourth Edition. Revised and Remodelled from the latest researches, by Lady Eastlake, 2 parts, London 1874. On Kugler, see Michel Espagne, Bénédicte Savoy and Céline Trautmann-Waller, eds, *Franz Theodor Kugler. Deutscher Kunsthistoriker und Berliner Dichter*, Berlin: Akademie-Verl., 2010; Kilian Heck, 'Die Bezüglichkeit der Kunst zum Leben. Franz Kugler und das erste akademische Lehrprogramm der Kunstgeschichte', *Marburger Jahrbuch für Kunstwissenschaft*, 32, 2005, 7-16; Henrik Karge, 'Franz Kugler und Karl Schnaase – Zwei Projekte zur Etablierung der "Allgemeinen Kunstgeschichte"', in Espagne/Savoy/Trautmann-Waller, *Kugler*, 83-104.

⁹² In addition to his *Handbuch der Geschichte der Malerei* of 1837, there is his *Handbuch der Kunstgeschichte*, Stuttgart: Ebner & Seubert, 1842. Other such handbooks include: Karl Schnaase, *Geschichte der bildenden Künste bei den Alten*, Düsseldorf: Buddeus, 1843/44; and Anton Springer, *Handbuch der Kunstgeschichte: Zum Gebrauche für Künstler und Studierende und als Führer auf der Reise, mit einem Vorwort von Fr. Th. Vischer*, Stuttgart: Rieger, 1855.

⁹³ Locher, *Kunstgeschichte*, 212-42, esp. 231.

to the building is not the building itself.'⁹⁴ Eastlake's search to discover the origins of oil painting, seen through his preliminary exchange of correspondence with Passavant and followed up by his publication of 1847, may be usefully understood against a backdrop of increasing specialization and awareness of the provisionality of knowledge.

Materials was also an immediate response to the Fine Arts Commission's desire to promote best practice in fresco – and oil painting – among living British painters, partly through investigating what materials and methods had been employed at perceived high points in the past. While the situation in England in relation to Continental Europe was far less developed – the first chair in art history in the UK was established only in 1930, almost a century after the German ones noted above – there were initiatives to get historical documentation about artistic techniques circulated to a British readership, one such being the publications of the Fine Arts Commission. What is pertinent to record here is that the earliest related research in the UK was carried out by a handful of people, many of whom were known to Eastlake and who shared the same new methodological approach and who, consequently, were happy to exchange data with him. Interestingly, two of the most important were women – Maria Callcott and, as previously mentioned, Mary Merrifield.

Maria Callcott, who had been a close friend of Eastlake's in Rome, published *Essays Towards the History of Painting* as early as 1836.⁹⁵ It included a final substantial chapter concerned with the history of materials and from the notes it is clear that she had been in touch with scientific authorities, for instance, with Sir Humphrey Davy in the context of antique pigments, and had been thorough in her background reading, referring, among other texts, to the work by Baron Bartholdy, George Field, and Rudolf Raspe. *The Monthly Review* saw the section on historic techniques as the book's most important part, noting that this essay 'evinces unusual research and acquaintance with the subject,' revealing how 'minutely versed' Maria Callcott was 'in everything connected with the history of painting'. In the case of Mary Merrifield, she took her research even deeper, and her resulting publications were 'based on the meticulous transcription, translation and annotation of historical manuscripts and printed sources'.⁹⁶ Following on from her well-received translation

⁹⁴ The original quotation: 'Die Wechselwirkung der Kräfte schafft viel höheren Gewinn, als wenn wir in vornehmer Abgeschlossenheit über einer Vollendung brüten, der wir uns nur durch gemeinsame Thätigkeit anzunähern vermögen. Ist der Stein, den wir zum Baue tragen, doch nicht der Bau selbst!' in Kugler, *Handbuch der Kunstgeschichte*, preface, xii. See Meyer and Avery-Quash, 'Connecting links', forthcoming (footnote 1).

⁹⁵ Maria Callcott published a chapter entitled 'On the Materials Used by Painters' in her *Essays towards the History of Painting*, London: Edward Moxon, 1836.

⁹⁶ Zahira Véliz Bomford, 'The Art of Conservation XI: Mary Merrifield's Quest: A New Methodology for Technical Art History', *Burlington Magazine*, 159, June 2017, 465-75, here 465. See also Giovanni Mazzaferro's two-part exploration of 'Mary Philadelphia Merrifield in Italy' on his blog 'Letteratura artistica'. In private correspondence (15 July 2017), Giovanni Mazzaferro drew our attention to a letter from Merrifield to her husband, 2 June 1846, in which she lists a series of books, including on historic techniques, that she had sent from Milan to her home in Brighton. Most were going to be given to Eastlake and most remain in

into English in 1844 of Cennino Cennini's *Craftsman's Handbook* 1844, she went on to produce *The Art of Fresco Painting*, published in 1846, which she declared was a response to an article that had appeared in the *Art Union* of 1841 that had called for the production of English editions of standard works on Renaissance fresco-painting for use by those engaged in the Palace of Westminster mural project. She was keen to get at original documentation and then check it against existing secondary literature, believing that the earlier work of Raspe was at times 'very imperfect' and John Francis Rigaud's 'curious'.⁹⁷ The fact that she wrote to Sir Robert Peel to say that she considered Charles Eastlake and Robert Hendrie to be 'labouring in the same field' as herself indicates that she considered herself as far more than a translator and compiler, indeed as someone working at the 'coalface' as much as certain male peers, and thus as making a valuable contribution to the emerging field of the history of painting techniques. Eastlake refers to her endeavours in his preface to *Materials*, noting that a future publication by her will be 'of great assistance to the author, or to any other person better qualified for the task, in investigating the history of technical processes in Italy'.⁹⁸ This was a reference to Merrifield's *Original Treatises on the Arts of Painting*, which would be published in 1849, dedicated to Peel (as her book of 1846 had been and as Eastlake's *Materials* had been) with 'part of the expenses of publication defrayed by Government'. This two-volume publication is more ambitious than her previous work, given that it encompassed historic documentation concerning a wider geographical and historical span. While in a private letter to Peel she confirmed that 'the opinions I have expressed on this subject are entirely my own, and (...) have not been revised or corrected by any person', in the book's preface Merrifield did acknowledge the help of many people. The first and fullest acknowledgement went to Eastlake, whom she thanked for 'the great assistance' she had derived from his 1847 book as well as 'for the important assistance and encouragement he has so kindly and readily afforded me during the progress of this work'.⁹⁹

Eastlake's library. Mazzaferro will publish the complete series of Merrifield's letters, translated into Italian, in 2018 with Officina Libreria of Milan.

⁹⁷ Mrs Merrifield, *The Art of Fresco Painting as practised by the old Italian and Spanish masters, with a preliminary inquiry into the nature of the colours used in fresco painting, with observations and notes*, London: published for the author by Charles Gilpin and Arthur Wallis, 1846, xv (note) and xvii (note), respectively.

⁹⁸ Eastlake, *Materials*, ix. He also quotes from Cennini's *Tratatto*, noting that it had been 'translated into English, with notes, by Mrs. Merrifield, in 1844.' Eastlake, *Materials*, 8 (note).

⁹⁹ Zahira Bomford informed Susanna Avery-Quash (private correspondence, 3 April 2017) that in the East Sussex Record Office there are a number of letters, dating between Autumn 1845 and Summer 1846, between Mrs and Mr Merrifield and Eastlake on the topic of historical techniques in general and on Mrs Merrifield's mission in particular. The letters contain a few extracts copied by Mrs Merrifield from letters addressed to her by Eastlake in order to keep Mr Merrifield up to date with the rationale behind her research trips in Italy. One letter from Mr Merrifield to his wife in Bologna includes a quotation from a letter received from Eastlake, in which the latter praised what Mrs Merrifield had so far accomplished in the field. On Eastlake's approach which put him into a camp with Mary Merrifield but which separated him from the viewpoint of a number of his contemporaries,

Earlier in this article, we noted that while Eastlake's discussion of the documentary sources that he chose to use in relation to fifteenth-century painting is solid, he barely touched on English medieval painting and its related sources – due to his premise that they were not relevant because he considered that they did not relate to figurative painting. It is worth briefly returning to this matter again because this decision meant that Eastlake chose not to include the opinion of certain scholars in *Materials*. Given that he was, therefore, producing a version of the history of oil painting within a chosen 'camp' it is fitting that Eastlake called his book 'a' history. Such important questions as to what Eastlake's relationships were like with these other scholars who were also considering the history of oil painting deserves further attention. However, as already noted, part of the answer may lie in Eastlake's perception that his research, both in terms of subject matter and methodology, was heading in a different direction to their work. He was interested essentially in the pre-history of Continental Old Master paintings and getting at it through primary sources, an interest and approach doubtless linked to his position as keeper at the National Gallery and his work as Secretary of the Fine Arts Commission. He had less interest in matters that he perceived to be more aligned with national archaeology, architecture, antiquarian studies, and the decorative arts, which perhaps he saw more as the preserve of institutions such as the South Kensington Museum, the Archaeological Society and the Society of Antiquaries.¹⁰⁰

The reception of Eastlake's *Materials* and changes in writing about art in Britain

After *Materials* had been published, Passavant wrote a letter of congratulation to Eastlake, in which he praised the thoroughness of Eastlake's approach and the wealth of new material.¹⁰¹ He went on to review the book in the *Deutsches Kunstblatt* in 1850, where, again, he noted the 'abundance of thorough research' it contained, and praised the fact that Eastlake had transcribed and published countless manuscripts.¹⁰² Interestingly, Passavant enriched his review with even more details that he had uncovered in the intervening period (including, for instance, the results of some scientific analysis carried out on work in Frankfurt Cathedral) – in the same way that Eastlake had done in his review article of Passavant's *Raphael* book.¹⁰³

see Spring and Morrison, 'Van Eyck', esp. 196-9; and Nadolny, 'Scientific analyses', esp. 40, 43.

¹⁰⁰ Robertson, *Eastlake*, 70, notes that Eastlake 'apparently did not see himself as one of them. He resigned from the Committee of the Archaeological Society in 1844.

¹⁰¹ See letter from J.D. Passavant to C.L. Eastlake, 18 October 1847, National Art Library, Victoria & Albert Museum, MSL/1922/416/23, no pagination.

¹⁰² *Deutsches Kunstblatt*, 1, 7 January 1850, 4-5 (5), and *Deutsches Kunstblatt*, 2, 14 January 1850, 14-5.

¹⁰³ Interestingly, when the review was republished in Eastlake, *Contributions*, Eastlake wrote to Passavant, 22 February 1848, that he hoped his friend would not mind the fact that his few criticisms were being reprinted, explaining: 'A friend of mine has lately done me the honor to collect some small essays & treatises of mine in a volume. Among them is the review (printed in 1840 in the Quarterly Review) of your work. It was my wish to have omitted the

Occasionally Passavant disagreed with Eastlake, for instance he did not think that Eastlake was right to say that the van Eycks were influenced by glass painting nor did he concur with Eastlake's expectation that his book, by supplying old recipes, would have a positive effect on contemporary artistic practice.¹⁰⁴ In terms of foreign reception history, it should not be forgotten that *Materials* was later translated into Italian and German.¹⁰⁵

As for the native reaction, the English critic John Ruskin started the review of *Materials* which he wrote in a positive vein, opining that Eastlake had 'done his duty excellently' and had 'alike withdrawn licence from experimentalism and apology from indolence. He has done away with all legends of forgotten secrets.'¹⁰⁶ Yet, the main thrust of the review was negative. He doubted that such an erudite book would have any direct effect on improving contemporary artistic practice. But his criticism did not stop there. In fact, he bluntly dismissed the whole enterprise, saying that he could not 'conceive any questions less interesting than those relating to mechanical operations generally, nor any honours less worthy of prolonged dispute than those which are grounded merely on the invention or amelioration of processes and pigments' and concluded that because Eastlake had 'refused himself the indulgence of such speculation [regarding how methods related to larger questions of social history]; his book is no more than its modest title expresses'.¹⁰⁷ Clearly battle-lines on account of differing views of what constituted worthy subject matter and best scholarly practice were being drawn up; one should remember that at the time of Ruskin's review he was deeply engaged with writing his multi-volume *Modern Painters*, in which he was interested in promoting modern British artists, notably Turner and the Pre-Raphaelites rather than the Old Masters. Furthermore, whereas Eastlake, in his book, was indirectly promoting connoisseurial skills needed for attribution and provenance research, based on archival documentation and a close looking at the physical aspects of the painting to

critical observations, but I am assured that a work is more recommended by the sincerity of some slight criticism, together with general praise, than by an unvarying eulogy. I therefore allowed the article to be printed almost as it first appeared.' Eastlake added, 'You have probably enriched the French edition with new information & on this account I am very desirous of seeing it.' See letter from C.L. Eastlake to J.D. Passavant, 22 February 1848. University Library, Frankfurt am Main: Ms. Ff. J.D. Passavant A II e, Nr. 167, fol. 278v°.

¹⁰⁴ *Deutsches Kunstblatt*, 2, 14 January 1850, 15.

¹⁰⁵ Eastlake, *Contributions*, 183. The German edition came out in 1907: C.L. Eastlake, *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Ölmalerei. Hrsg. und übers. von Julius Hesse*, Vienna: Hartleben, 1907. In his preface, Julius Hesse added that sixty years after Eastlake's work had first appeared, although some details had been superseded by more recent scholarship, its findings as a whole were still valuable because they had been based on syllogisms rather than second-hand hypotheses (x).

¹⁰⁶ John Ruskin's review of *Materials* appeared in the *Quarterly Review*, 82, March 1848, 390-427 (392). Others who had been considered as possible reviewers were Francis Palgrave and William Dyce; see the letter from C.L. Eastlake to John Murray, 14 June 1847, noted in Robertson, *Eastlake*, 73.

¹⁰⁷ Ruskin, 'Materials', 394.

garner information about an artist's materials and technique, Ruskin was keener to guide the viewer's emotional response to a work of art.¹⁰⁸

Other reviewers had a different response than Ruskin's to Eastlake's book. Two others thought Eastlake had achieved a huge amount, not least through his innovative methodology. Sir Edmund Head in the *Edinburgh Review* in July 1847 used his (anonymous) review to praise the author's knowledge: 'It is seldom, indeed, that such qualifications for writing on the history of painting meet in the same person, or that practical excellence and ardent love for his own art are seconded, as in this case, by the capacity for acquiring knowledge, and communicating it in an agreeable form.'¹⁰⁹ Head was knowledgeable on the subject for he had been the editor of the German section of Kugler's *Handbook*, mentioned above.¹¹⁰ The reviewer in *Blackwood's Magazine*, John Eagles, for his part, suggested that the type of methodology that Eastlake was pursuing signalled the way forward for future scholarship. As Eagles put it, the pages of *Materials* 'contained deep research, accurate knowledge, and clearly set forth the principles upon which, as a foundation, true taste must rest.'¹¹¹ Eagles immediately got to the heart of the matter when he explained that Eastlake had endeavoured 'to search out and examine records with the greatest care, leaving as little to conjecture as possible.'¹¹² Even Ruskin noted that Eastlake had avoided speculation. Another common theme that the reviewers picked up on was the modesty of the title, if none directly discussed Eastlake's related leitmotif of provisionality.

Eastlake's method was regarded as novel; importantly too, it was seen as Germanic. Previously, as noted, Eastlake had translated, edited and critiqued the work of several German scholars, notably Kugler and Goethe, but in *Materials*, the first scholarly work under his own name, he aligned himself with current Germanic scholastic practice, putting into action the 'Berlin School' approach of Waagen *et al.* – an approach not dissimilar, at least in English eyes, to that being promoted in other German-speaking lands, including by the 'Vienna School'. This was alien to the traditional way of writing about art in Britain. This is why, even four years later, Anna Jameson in her introduction to Waagen's work on Rubens in 1841, for which

¹⁰⁸ Not surprisingly, in her review of Turner's *Modern Painters* in the *Quarterly Review*, 98, March 1856, 384-433, Lady Eastlake attacked the critic's methodology for all the reasons that it was dissimilar to her husband's Germanic empirical approach. She and Ruskin were engaged in a battle of art historical method, and she continued to promote the ideology of her camp through a number of obituaries, including the one she wrote about Morelli ('Giovanni Morelli: Patriot and Critic', *Quarterly Review*, 143, July 1891, 235-52) in which she defined the qualities she saw as necessary for an effective connoisseur: 'astuteness of the lawyer, diagnosis of the physician', 'research of the antiquarian historian and a lifetime of observation and comparison,' aided by an 'extraordinary memory and an exact eye'.

¹⁰⁹ Edmund Head's anonymous review was published in the *Edinburgh Review*, 86, July 1847, 188-214.

¹¹⁰ Franz Kugler, *Handbook of the History of Painting, Part II: German, Flemish, and Dutch Schools, Translated by a Lady* [Mrs Margaret Hutton] and edited by Sir Edmund Head, London: J. Murray, 1846.

¹¹¹ John Eagles's anonymous review was published in *Blackwood's Magazine* 62, September 1847, 301-11; cited in Robertson, *Eastlake*, 73.

¹¹² Eagles, 'Materials', 302.

she supplied the scholarly apparatus, could note: 'The English are not yet accustomed to the many-sided and elevated spirit in criticism with which the Germans have been long familiar', a type of art writing that she compared favourably in comparison with most art-writing in England, which she saw as 'shallow conventional verbiage'. When in the following decade Lady Eastlake reviewed Waagen's *Treasures of Art*, she would take the chance to summarize his methodology and praise it for its reliance on 'unwearied diligence and sound sense and on the slowly gathered and accumulated facts, each one resting securely on that beneath it'.¹¹³ For both women, Waagen epitomized enlightened art criticism, an opinion with which, as this article has demonstrated, Eastlake fully concurred. We have concentrated on Eastlake's friendship with Passavant, but if anything, over the years, Eastlake became closer to this other German colleague. Eastlake's association with Germanic art historical methods was not greeted universally with favour. If John Ruskin was wary, then others, notably J. Morris Moore, were openly hostile. At just the time that *Materials* was appearing, the National Gallery was acquiring Velazquez's painting of a *Boar Hunt* and was heavily criticized in certain quarters for doing so. In letters to *The Times* in December 1846 and January 1847, Morris Moore, who signed himself 'Verax', implied that the trustees had been tricked by a wily dealer into a rash and costly decision, the principal blame being placed on Eastlake, in his capacity as keeper: 'We are thus plundered through the notorious incapacity of Mr. Eastlake, whose only guides in estimating a picture are 'eminent German friends, German handbooks, German twaddle of every description, measurements of panels, exorbitant prices, and threats of exportation.'¹¹⁴ Others in Eastlake's circle were also regarded as Germanophiles, such as Anna Jameson, whose 'Germanism' was commented on as the leading characteristic of her scholarship by the writer of her obituary in the *Athenaeum* of 1860.

Thanks to the efforts of Eastlake and his circle, attitudes started to change in the UK and the 'Germanic' approach came to be accepted as an acknowledged methodology, and one that would be increasingly widely employed. This can be seen with the emergence in the 1860s of a class of professional art critics in the press, alongside the generalist critics who had previously dominated the field.¹¹⁵ It is seen even more clearly in the growth of specialist books by English art historians. Most relevant here are those texts which were published in English mid-century which dealt with early Northern art. Whereas previously there had been very few early works – John Thomas James's *The Flemish, Dutch and German Schools of Painting*, published by John Murray in 1822, being a very rare exception – the field started to mushroom, in part because of the important value now being placed on the developments of the oil painting technique of the fifteenth-century Netherlandish school. Individual monographs appeared on leading early Northern painters during the 1860s, notably W.H. James Weale's work on Hans Memling, Ralph Nicholson

¹¹³ Lady Eastlake's anonymous review of Waagen's *Treasures of Art* appeared in the *Quarterly Review*, 94, March 1854, 467-508.

¹¹⁴ Verax in *The Times*, 30 December 1846. His other letters published in *The Times* in 1846-7 were republished in a pamphlet entitled *The Abuses of the National Gallery* in 1847.

¹¹⁵ Elizabeth Prettejohn, 'Aesthetic Value and the Professionalization of Victorian Art Criticism, 1837-78', *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 2:1, 1997, 71-94.

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Wornum's work on Hans Holbein, and William Bell Scott and Mrs Charles Heaton's on Albrecht Dürer.¹¹⁶ At the same time that such monographs on better-known painters were appearing, there were scholars who sought to contextualize these big names within a broader landscape. In English the earliest and hugely important scholarly survey was written by Joseph Crowe and Giovanni Cavalcaselle, who would become better known later for a similar type of work in relation to the Italian school. Their *Early Flemish Painters* was published in 1857, and it set the benchmark for other surveys which followed.¹¹⁷ Such works were influenced by, and in turn influenced, the content of paintings catalogues which were starting to be produced for national survey collections, not least by Passavant at the Städel, Frankfurt and by Eastlake at London's National Gallery, with assistance from the artist, art writer and administrator, Wornum, who was the Gallery's keeper from 1855 until his death in 1877. Indeed it was under both men that new style catalogues were pioneered in their respective institutions.

The effect of Eastlake and Passavant's ideas on museum acquisitions and catalogues

As noted earlier, in 1847, when Eastlake was corresponding with Passavant and *Materials* was published, Eastlake was keeper at the National Gallery. The institution was still in its infancy. It had only opened to the public in 1828 and subsequently had been based in temporary accommodation as Lord Liverpool's government, at the same time as purchasing thirty eight paintings from the collection of the late John Julius Angerstein to form the nucleus of the national collection, made the snap decision to buy the lease on his London town house, No. 100, Pall Mall. It was only in 1838 that the paintings moved to William Wilkins' purpose-built art gallery on Trafalgar Square. Despite a new home, the way the Gallery was managed did not radically change. There was still no acquisition budget which meant that the board, consisting largely of aristocratic conservative trustees, was heavily reliant on gifts and bequests, with the result that the Gallery's collection grew only in particular areas reflective of the Grand Manner taste of the day (in line with Angerstein's tastes too) – largely sixteenth-century Italian and seventeenth-century French art. Certain voices began to question the future direction of the Gallery and a Select Committee of 1835 first posited the idea that the National Gallery should follow the model of certain Continental art galleries like the Berlin Royal Gallery and move away from being a repository of already-acknowledged masterpieces to become a survey collection able to demonstrate the development of Western painting from its origins. Although nothing happened immediately as a result of the recommendations of the committee's report, certain

¹¹⁶ W.H. James Weale, *Hans Memlinc*, 1865; R.N. Wornum, *Some Account of the Life and Works of Hans Holbein*, 1867; *Hans Holbein and the Meyer Madonna*, 1871; William Bell Scott, *Albert Durer: His life and Works*, 1869; Mrs Charles Heaton, *Masterpieces of Flemish Art*, 1869; *The History and Life of Albrecht Dürer*, 1870; 2nd edn, 1881.

¹¹⁷ For instance, F.G. Stephens, *Flemish Relics: Architectural, Legendary, and Pictorial, as connected with public buildings in Belgium*, London: A.W. Bennett, 1866.

people continued to press for change. One of these was Eastlake who, a decade later, in 1845 (one year into his keepership), wrote an open letter to Sir Robert Peel in which he highlighted areas where the Gallery needed improving, and who later, in 1853, during his time as a trustee, was a key witness at a Select Committee set up to discuss (again) the future direction of the Gallery. As a result of this particular committee's findings, published in 1855, the Gallery was actually reconstituted in July 1855, an action which saw Eastlake appointed its first director with an annual purchase grant established and the designated task of plugging the gaps in the collection. In the first instance, priority was given to early Italian and Netherlandish art because these areas were identified as the most important in relation to the history of art's technical development in fresco and oil painting, respectively.¹¹⁸

In relation to early northern art, the National Gallery had much work to do as it had hitherto shown a decided lack of interest in it. When two pioneering private collections of such art were offered for the national collection, the trustees had responded negatively in both instances. Carl Aders, whose rejected collection contained works by van der Weyden, Memling, Bouts and David – although most of them were called 'van Eyck' or 'Memling' in keeping with the state of knowledge at that time on the subject – as well as a copy of the *Ghent Altarpiece* (and from whom Passavant bought his Petrus Christus painting discussed above), summed up the situation in 1832 when he noted:

As neither the National Gallery, nor any of the Public Institutions, contain specimens of the celebrated masterpieces of the old German and Flemish painters; private collections but few, and those frequently under the wrong names; this School is comparatively little understood in England, its history and importance but partially known, and the eye unaccustomed to them.¹¹⁹

This set of circumstances dictated the equally negative response to the Oettingen-Wallerstein collection of early Italian and Northern pictures, which was built up in the first decades of the nineteenth century by a cousin of Prince Albert.¹²⁰ Having sold some pictures in 1828 to Ludwig I, financial difficulties in 1847 led Oettingen-Wallerstein to exhibit the rest for sale at Kensington Palace in London. Although the National Gallery declined to act to secure them on more than one occasion,¹²¹ what is relevant here is the little-known fact that Eastlake saw and admired the collection, and got in touch with Passavant about it in February 1848, asking: 'Do you know anything of this collection & what is supposed to be its value in Germany? Out of about 70 pictures I reckoned nearly 30 that were interesting &

¹¹⁸ See Avery-Quash and Sheldon, *Art for the Nation*, 134-61.

¹¹⁹ *Catalogue of the Very Splendid Collection, Dutch, Italian, Ancient German and Flemish Pictures. For Sale by Private Contract*, undated, 21.

¹²⁰ For the Oettingen-Wallerstein collection, see Robertson, *Eastlake*, 124, 220 and Appendix C5; Campbell, *Netherlandish Paintings*, 14.

¹²¹ See Campbell, *Netherlandish Paintings*, 14. Prince Albert's involvement led to the accusation that 'the Prince was forcing the nation to buy the possessions of his German relatives'; see Gerald Reitlinger, *The Economics of Taste*, London: Barrie and Rockliff, 1961, I,125.

some few of the highest merit – the rest are not important. They are, as you no doubt know, chiefly of the early German & Flemish school.¹²² Even though Eastlake expressed interest in some of the collection, he was not then in a position to influence the decision of the Gallery's trustees, given that he had resigned from his post as keeper the year before. It would be interesting to know which paintings Eastlake regarded as eligible;¹²³ presumably there was significant overlap with the twenty-five paintings, including works by Memling and the workshop of Dirk Bouts, which the Gallery selected in 1863 (during Eastlake's directorship) on the back of Queen Victoria's offer of the entire Oettingen-Wallerstein collection to honour the wishes of her late husband, the paintings' last owner.¹²⁴

Once Eastlake had become director with an annual purchase grant and executive power to make decisions over Gallery purchases, he was in a strong position to broaden the Gallery's holdings. Although he is best remembered for his efforts in relation to the Italian schools, during his directorship some progress was made in relation to early northern art. While Eastlake showed some private enthusiasm for early German art and owned examples of such art himself,¹²⁵ in his official capacity he did not rate the German school particularly highly, considering that it had nothing novel to offer in terms of the history of technique to match Italian tempera or Netherlandish oil painting and offered nothing to artists in the way of recognized models of beauty to emulate, the latter a major objective for European art galleries of the day.¹²⁶ The fact that he did not acquire much early German art may also have been because he felt he lacked relevant expertise to make good acquisitions (his acknowledged expertise was in Italian art),¹²⁷ or that the Gallery already had sufficient holdings, given the purchase in 1854 of the Krüger collection of sixty-four early German paintings.¹²⁸ Nonetheless Eastlake did make some

¹²² Letter from C.L. Eastlake to J.D. Passavant, 22 February 1848, University Library, Frankfurt am Main: Ms. Ff. J.D. Passavant A II e, Nr. 167, fol. 279r°.

¹²³ Eastlake owned Ludwig Gruner's *Descriptive Catalogue of a Collection of Ancient Greek, Italian, German, Flemish and Dutch Pictures now at Kensington Palace*, London: Bradbury and Evans, 1848. In his copy, preserved in the National Gallery library, there are no annotations to indicate which pictures particularly interested him.

¹²⁴ On the Oettingen-Wallerstein gift, including a list of its early Northern pictures, see Robertson, *Eastlake*, 220.

¹²⁵ Eastlake owned examples of early German and Netherlandish art. See Susanna Avery-Quash, "'A gallery of Art": Fresh Light on the Art Collection of Sir Charles Eastlake (1793-1865)', *British Art Journal*, 15:3, 2015, 11-37. For Eastlake's study trips round Germany and the Low Countries in 1828, 1852 and 1863-4, see Robertson, *Eastlake*, 31-3, 129, 225.

¹²⁶ See Meyer, *Geburt*, 97, 136; and Jeanne Nuechterlein, 'German Renaissance Art through the Eyes of the National Gallery', *Burlington Magazine*, 156, February 2014, 76-84.

¹²⁷ In 1845, the Gallery purchased for £630 a portrait of a man supposedly by Holbein (NG195). It was rapidly 'downgraded' to 'German School'; today it is catalogued as by Michiel Coxcie. The episode was embarrassing for Eastlake and the painting became known as 'The Bad Holbein'. See Robertson, *Eastlake*, 84-7.

¹²⁸ On the Krüger collection (purchased on the recommendation of the Prime Minister William Gladstone, of which Eastlake, once he became director, retained only seventeen pictures), see Michael Levey, 'The Krüger Collection', *National Gallery Catalogues: The German School*, London: National Gallery, 1959, Appendix II, 112-4; and Nicola Sinclair, 'Nineteenth-

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strategic purchases as in 1854 – during his time as a trustee in fact – when at the Joly de Bammerville sale he bought what he thought was a Dürer,¹²⁹ and in 1862 when for two pictures at the Weyer sale in Cologne he was prepared to 'go to the utmost limit', one being *Saint Veronica with the Sudarium*, which he described as 'a good specimen of the early Cologne School'.¹³⁰



Figure 7 Jan van Eyck, *Portrait of a Man (Self Portrait?)*, 1433. Oil on oak, 26 x 19 cm. London: National Gallery, NG222. © National Gallery, London

In relation to Netherlandish painting,¹³¹ Eastlake played a more notable role in building on the Gallery's earlier acquisition of Jan van Eyck's *Arnolfini Portrait*.¹³² As the Gallery's first ever 'Primitive', put on display in March 1843, van Eyck's double portrait provoked much curiosity, mainly because of its minute manner of execution, remarkable state of preservation and ambiguous subject which prompted various theories. Building on the interest in van Eyck's work, Eastlake acquired two more portraits by the artist: one of an elderly man wearing a red turban bought from Lord Middleton's sale at Peper Harow Park in 1851 – again during his time as a Gallery trustee – which, carrying the artist's personal motto on its frame, is now

century British Perspectives on Early German Paintings: The Case of the Krüger Collection at the National Gallery and Beyond', unpublished PhD dissertation, University of York, 2016.

¹²⁹ Hans Baldung Grien, *Portrait of a Man* (NG245). In Passavant's day, the painting bore a Dürer monogram.

¹³⁰ Letter from C.L. Eastlake to R.N. Wornum, 20 August 1862, National Gallery Archive, NG5/142/9, regarding Master of Saint Veronica, *Saint Veronica with the Sudarium* (NG687).

¹³¹ See Till-Holger Borchert, 'Collecting Early Netherlandish Paintings in Europe and the US', in Bernard Ridderbos, Anne van Buren and Henk van Veen, *Early Netherlandish Paintings: Rediscovery, Reception and Research*, Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2005, 173-216; Campbell, *Netherlandish Paintings*, 12-7.

¹³² Jan van Eyck, *Arnolfini Portrait* (NG186); see Campbell, *Netherlandish Paintings*, 174-211; Graham, *Inventing Van Eyck*, 91-112.

considered a possible self-portrait (Fig. 7); the other of a young man bought in Munich in 1857.¹³³ Eastlake discussed the supposed self-portrait with Passavant. From a letter to his German colleague of August 1851, it is clear that Eastlake was pleased with the quality of the work and with the fact that it had been acquired for a public gallery where it would be on permanent display:

Dr Waagen, Mr Mündler & others have pronounced this to be a very choice specimen of the master. Here, then, is another Van Eyck hitherto unknown, rescued from obscurity & now preserved where it will always be open to inspection. It will soon be enclosed in a case with glass before it to exclude the dust which accumulates daily in our now over-thronged National Gallery.¹³⁴

In line with the Gallery's new educational remit noted at the start of this section, and in part a pragmatic response to the lack of works by the most esteemed masters on the market, the Gallery became interested in acquiring pictures which could contextualize masterpieces like those by van Eyck, by showing artistic networks and schools. This explains many of Eastlake's other purchases, for instance, his acquisition in 1860-1 of what he thought were three works by Rogier van der Weyden, including *The Entombment*, which although attributed to Lucas van Leyden by its Milanese owners, Eastlake found eligible on account of its being, in his opinion, a specimen by Rogier van der Weyden and moreover 'worthy of the reputation of this principal scholar of John van Eyck'.¹³⁵ Interestingly, a work by Rogier van der Weyden and his workshop – *The Exhumation of Saint Hubert* – which was acquired by the Gallery in 1868, had been previously owned by Eastlake, who had been keen to secure it for, according to Lady Eastlake, he had paid the dealer John Smith '£100 in money & 20 choice Italian sketches in oil for it' (Fig. 8).¹³⁶ It was also during Eastlake's directorship that the first Memlings entered the national collection, an artist whose importance in the history of art stemmed from the belief that he was strongly influenced by Rogier van der Weyden. Eastlake had pointed

¹³³ Jan van Eyck, *Portrait of a Man (Self Portrait?)* (NG222); see Campbell, *Netherlandish Paintings*, 212-7. Jan van Eyck, *Portrait of a Man ('Léal Souvenir')* (NG290); see Campbell, *Netherlandish Paintings*, 218-34.

¹³⁴ Letter from C.L. Eastlake to J.D. Passavant, 21 August 1851, University Library, Frankfurt am Main: Ms. Ff. J.D. Passavant A II e, Nr. 170, fol. 284v°.

¹³⁵ Dirk Bouts, *The Entombment* (NG664); see Campbell, *Netherlandish Paintings*, 38-45. The quotation is from Robertson, *Eastlake*, 313, who suggests Eastlake's attribution was very much along the right lines: 'In cataloguing it as a Bouts, Martin Davies (1945) pointed out that "Bouts reflects strongly the style of Rogier van der Weyden"'. The other 'Rogier van der Weydens' purchased by Eastlake around this time were: Robert Campin, *A Man and A Woman* (NG654.1-2), purchased 1860; Rogier van der Weyden, *The Magdalen Reading* (NG654), purchased 1860; Follower of Jan van Eyck, *Portrait of Marco Barbarico* (NG696); purchased 1862.

¹³⁶ Rogier van der Weyden and workshop, *The Exhumation of Saint Hubert* (NG783); see Campbell, *Netherlandish Paintings*, 407-27.



Figure 8 Rogier van der Weyden and workshop, *The Exhumation of Saint Hubert*, late 1430s. Oil with egg tempera on oak, 88.2 x 81.2 cm. London: National Gallery, NG783. © National Gallery, London



Figure 9 Hans Memling, *The Virgin and Child with an Angel, Saint George and a Donor*, c.1480. Oil on oak, 54.2 x 37.4 cm. London: National Gallery, NG686. © National Gallery, London

out as much in a note in *Materials*, where he sought to trace the pupils of the van Eycks, adding to Vasari's remark about Rogier van der Weyden being an important pupil of Jan van Eyck, that van der Weyden had communicated the technique, in turn, to Hans Memling, as well as the fact that previously Hubert 'must have communicated the process freely to his scholars (...) Peter Christophsen, Gerard van der Meire, and probably Justus van Ghent'.¹³⁷ Memling's *Virgin and Child with an Angel, Saint George and a Donor* was purchased at Cologne in 1862 (Fig. 9), the

¹³⁷ Eastlake, *Materials*, 206-7, note.

following year a second Memling *Virgin and Child* was acquired with Queen Victoria's gift mentioned earlier,¹³⁸ while in 1865 Eastlake acquired wings from an altarpiece depicting Saint John the Baptist and Saint Lawrence that he believed were by the master.¹³⁹ Through texts like *Materials* and the National Gallery's paintings catalogues and through an increasingly rich collection of early oil paintings from the Netherlands, Germany and Italy, Eastlake was able to dispel another Vasarian myth. Whereas Vasari had stated that van Eyck's method had been sought for by 'the painters of the world', and that, once found had been 'every where [*sic*] permanently adopted', Eastlake was able to demonstrate that things had not been as simple or definitive as Vasari had made out. He was able to argue, instead, that the adoption of oil painting had happened over time and had not been universally adopted in the exactly same way.¹⁴⁰

What Eastlake was doing in London mirrored activity that had already taken place elsewhere in European museums, especially in Germany. For instance, after the Prussian royal collection had been transferred to the new Gemäldegalerie in Berlin in 1830, Waagen, as its first director, systematically acquired examples of early art that enhanced those already in the collection as a result of the purchase of the Solly collection in 1821 which included many important early Netherlandish pictures, not least the wing-panels of the *Ghent Altarpiece* and Petrus Christus's *Portrait of a Young Woman*.¹⁴¹ Albeit on a smaller scale, Passavant likewise strove to build up the Frankfurt museum's collection both before and after he became director, especially during the 1840s and 1850s.¹⁴² What is worth noting in the current context – and something that distinguishes Passavant's interests in early Northern art from Eastlake's and aligns it with a then quite widespread proto-nationalistic approach – is Passavant's interest in early German painters, and his related desire seemingly to find evidence of a German school which had been at

¹³⁸ Hans Memling, *The Virgin and Child with an Angel, Saint George and a Donor* (NG686); see Campbell, *Netherlandish Paintings*, 354-8. Memling, *Virgin and Child* (NG709); see Campbell, *Netherlandish Paintings*, 359-61.

¹³⁹ Hans Memling, *Two Panels from a Triptych* (NG474.1-2); see Campbell, *Netherlandish Paintings*, 362-9.

¹⁴⁰ Eastlake, *Materials*, 200-1. He noted (201): 'The incongruities in his [Vasari's] statement arise, in a great measure, from this cause. Long before he visited Venice, perhaps even before Antonello had ceased to exist, the great artists who founded the Venetian school had taken the system of oil painting into their own hands, and had modified it considerably. The same degree of change, though of a different kind, had taken place in Florence and in Milan. It is indeed apparent from Vasari's narrative, that he is as it were unconsciously, describing a method different from any commonly practiced in Italy in his time. His occasional attempts to reconcile this contradiction are the chief causes of the ambiguities referred to.'

¹⁴¹ Kemperdick, *Die Geschichte des Genter Altars*, 64. On the Solly collection, see Robert Skwirblies, 'Ein Nationalgut, auf das jeder Einwohner stolz sein dürfte. Die Sammlung Solly als Grundlage der Berliner Gemäldegalerie', *Jahrbuch der Berliner Museen*, 52, 2009, 69-99.

¹⁴² Jochen Sander, "'(...) um für eine der ausgezeichnetesten Sammlungen der altdeutschen Schule zu gelten": Johann David Passavant als Berater und Kunstagent des Städelchen Kunstinstituts beim Erwerb altniederländischer Gemälde vor seiner Berufung zum Städel-Inspektor im Jahre 1840', in Klaus Gallwitz und Jochen Sander, *Niederländische Gemälde im Städel 1400-1550*, 2nd edn, Mainz: von Zabern, 2002, 17-25.

least as significant for the early history of oil painting as the early Netherlandish school. This motivation helps to explain Passavant's particular interest in positioning Stephan Lochner and Israhel van Meckenem (then associated with the painter now known as the Master of the Life of the Virgin) within the German school as well as his great enthusiasm for the Master of Liesborn, an artist who was influenced by the style of nearby Cologne, whose work he compared to van Eyck.¹⁴³

The changing attitudes towards early Northern art can be seen in the response that Passavant got when he offered his Petrus Christus' *Madonna* to the Städelsches Kunstinstitut on two separate occasions. His first approach was in 1834, when he offered the work as a 'painting undoubtedly by Johann van Eyck' – the attribution resting on apparent similarities that the work shared with van Eyck's *Bruges Madonna* – together with a painting by Hubert van Eyck of *The Head of Saint John the Baptist* for 3.500 fl (guilders).¹⁴⁴ He thought both works eligible for the collection on account of their beauty and rarity and for their potential as keystones in any historical display of early Northern art which started with the van Eyck school – noting that even the esteemed Boisserée collection could not boast such specimens.¹⁴⁵ The official response came back quickly and negatively.¹⁴⁶ A dozen years later circumstances had changed, tastes had moved on and notions about what type of art a public gallery should contain had also been discussed at the Institute over the intervening decades, all of which might have led to the positive outcome: Passavant was now director and he offered to give the *Madonna*, now reattributed to Petrus Christus, as he was keen to have in Frankfurt an early picture that could demonstrate the origins of oil painting.¹⁴⁷ In 1846 the director's gift of a

¹⁴³ We are grateful to Susan Foister for discussing Passavant's interest in early German art with us. See Nadolny, 'A Problem of Methodology', 1030, and Nadolny, 'Scientific analyses', 40, who notes that in Eastlake's case, he mentioned only a little bit of the work relating to accounts of early oil painting in Westminster Abbey and Ely Cathedral and interpreted it in a different way to others, as well as not quoting some of it at all or the related experiments.

¹⁴⁴ Letter from J.D. Passavant to the Städel's administration, 9 September 1834, without foliation, Städel Museum Archive, Karton P, Faszikel P.17.b. Sander, 'Ausgezeichnetesten Sammlungen', 1993, 18, 21-2 (and footnote 20), 158; transcription of Passavant's letter, 21-4. According to Lorne Campbell (private correspondence with the authors, 16 January 2018): 'Passavant's *Head of Saint John the Baptist* is a mystery: it came from the Aders collection and Passavant bequeathed it to the Städel. According to Jochen Sander's catalogue, it was sold in Paris during the 1880s and can't be identified. It was probably from the workshop of Albrecht Bouts.'

¹⁴⁵ Letter from J.D. Passavant to the Städel's administration, 9 September 1834, without foliation, Städel Museum Archive, Karton P, Faszikel P.17.b; Sander, 'Ausgezeichnetesten Sammlungen', 1993, transcription of Passavant's letter, 21-4, here 22.

¹⁴⁶ Letter from the Städel's administration to J.D. Passavant, 12 September 1834, without foliation, Städel Museum Archive, Karton P, Faszikel P.17.b; Sander, 'Ausgezeichnetesten Sammlungen', 1993, transcription of the Administration's letter, 25.

¹⁴⁷ Also mentioned in the museum catalogue, Johann David Passavant, *Eine Wanderung durch die Gemaelde-Sammlung des Städel'schen Kunstinstituts*, Frankfurt am Main: Heinrich Keller, 1855, 12.

well-researched important early Northern painting – indeed, one with iconic status in the history of artistic technique – was accepted.¹⁴⁸

During Passavant's directorship, in addition to contemporary works by the Nazarenes and some Old Masters including a number of Dutch Golden Age paintings,¹⁴⁹ the Städel acquired a number of important examples of the early Northern school.¹⁵⁰ Some could have been chosen because they were by esteemed painters (e.g., Dürer),¹⁵¹ others perhaps because they helped contextualize those masters among their own teachers, contemporaries and followers. For instance, Passavant acquired a work by Dürer's pupil, Barthel Beham,¹⁵² as well as 'The Flémalle panels' by the Master of Flémalle.¹⁵³ The undoubted 'jewel in the crown' was an acquisition made at the Willem II sale in The Hague in 1850 – where Passavant and one of the Städel administrators, Heinrich Anton Cornill d'Orville, bid in person for several 'outstanding works of art' for the Städel.¹⁵⁴ Realizing the stiff competition – and greater finances – they would encounter from collectors in London, Paris and St Petersburg, they focused their efforts on securing works 'with a low estimate', which included paintings by 'old German and Italian masters'.¹⁵⁵ They were particularly keen to purchase two paintings by Jan van Eyck, and succeeded in acquiring his *Lucca Madonna*, which is still in the Städel Museum, after the other one, an *Annunciation*, was lost to a competitor from St Petersburg (today at the National Gallery in Washington).¹⁵⁶

In line with the new museological practice of acquiring paintings that could form part of a historical survey collection, was the desire to hang them by date and

¹⁴⁸ Petrus Christus, *The Virgin enthroned with Christ and Saints Jerome and Francis*, gift from Passavant in 1846 (Städel Museum, inv. no. 920); on the painting, see Sander, *Niederländische Gemälde*, 18, 21-5, 154-74.

¹⁴⁹ For instance, a Jan Steen was acquired in 1842 (inv. no. 898, Städel); two Rembrandts were acquired in 1844 and 1847 (inv. nos. 912 and 927, respectively; the first still at the Städel, the latter sold in 1882); a Ferdinand Bol in 185 (inv. no. 918, Städel); a Frans van Mieris in 1844 (inv. no. 914, sold in 1882); a David Teniers the Younger in 1847 (inv. no. 928, sold in 1882).

¹⁵⁰ Corina Meyer is undertaking a research project to examine Passavant's acquisitions during his directorship at the Städel.

¹⁵¹ Dürer, *Portrait of a Young Woman with Loose Hair*, acquired 1849 (inv. no. 937, Städel).

¹⁵² Barthel Beham, *Portrait of Hans Urmiller with his Son*, acquired 1846 (inv. no. 919, Städel).

¹⁵³ Master of Flémalle (artists working in the Tournai workshop of Robert Campin, among them the young Rogier van der Weyden): "The Flémalle panels", acquired in 1849, containing (1) *Virgin and Child*, (inv. no. 939); (2) *Saint Veronika* (inv. no. 939A); and (3) *The Mercy Seat* (inv. no. 939B). All three paintings remain in the collection of the Städel Museum. See Stephan Kemperdick and Jochen Sander, eds, *Der Meister von Flémalle und Rogier van der Weyden*, exh. cat. (Städel Museum, Frankfurt; Gemäldegalerie Berlin), Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2008.

¹⁵⁴ Jochen Sander, 'The acquisition of paintings and drawings at the Willem II auction by the Städel Kunstinstitut, Frankfurt', *Simiolus*, 19, 1989, 123-35 (124); see also Sonnabend, 'Raffael, Passavant', 57-75; esp. 68-71.

¹⁵⁵ Sander, 'Acquisition of paintings', 125.

¹⁵⁶ Sander, 'Acquisition of paintings', 125; see also

<https://nga.gov/content/ngaweb/Collection/art-object-page.46.html#provenance> (accessed: 10 August, 2017). On the Lucca-Madonna, see Sander, *Niederländische Gemälde*, 244-63.

school rather than in what has become known as an aesthetic hang, following the art theory of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which had been fashionable hitherto. Northern European museums set the trend in this regard, one of the first to do things differently being the Belvedere, Vienna, where the curator, Christian von Mechel, as early as the 1780s, displayed the pictures 'so that the arrangement as a "whole, together with its parts, might be instructive and, as far as is possible, a visible history of art"'.¹⁵⁷ Such ideas were adopted by Passavant during his directorship of the Städel, as is seen by the new style guide, *Eine Wanderung durch die Gemaelde-Sammlung des Städel'schen Kunstinstituts*, that appeared in 1855.¹⁵⁸ Whereas the earlier guidebook of 1844 had followed the order of the room, giving the artist's name and the title of the work and then a description, here, for the first time, the order of the paintings followed historical and geographical lines, so that artists and their works were pinned down within particular schools. Within the information, it is filiations and networks that are highlighted. Thus, in the early Netherlandish section, Passavant contextualizes Jan van Eyck by putting his contemporaries and his brother back into the frame: Stephan Lochner's work is mentioned before Jan van Eyck's which clearly indicates that Jan van Eyck could not claim precedence; and in relation to the Peter Christus, Passavant highlights the painting's links to Hubert van Eyck by stating: 'The picture shows how the technique was used in Hubert van Eyck's school seven years after he had invented oil painting (in 1410)'.¹⁵⁹ Another chapter concerned 'the German school under van Eyck's influence', which included mention of artists, such as Martin Schongauer, discussed in Passavant's letter to Eastlake of 29 April 1846,¹⁶⁰ while a later chapter focused on German sixteenth-century art.

Developments relating to a systematic historic arrangement of the collection were slower to manifest themselves in London due to a chronic shortage of space but there is evidence that Eastlake made some trial attempts in this direction, fully on paper and partially in certain galleries at certain moments.¹⁶¹ Where he got his full range of ideas regarding schools and affiliations across most effectively in the first instance was in the new style National Gallery catalogue, the first of which was published in 1847, having been commissioned by the trustees from Wornum and 'revised' by Eastlake, in his capacity as keeper (Fig. 10). If we compare the information contained in *Descriptive and Historical Catalogue of the Pictures in the National Gallery* with that conveyed in the pages of *Materials*, we can see similarities

¹⁵⁷ Christian von Mechel, *Verzeichniss der Gemälde der Kaiserlich Königlichen Bilder Gallerie in Wien*, Vienna: Christian von Mechel, 1783, xi; quoted and translated by Rampley, *Vienna School*, 10.

¹⁵⁸ Passavant, *Eine Wanderung*. Eastlake's library did not contain this guide, but rather two editions of the official guide: *Verzeichniss der öffentlich ausgestellten Kunst-Gegenstände des Städel'schen Kunst-Instituts (zu Frankfurt a/M.)*, von J. D. Passavant, Frankfurt a/M., 1844 and 1858.

¹⁵⁹ Passavant, *Eine Wanderung*, 12.

¹⁶⁰ Passavant, *Eine Wanderung*, 14-5.

¹⁶¹ Charles Locke Eastlake, 'Picture Hanging at the National Gallery', *Nineteenth Century*, 33, June 1893, 981-93. The author was the nephew of Sir Charles Eastlake, who served as keeper at the National Gallery from 1878 to 1898.

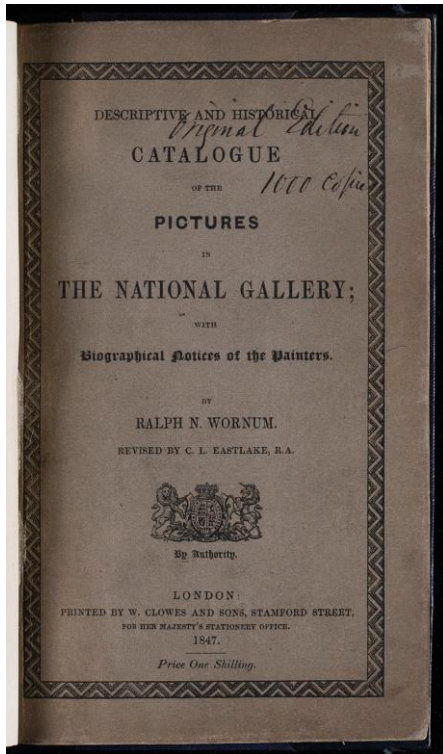


Figure 10 Title page of Ralph Nicholson Wornum, *Descriptive and Historical Catalogue of the Pictures in the National Gallery; with Biographical Notices of the Painters*. Revised by C.L. Eastlake, R.A. London: H.M.S.O., 1847. London: National Gallery Library, 109738. © National Gallery, London

between both these publications of 1847. Most importantly, the very concept of the catalogue is based on schools, a concept defined, in the 'Notice' at the start of it, in its various permutations from its broadest definition (in terms of 'country', and then 'particular locality') to the narrowest definition (in terms of scholars associated with 'the distinctive style of a particular master').¹⁶² The notice is followed by a 'Tabulation of Schools', where core information is supplied regarding the name of the school, the date of its foundation and then, by century, the names of artists represented in the National Gallery's collection whose work fell in that timeframe. Thus the Flemish School is noted in the pioneering 1847 catalogue as 'Established in the fourteenth century' and one early master is noted under the subheading, 'The fifteenth century': Jan van Eyck. With the expansion of the collection over time, the table becomes ever more richly populated; for instance, in the 1854 catalogue, 'G. Van der Meire' makes his appearance. Within the main body of the catalogue which is arranged alphabetically, a short biographical description of each painter precedes a notice about individual paintings by them in the national collection. Interestingly, what is stressed in these deliberately concise biographies is the relationship between painters, most often in terms of who taught who. Thus Van der Meire, having been introduced to the reader as an early Flemish painter 'of very great ability', is described in relation to the van Eycks: he is 'the scholar of Hubert Van Eyck', and 'is considered to approach nearer to the execution of the van Eycks' than any of Hubert's other pupils. Similar rules apply to the presentation of material about the German School. For instance, when the first early German painting was accessioned into the collection, the artist, the Meister of Liesborn, is described first as an

¹⁶² R.N. Wornum, revised by C.L. Eastlake, *Descriptive and Historical Catalogue of the Pictures in the National Gallery*, London: HMSO, 1847, 11.

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'unknown painter of Westphalia who executed some considerable works, about the year 1465' but as a result of placing him in relation to a fixed point – the van Eycks – he is, in the following sentence, announced as 'the chief or *caposcuola* of the Westphalian school of German painting, and one of the principal German artists of the 15th century. The school is evidently allied to that of the Van Eycks, and to the school of Cologne.' A second way in which the catalogue reflects Eastlake's new methodology is in its citation of relevant sources, whether that is other examples of paintings by the artist under review, primary documentation or secondary sources, information that was placed either in the main body of text or in one of the numerous footnotes.

The 1847 catalogue was reviewed positively in leading art journals, the critics dwelling on the advantages of contextualisation of one kind or another. For instance, the *Athenaeum* reviewer thought the chronological table of schools of painting could serve as a 'good guide to those who have had but little leisure or disposition to consider a picture otherwise than *per se* – as a part of a great chapter in the history and civilisation of man.' The critic went on to note, perceptively, that the list could act as the basis for a desiderata list through 'demonstrating where the Gallery is deficient of such as are necessary to form connecting links towards forming a complete chronology of Art.'¹⁶³ Indeed Eastlake, with Wornum's help, did go on to compile such lists. The reviewers also picked up on the new style of writing of the catalogue and its fact-based approach. In the *Art Union's* opinion the refraining from entering into criticism made the book 'acceptable to all, by omitting matter which would render it amenable to cavil or dispute.' Noting the 'careful revisions of Mr. Eastlake', the reviewer finished his review by opining that Eastlake 'could scarcely have bequeathed, on his retirement from the office of keeper of the National Gallery, a more desirable legacy than this catalogue'.¹⁶⁴ This is a rare contemporary statement relating to the period of Eastlake's keepership during the mid-1840s and is thus particularly valuable in the current discussion which takes this timeframe as its focus.

Conclusion

The 1840s is an overlooked decade in the history of the National Gallery. Most historical accounts emphasize the Gallery's origins in the mid-1820s and then go on to focus on the decade of Eastlake's directorship from 1855, when the Gallery was formally reconstituted and started its second dispensation. However, the period covered in this article which encompasses Eastlake's four-year keepership, the majority of his correspondence with Passavant, and some important publications by Eastlake – *Materials* and the first new-format *National Gallery Schools Catalogue* – is critical. The 1840s was a decisive decade because problems concerning the Gallery's mission and administration, having become so clear, gave rise to the first serious attempts to find answers and a better *modus operandi* for the future. A lengthy review article of the second edition of the National Gallery Schools Catalogue

¹⁶³ Review of the 1847 catalogue, published in the *Athenaeum*, 30 October 1847, 1130.

¹⁶⁴ Review of the 1847 catalogue, published in the *Art Union*, 1 December 1847, 416.

(1852), which also addressed in general terms the Gallery's past, present and future, appeared in the *Edinburgh Review* of 1853. By drawing some major themes from it we can assess, by way of conclusion, what Eastlake's part was in shaping the Gallery *before* he became director and how, in particular, his correspondence with Passavant and subsequent publications of 1847 arising from that exchange fit into a larger picture of nineteenth-century European museological reform as well as the narrower compass of professionalization within the museum sector of Victorian Britain.

The *Edinburgh Review* article of 1853 quotes Eastlake's open letter to Sir Robert Peel of 1845, mentioned above, as well as an equivalent letter written to Prince Albert in 1853 by William Dyce (1806-1864), a distinguished Scottish painter who played a significant part in the formation of public art education in the United Kingdom, and who, in this particular publication, stressed the need for expertise among those in charge of the National Gallery in terms of how it was run, and how the paintings were selected, arranged and catalogued. Such views as Eastlake's and Dyce's were reactions to the state of affairs that had greeted Eastlake at the start of his keepership in 1843, when acquisitions had come about rather by 'accident and the individual predilections for certain schools of Art, than to any predetermined plan for the formation of the Gallery,' and, related to this, that there had been 'no plan (...) proposed by the Trustees either (...) "for the historical arrangement of pictures according to schools, or for making a distinction between the great schools of Italy and the different national schools"' .¹⁶⁵ The critic put the following set of statistics concerning the current coverage of schools of painting in the National Gallery before his readers:

Lanzi, the historian of painting in Italy, mentions thirteen schools within that peninsula, and the classification might be extended further: Stirling, in his 'Annals of Spanish Art,' enumerates five Iberian provinces each entitled to a separate place. Byzantium, Flanders, France, Holland and England have had also their peculiar styles, while Upper and Lower Germany respectively claim consideration. Now it may surprise many of our readers to be told that, after twenty-eight years [of the Gallery's existence], and an expenditure of 122,000*l.*, the British nation possesses specimens of at most but fifteen of the twenty-five schools thus reckoned up.¹⁶⁶

The writer went on to cite Dyce's opinion that during Eastlake's keepership there had been few positive developments. In Dyce's estimation: 'The additions to the Collection made by purchase between the years 1844 and 1847, as well as the known opportunities of purchase overlooked or disregarded, evinced with sufficient clearness that, during the period, the trustees had made no advances towards the systematic fulfilment of their undertaking'.¹⁶⁷ It is true that things would change at a policy level only after the Gallery had been formally

¹⁶⁵ Review of the 1852 catalogue, published in the *Edinburgh Review*, 97, April 1853, 390-420.

¹⁶⁶ *Edinburgh Review*, 97, April 1853, 405-6.

¹⁶⁷ *Edinburgh Review*, 97, April 1853, 418.

reconstituted in July 1855 and that major acquisitions of early Northern art took place, as noted above, only in the decade after Eastlake had been appointed first director when he had a designated purchase grant at his disposal. However, what this article has sought to demonstrate is that even during his earlier association with the Gallery, as keeper between 1843 and 1847, Eastlake did make 'advances towards the systematic fulfilment of [the trustees'] undertaking'. Consequently, his keepership deserves to be viewed as more effective – and thus significant – than Dyce made out. We have aimed to show what Eastlake achieved and also what channels he used to get there and what the implications were of choosing those channels both for the academic discipline of art history and for the museum world in the UK in the later nineteenth century. Along the way we have demonstrated his debt to Passavant and to the model that Passavant and other German scholars and museum directors were offering both for the academy and the museum world.

We have seen how fruitful Eastlake and Passavant's exchange was. We have seen how the letters were the first iteration of certain ideas which continued to be honed until they were given final expression in two pioneering publications of 1847 – firstly, *Materials* which concentrated on the history of technique and, secondly, a reformed type of museum catalogue where there was additional emphases on biographical and provenance information. Furthermore, Eastlake's and Passavant's research had a direct impact on the look of the galleries where they were directors, in terms of an increase in numbers of examples of early Northern art and also in terms of arrangement given that for the first time examples were shown as a group representative of a particular historic school (one of many such groupings) – at least as far as space would allow.

We have also explored the use that Eastlake made of his correspondence with expert colleagues and friends. Through focusing in particular on his exchanges with Passavant, we have seen how Eastlake expanded his understanding and knowledge about one particular technique (oil) in relation to a specific type of artistic production (paintings rather than painted objects), a particular timeframe (from its origins up to the eighteenth century) and a defined geographic sphere (Europe). In their subsequent writings, Eastlake and Passavant maintained their preoccupation with authorship and with the revision of attributions of early Northern art by means of scrupulously constructed visual analyses coupled with reference to other visual and textual sources. Thereby the pair contributed to an evolving methodology for studying the history of art which sought to set a painting in relation to a broader history.¹⁶⁸ The point is not so much that Eastlake's correspondence with Passavant was unique – we have mentioned his contact with a number of other scholars – but certainly that it was among the first, if not the earliest, where he used such an approach in his art historical studies. Another point that makes this particular exchange stick out from the rest is the fact that in it we witness, on the one hand, Eastlake asking a lot of questions rather than answering those of other people – as would become the norm as time went on, and, on the other, Passavant acknowledging in his answers, that what he said was provisional and subject to change as further facts were uncovered in the course of time. We said

¹⁶⁸ Locher, *Kunstgeschichte*, 99-291.

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earlier that we were struck by the fact of Passavant giving so many details but no clear conclusion about *the* invention of oil painting or what *the* first oil painting was. Instead, he – and Eastlake – were content to collect and collate information, hints, and details to get closer to an answer. They understood their own work as part of a process, a contribution to a larger whole. Doubtless such an understanding and acceptance of their contributions to scholarship as just one 'link in a chain', to use a phrase they both employed (reminiscent of Kugler's likeminded metaphor of a stone in a building), helps explain why Passavant responded in the way he did to Eastlake in their 1846 correspondence and why, in turn, Eastlake chose modestly to entitle his 1847 book *Materials for a History of Oil Painting* rather than claiming anything more grandiose for it, along the lines of its being *the* definitive word on the subject. Understanding professionalization as a process, we suggest that Passavant and Eastlake's provisionality was an important facet of that process. So, while the period when Eastlake was in most direct and long-term contact with Passavant was a difficult and messy one, it is fair to see it as a gestation period, where much core foundation work was done, which led on to a period of rapid and largely positive change in the following decade. This case-study points to the mid-1840s as the moment when the term 'professionalization' can reasonably first be applied to the National Gallery, and that its reconstitution in 1855, usually regarded as a *Wendepunkt*, in fact saw the Gallery continue on a trajectory of professionalization which had started the decade before.

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