

Women writers on art and perceptions of the female connoisseur, 1780-1860

Caroline E. Palmer (2009)

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**Women writers on art and
perceptions of the female connoisseur, 1780–1860**

Caroline Elizabeth Palmer

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of the requirements of the award of Doctor of Philosophy
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Abstract

It has been suggested that women were broadly excluded from the art world of the eighteenth century because of prevailing views on female taste, which considered them incapable of appreciating high art. Satirical representations of women spectators suggest a vulgar mode of art-viewing, associated with a preference for gaudy colour and excessive finish, and for portraiture over history painting, reversing the academic canon. A survey of periodicals reveals that such stereotypes persisted throughout the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

However, my investigation of women's writing on art between 1780 and 1860 indicates the extent of their involvement in the art world. Initially through travel-writing, and across an increasingly wide range of genres, women published a wealth of material on art, ranging from popular handbooks and painting manuals to scholarly treatises. This study is the first to focus on these largely neglected texts as a collective body of work, and to demonstrate women's sophisticated engagement with contemporary and historical art in this period.

Through their social networks, travel, meticulous research and self-presentation as 'proper' women writers, individuals such as Maria Graham (Lady Callcott), Anna Jameson, Mary Philadelphia Merrifield and Elizabeth Rigby (Lady Eastlake) built up a public reputation, despite their unofficial status. Far from being merely industrious 'compilers', these women were in the vanguard of changes in taste, through their promotion of the Primitives and of German connoisseurship, and their iconographical studies. I investigate how these largely self-educated amateurs established their authority, and how their writing negotiated negative perceptions of the female viewer. I show that the strategies they employed were determined as much by their class, education and religion, as by their sex.

Given the high praise these writers received from reviewers, artists and fellow connoisseurs, I argue that it was possible to perceive women's taste far more positively than the satirical stereotypes suggest. This thesis offers a substantial reassessment of the scale and nature of women's contribution to the evolving discipline of art history in the early Victorian period.

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List of abbreviations

<i>LBA</i>	<i>La Belle Assemblée</i>
BM	British Museum, London
<i>BWM</i>	<i>Bell's Weekly Messenger</i>
<i>GM</i>	<i>Gentleman's Magazine</i>
<i>MR</i>	<i>Monthly Repository</i>
<i>QR</i>	<i>Quarterly Review</i>
RA	Royal Academy, London

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Introduction

Women ought, perhaps, always to make the best critics – at once more quicksighted, more tasteful, more sympathetic than ourselves, whose proper business is creation. Perhaps in Utopia they will take the reviewer's business entirely off our hands, as they are said to be doing already, by the bye, in one leading periodical. But of all critics an English matron ought to be the best¹

Reviewing Anna Jameson's *The Poetry of Sacred and Legendary Art* in 1849, Charles Kingsley reveals considerable respect for the judgment of a particular woman critic, who has been described as the 'first professional English art historian'.² Apart from the back-handed nature of his compliment, which reserves creativity for men, Kingsley is fulsome in his praise of Jameson's aesthetic discernment and her 'vivid and masterly' descriptions, which are prime examples of 'what criticism should be'.

There is a world of difference between these comments, published in the mid-nineteenth century, and the image of the female connoisseur that emerges from periodical reviews, pamphlets and poems written in response to the Royal Academy exhibitions of the 1780s and '90s. Such texts display essentially negative attitudes towards women as viewers of art. They are characterized as frivolous in their judgments and are seen as exercising a malign influence on artists' choice of subject, style and colouring. Their obsession with gaudy hues and mimetic detail, and their inability to appreciate elevated subject-matter, seem to have precluded their being treated as serious critics. The satirical writer Peter Pindar (John Wolcot), for example, in his *Lyric Odes to the Royal Academicians*, describes his irritation with the behaviour of 'pretty Misses' at the exhibition:

Although the Ladies with such Beauty blaze,
They very frequently my passion raise –
Their charms compensate, scarce, their want of *Taste* –
Passing amidst the EXHIBITION crowd,
I heard some Damsels *fashionably* loud;
And thus I give the Dialogue that pass'd.

"...What charming Colours! here's fine Lace, here's Gauze!
What pretty Sprigs the fellow draws!
Lord, Cousin! he's the cleverest Man in town!"

"Ay, Cousin," cried a second, "very true –
And here, here's charming green, and red, and blue –
There's a complexion beats the *Rouge* of WARREN!
See those red Lips, oh la! they seem so nice!
What rosy Cheeks then, Cousin, to entice! –
Compar'd to this, all other heads are carrion. –"³

Ignoring Reynolds' 'matchless pieces', the women focus on the fashionable fabrics and cosmetic colours they find in the portraits on display. Despite their decorative presence, Pindar clearly wishes women would leave the field of viewing to men, who, by implication, know how to appreciate good art when they see it, and are not distracted by superficial concerns.

This thesis will explore the gulf that appears to exist between the late-eighteenth-century view that women were intellectually incapable of appreciating the finer qualities of art, and Kingsley's comments of 1849, which compliment women wholeheartedly on their connoisseurship. It examines the broader context for these positions, considering what contemporary texts reveal about perceptions of women as connoisseurs across this period. In particular, it investigates whether attitudes to the female art-viewer evolved as women entered the world of print. I will show that women made a significant contribution to art debates in the early and mid-nineteenth century, publishing in a wide range of contexts, from painting manuals to artist monographs, though their work has tended to be ignored in art-historical accounts. Through a detailed study of their publications, as well as more private writing, I will examine the relationship between satirical representations of the female spectator and women's own responses to art.

In tackling these issues, it is important to set women's art-viewing in the context of more general developments in the art world of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Scholarly debates have focused on the rapidly expanding audience for art, with the advent of public exhibitions in the 1760s, and the growth of the art press. Pears and Solkin, for example, have traced the development of a commercialized art market, while Brewer, McKendrick, Plumb and Bermingham have set the cultural world of the eighteenth century in the context of social, economic and political forces, characterizing this period as a time of dynamic change.⁴ Discourses of Politeness and Sensibility, as well as Enlightenment educational theories, also had an impact on attitudes to connoisseurship, affecting the roles played within art culture by men and women.⁵

The 2001 *Art on the Line* catalogue investigated the nature of the new audiences for art, as well as demonstrating how the Royal Academy appealed to this expanded public.⁶ However, the catalogue was criticized by Angela Rosenthal for not giving female viewers and critics their due.⁷ From the catalogue essays by Kriz and Matheson, which do touch on this topic, it is clear that women's presence was not only tolerated at exhibitions, but actively encouraged.⁸ However, with the exception of Pullan's important thesis on gender and the fine arts in relation to women's magazines c. 1800–25, little work has been done on characterizing the female dimension of art audiences before the Victorian period.⁹ My

thesis aims to remedy this lack by examining constructions of the female art-viewer from 1780 to 1860.

The relative omission of women from recent discussions may reflect, in part, the view that they were excluded by classical theories of art. Barrell has argued that, just as they were denied entry to the political republic, women were 'denied citizenship, and denied it absolutely, in the republic of taste', within what he characterized as the civic humanist tradition of art.¹⁰ Pears agreed that appreciation of the arts was a 'masculine preserve', the 'virtual exclusion of women from all but amateur painting' serving 'to confirm the seriousness of painting as a topic'.¹¹ Women were considered incapable of exercising mature judgment, they suggest, partly because of their dependent social position, and partly because of contemporary views on their inability to think beyond personal, private concerns. This appeared to deny women an understanding of history painting, in particular – the genre of high art *par excellence* – and limited them to depictions of common nature, such as landscape, still-life and portraiture. As Shaftesbury declared, 'Ladies hate the great manner'.¹²

Even as theories of taste evolved away from Shaftesbury's idealist philosophy of art as the exclusive preserve of a public-spirited, landed elite, to include an expanded polite public – 'commercial humanism', to use Solkin's phrase – women apparently continued to be marginalized.¹³ Though their presence helped to create the image of a refined viewing public, it seems that assumptions about women's intellectual limitations still excluded them from the discerning elite of the mind. Bermingham, Jones, Perry and Messer-Davidow have underlined the central importance of gendered difference within the culture of connoisseurship, suggesting that women's primary role as attractive objects to be viewed, rather than as active viewers of art, had a profound effect on theories of female taste in the eighteenth century.¹⁴ The tendency to consider women as objects of the gaze had clear implications for their role as bearers of the gaze, problematizing their position as spectators. Sekora's analysis of the association between women, luxury and commerce is also helpful here in suggesting how women's perceived materialism worked to exclude them from the realm of disinterested aesthetic judgment.¹⁵

In spite of this theoretical exclusion, however, periodical-writers addressed women alongside men as members of an extended polite public within the newly commercialized society. Copley has emphasized the ambiguous position of women within polite culture, where, despite the increasing celebration of feminine values, women's involvement continued to be restricted by the patriarchal order.¹⁶ Nevertheless, there is no doubt that women were often deferred to in matters of taste, albeit frequently in a tone of patronising

gallantry. In 1775, for example, *The Exhibition of Painting* appealed to the 'British Fair' as 'bright Patronesses all!', and encouraged artists to vie for their approval, 'Seeking a gen'rous patroness,/ In ev'ry bright judicious eye'.¹⁷ Such texts indicate that, although women's taste was seen to require improvement, there was a strong desire to promote their participation in art culture.

Throughout the eighteenth century, aristocratic women were expected to display an interest in art, and towards the end of the century, as I will show, satirical writers imply that increasing numbers of middle-class women were joining the crowds at the Royal Academy. Although some allowance must be made for their purely pictorial function, female figures dominate prints of the exhibitions, from Johann Ramberg through to the Cruikshank brothers (figs 1–4), and women's presence is frequently referred to in exhibition reviews. Numerous writers, including Lippincott and Pointon, have insisted on women's importance in the burgeoning art market of the eighteenth century.¹⁸ Pullan's investigation of Joseph Farington's diary also revealed the unofficial role women played within the art world, where their experience of the fine arts was determined by their social relationships.¹⁹ Women's reception of art was inevitably mediated by men within a patriarchal culture that defined what they saw, as well as controlling their purse-strings, and yet women were recognized as powerful players in an increasingly consumer-conscious market. They were courted by entrepreneurs, such as Rudolf Ackermann and John Bell, through publications and art products designed specifically for women, and while the very separation of women as a target audience implies gender inequalities within art culture, it nevertheless points to women's importance. It is the tension between women's theoretical exclusion from the 'Republic of Taste' and the reality of their role as enthusiastic viewers and consumers of art that I have sought to investigate.

Such research clearly involves issues ranging far beyond the art world itself, encompassing contemporary assumptions about women's biological and moral characteristics, the nature of their education, as well as theories of taste. A useful summary of the biblical and classical notions that underpinned eighteenth-century attitudes to women, as well as the new biological theories developing alongside them, is provided by Shoemaker.²⁰ While accepting the important part played by economic forces within society, it is clear that changing ideas could also significantly affect attitudes to women. Barker-Benfield, for example, has shown how new medical beliefs about women's nervous system impacted on gender roles through the literature of Sensibility, while Fletcher has suggested that changing notions of women's sexuality helped to construct a more positive notion of womanhood in the nineteenth century.²¹ These studies have revealed the range of

sources that can be used to uncover implicit notions of femininity, from conduct books and fiction to medical treatises, for example.²² While drawing on the findings of such secondary literature, I will demonstrate that art-writing in periodicals and newspapers offers another rich source for exploring underlying assumptions about women's 'nature' and the strategies employed to mould female behaviour.

The history of women's education is a key factor in establishing the background to my study. The defence of women's intellectual equality and the tradition of female learning dates back far beyond the Bluestockings. However, the growth in women's published writing on art is closely connected with improved educational opportunities for middle-class women in the late eighteenth century, and the trend, especially among Nonconformist groups, to educate their daughters alongside their sons.²³ Discovering the extent to which women studied classics and history in this period is central to an understanding of how they learned to appreciate art, because the assumption that women were incapable of understanding history painting stemmed in part from the belief that they were unfamiliar with the myths and historical events depicted. Women's supposed preference for detail, in a visual context, also derived from the notion that general concepts were too difficult for them to comprehend. Although there were continuing calls, even into the late nineteenth century, for improvements to women's education, greater access to learning was a major factor in women's growing confidence as critics.²⁴ My research investigates the role of education in enabling middle-class women to become art-writers. It therefore contributes to wider debates concerning women's history, beyond the purely art-historical context.

The dominant theory for study of this period has been the concept of 'separate spheres' for men and women, the public world of work versus private domesticity and the family.²⁵ This concept has been significantly modified by writers such as Vickery and Colley, however.²⁶ It is clear that women were engaged in the public realm to a far greater extent than was previously thought, and that the doctrine of separate spheres became increasingly prescribed, as it broke down in practice. As Colley says, it was 'more didactic than descriptive'.²⁷ Art-viewing is a particularly appropriate area in which to consider the notion of 'separate spheres', as it represents an intersection of the private and public worlds. Galleries and exhibitions offered a public arena that was deemed relatively acceptable for women, providing all the advantages of polite sociability, as well as an educational opportunity – especially if men were on hand to explain the finer points.

Yet while art-viewing was often set within a public space, it was also a very private experience, as women's journals make clear. In 1857, for example, when Thereza

Llewelyn (1834–1926) visited Marlborough House, she recorded her lack of enthusiasm for Turner's *Fighting Temeraire* (1839; National Gallery, London), 'about which the world has gone mad'. 'My taste may be very wrong in the opinion of the world;' she wrote in her journal, 'but it is sacred to me, as my *own*.'²⁸ In this way, intimate thoughts clashed with an awareness of public opinion, as absorbed through the press or fellow exhibition-visitors, encouraging viewers to measure themselves against socially acceptable responses. Thereza (fig. 5) also compared her opinions with those in her family circle: 'Mama ... admires Landseer's [pictures] much more.' Many of her comments reveal the importance of private experience in judging works on display, her enthusiasm for Turner's moonscape of 1797 being associated with her love of gazing at the moon from her window and her interest in astronomy, for example (fig. 6). Her preference for Landseer over Turner is based on the familiarity of his subject-matter and its relevance to her own life:

It is true that Landseer paints subjects that we all can appreciate and sympathise in, therefore we do enjoy them, they transport us to the scenes he represents; on the other hand we none of us ever went to the Garden of Hesperides!²⁹

Thereza's use of the plural 'we/us' positions her personal judgment within the public realm, though it is unclear whether she is referring simply to her mother and herself or to the viewing public as a whole. Such writing indicates the fluidity of interaction between the public and private realms in art-viewing.

Although Thereza's comments were never intended for publication, one way in which the demarcation between public and private spheres became blurred was through women's writing on art, which, though carried out in a domestic setting, enabled their responses to reach the wider world through publication. The more general history of women's writing in this period has been considered by Shevelov and Turner, among others.³⁰ Harcstarck Myers gives an excellent account of how the Bluestockings' assertions of intellectual capacity were initially modified by their fear of being labelled immodest or neglectful of familial duties.³¹ She points to the growing confidence of second-generation 'Blues', who took for granted a woman's right to publish. Despite continuing concerns about ambition, by the early nineteenth century large numbers of women were overcoming their diffidence. Far from being restricted to the domestic sphere, they increasingly participated in the 'borderland' of a working life as writers. My study will therefore contribute to discussions around women's professionalization in the field of publishing.

The major portion of my research focuses on an area in which women became particularly involved: art criticism. Hallett has explored the development of art criticism in the early part of my period, through exhibition pamphlets, periodicals and newspapers.³²

The explosion in print media devoted to art has also been thoroughly analyzed by Hemingway, while writers such as Bennett and Smiles have considered the political alliances and class interests that underlie the aesthetic judgments expressed in art journalism.³³ Useful work on art critics and their changing role in the Victorian period has been carried out by Prettejohn, Roberts and Flint.³⁴ The role of the female art critic has been relatively neglected, however.

Gerrish Nunn's essay 'Critically speaking' is an exception, and is particularly relevant to this discussion.³⁵ Gerrish Nunn pointed to women's contributions as writers of instruction manuals, artist biographies and anthologies, citing particular individuals excluded from the art-historical canon. She rightly underlines the extent to which women have been omitted from histories of art because journalism has been consistently undervalued. She calls for a redefinition of art criticism, broadening the category to include newspapers and periodicals, letters and memoirs. It is this wider definition that I have used in selecting material for study. However, Gerrish Nunn's claim that the 'visibility of the female art critic ... was slight and irregular until the 1880s' is firmly challenged by my research.³⁶ This thesis will show that women art-writers enjoyed a considerable public profile long before this date.

Clarke's work on women art critics of the late nineteenth century similarly questions Gerrish Nunn's assertion that art criticism was a purely masculine sphere. She notes that by the 1880s thirty women were publishing regular contributions in specialist publications such as the *Art Journal*, although she claims women were gradually excluded by the institutionalization of art critics around the turn of the century.³⁷ Clarke correctly suggests that women enjoyed greater prominence earlier in the nineteenth century, when there were fewer preconceptions about the qualifications required for an art critic, and she recognizes that women had gained renown as writers on art and travel in the early Victorian period. Clarke's emphasis on the interdisciplinarity of art criticism, literature, history and travel-writing, as revealed by her individual case studies, is of great relevance to my study of early women art-writers, as is her discussion of the publishing strategies they employed, including pseudonyms and anonymity. Like Gerrish Nunn, however, Clarke significantly underestimates the extent to which women contributed to art criticism before the 1880s, and fails to recognize the importance of such figures as Jameson and Elizabeth Rigby (Lady Eastlake). My thesis will show that the women art-journalists of the 1880s and '90s were part of a long tradition stretching back into the eighteenth century, rather than a novel phenomenon.

Writers of the later nineteenth century, such as Emilia Dilke, Julia Cartwright and Vernon Lee, have been better served by scholarly studies, including the work of Fraser.³⁸ There has been a tendency to neglect women's art-writing in the first half of the century, however, and my thesis aims to remedy this neglect. One exception is Jameson, who has attracted considerable research. The sophisticated level of her work well deserves such attention, but it is important to set her writing in context by investigating her immediate precursors and contemporaries, rather than seeing her as an isolated case. This is the first study to focus on these under-researched women and to indicate their importance for the formation of art history as a discipline.

Sherman and Holcomb are the only writers to discuss women's art-writing before the Victorian era.³⁹ Although their study is important for indicating general trends, however, most of the writers are mentioned only briefly. Sherman and Holcomb do, nevertheless, provide a European-wide framework for writing by British women, as well as drawing parallels with America, and they suggest the many ways in which women wrote on art outside the context of art criticism proper, in particular through travel-writing. By the late eighteenth century far more women were beginning to travel to the Continent, and the Grand Tour, originally a male preserve, was increasingly within their compass. This final 'polishing up' of taste was crucial to women's confidence in expressing authoritative opinions on art, so travel-writing forms an important part of my study (Chapter 3).⁴⁰

Since the pioneering feminist analyses of the 1970s and '80s, much has been written on the position of women artists in the Victorian period. Gerrish Nunn, Cherry and Yeldham, for example, have charted the difficulties women faced with regard to training and critical acceptance.⁴¹ Clearly, women artists were more likely to be skilled viewers and critics, but the group of women who experienced art was much broader than this. Art was enjoyed by all social groups, and even servant girls were described as gawping at print-shop windows and pinning cheap prints of Old Masters to the walls of their lodgings.⁴² As public collections opened up in the nineteenth century, democratizing the viewing public, a broader spectrum of men and women were encouraged to undertake art-viewing as a leisure-time pursuit. Campbell Orr's *Women in the Victorian Art World* considers women's involvement as collectors, patrons and artists, but much remains to be done to recover women's experience as 'ordinary' art-viewers in this period. Pullan pointed to informal sources of writing on art, including letters and journals, as a means of gaining insight into their responses.⁴³ When modified by awareness of the writer's background and the context in which they were written, private comments can reveal much about contemporary reception. Such sources form an important part of my research, as they have gained little

attention in the literature so far. Access to the opinions of those at the bottom of the social scale remains problematic, but through the study of private writing and publications, this thesis will help to construct a far more rounded picture of middle-class women's engagement with art.

In focusing on women as part of the growing audience for art, it is important to consider the extent to which they were perceived by periodical-writers as displaying specifically feminine modes of viewing, and to what extent they were seen in terms of class. Copley, responding to Barrell, indicated the importance of class considerations, alongside gender, as various social groups struggled to differentiate themselves from 'vulgar' audiences.⁴⁴ The vulgarity of women, apparently inescapable through their sex, may be associated with the vulgarity of the middle classes, whose limitations are related to the taint of commerce, or that of the aristocratic dilettante, whose veneer of cultivated discernment conceals his superficial knowledge. Women sometimes form a distinct group in a writer's mind, while at other times they merge with a particular class grouping. Pullan's work is especially helpful here, in indicating the importance of class ideologies for construction of the female viewer. My study therefore seeks to set women's viewing of art and writing on art always within the context of class.

In terms of women's history in this period, Barker and Chalus have been crucial in setting the general context for this study. Their historiography of gender studies charts a move away from overarching conceptual frameworks – whether of patriarchy, class theory and economic change, the emergence of the nuclear family or separate spheres – and towards more evidence-based work, which reflects 'discontinuity, divergence and difference'.⁴⁵ They stress that factors such as social status, location, nationality, race and religion often had a far more important effect on women's lives than sex. They draw attention to the flexibility of gender relations, conditioned by codes of behaviour that were felt, yet often resisted, and they caution against simplistic generalizations, emphasizing the crucial part played by individual experience. Following their lead, I have considered how gender was conceptualized, but also examined personal accounts, to see how gender roles were played out in the lives of individuals.

Instead of studying the female viewer in theoretical terms, then, my research focuses on a series of case studies which investigate particular women spectators. This micro-historical approach enables accepted generalizations about women's history to be tested against individual experience, calling into question, for example, the notion that women's entry into print culture was resisted in the early nineteenth century, as the result of a vitriolic, post-revolutionary reaction against intellectual females.⁴⁶ By demonstrating

the personal encouragement given to women by artist-friends and publishers, it is possible to construct a far more positive picture of attitudes to women writers in this period. The study of unique subjects, located within a specific social setting, also makes it possible to identify the precise mechanisms by which women entered the flourishing print market, the networks that helped them to penetrate a broadly male-dominated field. Editor Dionysius Lardner's invitation to Jameson to write for the *Monthly Chronicle* in 1838–9 (Chapter 7) may partly be explained by their shared Dublin origins, for example, while the fact that Sarah Flower Adams was a member of Revd W. J. Fox's congregation suggests how she came to write for the *Monthly Repository* (Chapter 4). Such biographical details are especially important in the case of women, who had no obvious professional route into publishing or the art world.

One reason why it is so important to investigate these women as individuals is because the persona of the woman writer is often inextricably bound up with her writing in the responses of contemporary reviewers. Knowing more about these women therefore helps us to evaluate such judgments and to put critical comments in perspective. To focus solely on their published texts, rather than investigating their lives, is also to lose a wealth of insights into women's relationship with art in this period. A study of individual biographies instead reveals the many different ways in which women contributed to art culture beyond their publications – through patronage or discussions with artists and writers. As well as indicating the diversity of their experiences and situations, biographical investigation also helps to identify what these writers have in common as women, such as the nature of their education or the motivation behind their modest self-presentation as authors. It further enables us to understand the factors beyond their sex that influenced their participation in the cultural sphere. These case studies suggest, for example, how class position and family circumstances could affect their ability to travel, their choice of genres and preference for anonymity or avowed authorship. Only by looking closely into their backgrounds can we attempt to unravel how factors such as sex, social location, religion and education determined their approach to writing and their engagement with art. In studying individuals, rather than generalizing about the gendered spectator, I insist on the essential inseparability of experience, class and sex in shaping responses to art.

I see my approach as broadly empirical, in that I examine a range of primary sources, including journals, letters, books, periodical essays and newspaper reviews, using multiple sources of evidence to flesh out our historical picture of these authors. A comparison of stereotypical notions of women's art-viewing with what individuals actually wrote, both in public and in private, allows me to investigate the extent to which these

writers complied with contemporary expectations of women, as expressed in conduct literature, for example, or diverged from conventional norms. By setting private journal comments against the more guarded face of published work, the case studies allow for the prescriptive to be tested against the actual, exposing the gaps between public self-presentation and private pronouncements.

The women selected for my case studies are by definition exceptional, rather than typical figures; the fact that they have left significant archival traces is in itself an indication of this. They were chosen because they stood out as having made innovative contributions to art literature in the period before 1860. Numerous women wrote on art for the press and published monographs from the 1860s onwards. Emilia Dilke and Margaret Oliphant, for example, regularly contributed art-related articles to the *Saturday Review* and *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, respectively, while Mary Margaret Heaton and Fanny Palliser published extensively from the mid-1860s.⁴⁷ Before this date, however, examples are sparse. Anna Jameson (Chapter 7) is the only woman listed by the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* as an 'art historian' or 'art critic' publishing before 1860, while only Frances Reynolds (Chapter 1), Mary Philadelphia Merrifield (Chapter 5) and Elizabeth Rigby (Chapter 8) are noted as 'writers on art'. Though Hannah Lawrance and Amelia Blanford Edwards worked as art critics in the 1850s, they did not specialize in this area, but covered art as a minor part of a more general literary career.⁴⁸ The only woman mentioned in Maura Barnett's thesis on art critics before Ruskin is Sarah Flower Adams (Chapter 4).⁴⁹ It is by presenting case studies drawn from the period before 1860 that I am able to trace the process by which women came to be more widely accepted as proficient art historians and critics in the latter part of the century.

A major consideration in selecting these case studies was the need for both published works on art and the existence of additional biographical material, such as diaries and letters. Many women made important contributions to art culture, including Theresa Parker, Elizabeth Montagu, Margaret Cavendish (Duchess of Portland) and Mrs Delany in the eighteenth century, or Eliza Aders and Amelia Long (Lady Farnborough) in the nineteenth, for example; but as they did not publish on art, they were not selected for close investigation.⁵⁰ Other women published, but offered insufficient sources for further study: Mrs Foster, for example, who translated Vasari and wrote for the *Art Journal* in the 1850s, or Maria Farquhar, who published a handbook of Italian painters in 1855.⁵¹

The women discussed here all emerged from my research as particularly significant figures for the development of art publishing; they were chosen because they demonstrated a particular interest in art and an intimate involvement in art culture. I also, in Chapters 3

and 4, favoured women who were relatively under-researched. In terms of travel-writing (Chapter 3), for example, several writers offered potential for study, including Lady Morgan, Mary Shelley and George Eliot, all of whom recorded their responses to art abroad in travel journals or publications. These women have been considered by literary scholars, however, so I concentrated instead on the less well-known Anna Miller and Mariana Starke, who are of greater relevance to art-historical studies, and who helped to establish the conventions of the female art-enthusiast's travel narrative and guidebook formats.⁵² In the context of religion (Chapter 4), I sought to discuss figures representing a range of Protestant denominations, but focused on Sarah Flower Adams and Louisa Twining as particularly rich examples of how religious faith could interact with a love of art in this period. The four main case studies (Chapters 5 to 8) examine women art-writers who were recognized in their own time as innovative thinkers and influential figures within the art world, influencing contemporary artists and art audiences. They all published named monographs that were acknowledged as scholarly contributions to the study of art, and therefore contributed to the development of art history as a discipline.

In concentrating on exceptional individuals in this way, there is, of course, a danger of losing sight of the overall historical narrative. I have endeavoured, therefore, to employ these case studies to construct hypotheses regarding more general trends, pointing to a growing respect for female art critics, and the increasing specialization of women writers on art across this period as a whole. The case studies combine to underline the vital role of social networks and of publications in establishing women's authority as connoisseurs. By setting these individuals within the broader context of the increasing democratization of art audiences and the expansion of print culture, I consider how perceptions of the female viewer were coloured by evolving attitudes to gender and class in early nineteenth-century Britain.

The feminist notion of gendered difference in the viewing of art is an issue that is central to this study, of course. The complex interaction with issues of class indicates the limitations of a wholly gender-focused approach to this research topic, but feminist writers such as Pollock have themselves pointed to the need to stress the multiplicity of women's responses, as contextualized by family background and class position, rather than seeing their views as biologically determined.⁵³ Like Pollock, I hesitate to ascribe any essentialist viewing qualities to women, preferring instead to see their responses to art as socially constructed. Rather than trying to determine whether women experienced art differently from men, I investigate contemporary theories of how they understood and judged art. What factors determined what they saw, and who censored their viewing or influenced

their judgments? I explore how they characterized themselves as viewers, and how they characterized the viewing of others.

I am somewhat wary of projecting feminist perceptions into the past, and looking for evidence of an active patriarchal suppression of female opinions as against increasing resistance by women. Clearly, there were many practical barriers to women's art-viewing and publishing, but the willing acceptance of the status quo by the majority of women writers, their apparent belief in essentially feminine attributes as endowed by God, makes such an approach anachronistic. Though the nineteenth century was certainly a time of increasing proto-feminist activism, most of the women I discuss embraced a somewhat conservative view of womanhood, adhering to a belief in proper femininity and domestic duty. Their aim was not to overturn a system they considered to be divinely ordained, but to work within such constraints. Their desire to be seen as 'proper women writers' has much to do with internalized patriarchal pressures, of course, and I certainly would not wish to underplay the difficulties they encountered, but I will show how they subverted these restrictions, turning positive notions of essential femininity to their advantage.

Although I will be discussing women's art-writing alongside responses to female viewers and writers in the broadly male-dominated press, I would emphasize that I do not intend to set up a fixed opposition between women's and men's views in general. Opinions expressed by particular male writers cannot be assumed to represent a monolithic male viewpoint. Many women would have agreed with Hazlitt's assertion, in 1815, that classical learning was unsuitable for women, for example, while it was a male writer of the same social circle, Leigh Hunt, who responded in outraged defence of women's intellectual abilities.⁵⁴ Jameson could write disparagingly of the 'namby-pamby taste of our fine ladies', while Kingsley was clearly sympathetic to the qualities women brought to art-viewing.⁵⁵ I underline this multiplicity of perspectives, believing that the simple fact of a writer's sex can tell us less about their views than their social, religious and political loyalties.

My approach can nevertheless be construed as firmly feminist in that I am attempting to retrieve a body of material, written by women, that has so far been woefully neglected. Gerrish Nunn and Clarke have pointed out that because women's writing was more likely to be published as ephemeral, anonymous newspaper pieces, it has tended to be ignored, or at least dominated by the mainstream male voice.⁵⁶ This is evidently only part of the story, however, given that even named women authors who were critically acclaimed in their own lifetime for scholarly published monographs have also been omitted

from the canon. My research aims to restore these women writers to their rightful place within the historiography.

The first section of my thesis examines perceptions of the female connoisseur as they emerge from texts between 1780 and 1860, when women were finally permitted entry to the Academy schools – a time of considerable debate around the theme of women and art. By 1780 there were regular art reviews in the press, and the Royal Academy's move to Somerset House stimulated intense popular interest, resulting in the writing of many pamphlets and periodical articles.

Chapter 1 considers how female viewers are characterized in these early exhibition reviews, as well as in other eighteenth-century writings on taste. I explore what these sources reveal about perceptions of women's ability to appreciate art, and investigate the complex interaction between sex and class in portrayals of the female viewer. In parallel, I present evidence of women's first-hand experiences of art 1780–1800, examining their opportunities for practising connoisseurship during this period. In investigating women's theoretical exclusion from culture alongside the reality of their role as consumers of art, I consider whether Barrell's claims about their exclusion from taste are over-simplistic.

Chapter 2 explores how the female connoisseur is constructed by the periodical press 1800–60. I investigate stereotypical notions of women's taste, and indicate the persistence of eighteenth-century themes, showing how the female viewer remained a figure of fun into the late nineteenth century. I also examine how publishers targeted women in a more serious context, and by comparing periodicals aimed at women with those for a mixed audience, I ask whether their viewing was differentiated from that of men to the extent that comic stereotypes suggest.

The second part of my thesis studies women's own perceptions of art, as revealed by their writing, both published and unpublished. It investigates their experiences and critical responses, and asks whether their comments support or contest prevailing stereotypes of the female connoisseur. Given the background of negative prejudice, I explore the strategies women employed as they entered the publishing market.

Chapter 3, on travel-writing, investigates the ways in which women used this genre to counter their exclusion from the 'Republic of Taste'. I will discuss how women writers constructed themselves as art-viewers, and demonstrate how travel enhanced their authority, enabling them to engage in debates alongside male writers.

Increasingly, in the early nineteenth century, women began to publish across a range of genres, though still within acceptably 'feminine' contexts. Chapter 4 considers religion as an area that was deemed particularly appropriate. Religious belief was central to

women's lives in this period, and many wrote on art as an aspect of their faith, seeing publication almost as a philanthropic duty. I explore the interaction of art and religion in the work of writers such as Unitarian Sarah Flower Adams, Quaker Thereza Llewelyn and Anglican Louisa Twining.

The role of science in women's art-writing is perhaps an unexpected one, but in Chapter 5 I show how an interest in chemistry could lead women into writing on art, providing another arena that was considered suitable for them. This chapter considers the work of Mary Philadelphia Merrifield, and reveals how she used her expertise in science to contest the notion that female viewers were lacking in logic.

In the Victorian period women became increasingly specialized as art historians and critics. Maria Graham (Lady Callcott), Jameson and Rigby were all highly respected for their expertise, and Chapters 6, 7 and 8 chart their careers, considering how their texts negotiated negative attitudes to the female art-viewer, and the tactics they employed, from promotion of their femininity to the adoption of a male persona. I investigate how they located themselves within an art world from which they were professionally excluded, and consider the role of travel, education and social networks in establishing their authority.

Throughout, I assess what these sources reveal about perceptions of the female connoisseur. By making significant contributions to contemporary debates, women implicitly confronted the authority of an Academy that resisted their opinions, challenging the notion that women were ignorant consumers of art. Was there a static belief, in spite of this, that women were essentially incapable of appreciating art? Or was this prejudice transformed across the century through women's active participation in publishing? I consider whether attitudes underwent any significant evolution, and consider the factors that could have influenced any such change. These include evolving views on connoisseurship more generally, resulting from the democratization of art audiences, and the increasing popularity of genres seen as more 'accessible' to women, such as landscape and genre. Did early-nineteenth-century views on the importance of the spectator's individual response lend greater weight to women's viewpoints, or did the rise of the professional art critic marginalize them still further? In endeavouring to answer some of these questions, and in lending greater prominence to early women art-writers, I hope to construct a multi-layered image of the female viewer in this period and fundamentally challenge the notion that women were excluded from art culture.

- ¹ [Charles Kingsley] 'The Poetry of Sacred and Legendary Art', *Fraser's Magazine*, 39, 231, March 1849, p. 289.
- ² Adele M. Holcomb, 'Anna Jameson: The First Professional English Art Historian', *Art History*, 6 (2), June 1983, p. 171.
- ³ Peter Pindar [John Wolcot], *Lyric Odes to the Royal Academicians*, London, 1782, Ode XIII, pp. 30–1. Warren was a London perfumerer.
- ⁴ Iain Pears, *The Discovery of Painting*, New Haven and London, 1988. David Solkin, *Painting for Money*, New Haven and London, 1992. Neil McKendrick, John Brewer and J. H. Plumb, *The Birth of a Consumer Society*, London, 1982. Ann Bermingham and John Brewer (eds), *The Consumption of Culture 1600–1800*, New York and London, 1995.
- ⁵ John Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination: English Culture in the Eighteenth Century*, London, 1997. G. J. Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility: Sex and Society in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, Chicago and London, 1992.
- ⁶ David Solkin (ed.), *Art on the Line: The Royal Academy Exhibitions at Somerset House 1780–1836*, New Haven and London, 2001.
- ⁷ Angela Rosenthal, exhibition review of 'Art on the Line', Courtauld Institute Gallery, London, *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 35 (4), 2002, pp. 607–8.
- ⁸ C. S. Matheson, "'A Shilling Well Laid Out': The Royal Academy's Early Public", and K. Dian Kriz, "'Starecases": Engendering the Public's Two Bodies at the Royal Academy of Arts', in Solkin (ed.), *Art on the Line*, pp. 39–63.
- ⁹ Ann S. Pullan, 'Fashioning a public for art: ideology, gender and the fine arts in the English periodical c. 1800–25', unpubl. PhD thesis, 2 vols, University of Cambridge, 1992.
- ¹⁰ John Barrell, *The Political Theory of Painting from Reynolds to Hazlitt: 'The Body of the Public'*, New Haven and London, 1986, pp. 65–8.
- ¹¹ Pears, *Discovery of Painting*, p. 3.
- ¹² Anthony Ashley Cooper, third Earl of Shaftesbury, quoted in Barrell, *Political Theory of Painting*, p. 68.
- ¹³ Solkin, *Painting for Money*, p. 19.
- ¹⁴ Ann Bermingham, 'The Aesthetics of Ignorance: The Accomplished Woman in the Culture of Connoisseurship', *Oxford Art Journal*, 16 (2), 1993, pp. 3–20. Robert W. Jones, *Gender and the Formation of Taste in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, Cambridge and New York, 1998. Gill Perry (ed.), *Gender and Art*, New Haven and London, 1999. Ellen Messer-Davidow, "'For Softness She": Gender Ideology and Aesthetics in Eighteenth-Century England', in F. M. Keener and S. E. Lorsch (eds), *Eighteenth-Century Women and the Arts*, New York and London, 1988, pp. 45–56.
- ¹⁵ John Sekora, *Luxury: The Concept in Western Thought, Eden to Smollett*, Baltimore, 1977, pp. 56–9.
- ¹⁶ Stephen Copley, 'The Fine Arts in Eighteenth-Century Polite Culture', in John Barrell (ed.), *Painting and the Politics of Culture*, Oxford and New York, 1992, pp. 25–6.
- ¹⁷ [Anon.] *The Exhibition of Painting; A Poem. Addressed to the Ladies*, London, 1775.
- ¹⁸ Louise Lippincott, *Selling Art in Georgian London: The Rise of Arthur Pond*, New Haven and London, 1983, pp. 38–41. Marcia Pointon, *Hanging the Head*, New Haven and London, 1993.
- ¹⁹ Pullan, 'Fashioning a public', p. xi.
- ²⁰ Robert Shoemaker, *Gender in English Society 1650–1850*, New York and London, 1998.
- ²¹ Barker-Benfield, *Culture of Sensibility*, pp. 1–36. Anthony Fletcher, *Gender, Sex and Subordination in England, 1500–1800*, New Haven and London, 1995.
- ²² See also Vivien Jones (ed.), *Women in the Eighteenth Century*, London, 1990.
- ²³ Felicia Gordon and Gina Luria Walker, *Rational Passions: Women and Scholarship in Britain, 1702–1870*, London, 2008, pp. 7–8.
- ²⁴ Rosemary Ann Mitchell, "'The busy daughters of Clío": women writers of history from 1820 to 1880', *Women's History Review*, 7 (1), 1998, pp. 107–34.
- ²⁵ Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780–1850*, London, 1987.
- ²⁶ Amanda Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter: Women's Lives in Georgian England*, New Haven and London, 1998, and 'Golden Age to Separate Spheres?', *Historical Journal*, 36, 2, 1993, pp. 383–414. Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707–1837*, New Haven and London, 1992.
- ²⁷ Colley, *Britons*, p. 281.

- ²⁸ Thereza M. D. Llewelyn, journal transcript, 30 March 1857, p. 16. Turner's works were in the Vernon Collection. For Llewelyn's background, see Chapter 4.
- ²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 16–17. Referring to Turner's *Goddess of Discord ... in the Garden of the Hesperides* (1806, Tate Gallery).
- ³⁰ Kathryn Shevelow, *Women and Print Culture*, New York and London, 1989. Cheryl Turner, *Living by the Pen: Women Writers in the Eighteenth Century*, London, 1992.
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Chapter 1

‘Bright Patronesses all!’: perceptions of the female connoisseur in late eighteenth-century England

In order to examine the notion that women were excluded from the ‘Republic of Taste’, this chapter will consider a range of texts, from art treatises and conduct literature to satirical poems and exhibition pamphlets, and explore the extent to which women’s taste was constructed as antithetical to the academic ideal. It will also investigate letters, journals and institutional records for evidence of women’s first-hand involvement in eighteenth-century culture, demonstrating the ways in which their opportunities for art-viewing developed up to 1800. By indicating the existence of conflicting discourses on women’s taste, and their intersection with issues of class, I will reveal the complexities inherent in perceptions of the female connoisseur in the late eighteenth century.

Constructing the ideal viewer

As we have seen, the small body of the aristocratic elite, conceived by Shaftesbury as arbiters of taste, was considerably widened during the eighteenth century to encompass a far broader social grouping of the ‘polite’.¹ Good taste came to be represented as more generally available, and Daniel Webb, writing in 1760, even asserted its universal potential: ‘we have all within us the seeds of taste, and are capable, if we exercise our powers, of improving them into a sufficient knowledge of the polite arts’. He saw painting as particularly accessible because of its direct appeal to the senses; it united all classes, ‘from the elegant observer of beauty, down to the illiterate rustic’.² However, this rhetoric of universality is misleading. In fact, treatises were usually written with gentrified male readers in mind. Jonathan Richardson’s connoisseur, for example, was ‘unambiguously masculine’, according to Gibson-Wood.³ Even if one man might be considered potentially as good a judge as another, this did not necessarily extend to women, who, though rarely explicitly excluded, were simply not seen as relevant to the debate.

Eighteenth-century texts reveal considerable tension between a desire on the one hand to include the newly expanded public for art, and on the other to protect polite culture from vulgar influence. In the struggle for definitions of connoisseurship, the ideal viewer of art was a central concern.⁴ Richardson, Hogarth and Reynolds, for example, readjusted

definitions of the man of taste to absorb middle-class professionals like themselves, while aristocratic writers defended their own traditional prerogative.⁵ All, however, sought to distinguish between the lower levels of aesthetic pleasure and a more discerning appreciation, based on reasoned judgment. A clear distinction was made between the ability to respond to the sensual qualities of colour or to marvel at the imitation of nature, and a superior level of enjoyment, apparently available only to the educated elite.⁶ Thus, as concepts of connoisseurship developed, a more sophisticated differentiation occurred between various 'grades' of viewer, as writers endeavoured to separate polite spectators from the common herd. The position of the female spectator within these definitions was a highly contested one.

Connoisseurship was defined primarily, not by what it was, but by what it was not. Satirical writers and dramatists lampooned false connoisseurs, unveiling the ill-bred vulgarity of *parvenus*, the superficial knowledge of self-styled experts, and the cupidity of art-dealers. An intense mistrust of foreigners is evident, too.⁷ Artists such as Hogarth and Reynolds attacked the false cant of aristocratic *virtuosi*, while upholding the value of honest viewing.⁸ Alongside these exclusions based on class and nationality, one 'sub-species' of unacceptable connoisseur was undoubtedly the female art-viewer, and women's responses to art were often associated with those of children, the working classes and even 'primitive' peoples. A gendered distinction is apparent, for example, in George Turnbull's treatise of 1740, which declared that modern painters could see the effect of their pictures 'even on ordinary Women and Children'.⁹

As we have seen, Barrell and Pears claim that women were excluded from the 'Republic of Taste'. Perry has also shown how the gendered nature of the language of art tended to resist women by definition, while Jones sees the norm of taste as being initially defined against a female Other.¹⁰ There were also many practical exclusions. Women were not permitted to attend Joseph Farington's monthly dinners or those preceding the Royal Academy exhibitions.¹¹ They could not hold official positions within art institutions or join all-male societies, such as the Dilettanti and Society of Antiquaries, and they were deprived of the informal discussions that took place in clubs and coffee-houses. However, the picture is far from clear-cut. Alongside this resistance, we find evidence of a desire to include women, as the 'refining' qualities they were seen to bring to society were increasingly celebrated, particularly in relation to the arts.¹² Women's innate good taste was often seen to outweigh their lack of book-learning, giving them a far more positive role. David Hume, for example, in 1741–2, had declared that,

All men of sense, who know the world, have a great deference for their judgment ... and repose more confidence in the delicacy of their taste, though unguided by rules, than in all the dull labours of pedants and commentators.¹³

An interest in the arts was considered an integral aspect of polite femininity, and art publications began to be dedicated to women, such as *The Polite Arts, Dedicated to the Ladies* (1767) and *The Exhibition of Painting; A Poem. Addressed to the Ladies* (1775). Individual women were frequently acknowledged to have good taste. Lady Bingham, Anne Damer, Mary Berry, Lady Diana Beauclerck and Mary Delany were among those praised by Walpole and Reynolds, while Dr Johnson enjoyed discussing art with Hester Thrale, and James Northcote asked Frances Reynolds for her advice on buying prints.¹⁴

Certain qualities considered integral to the female character were seen as offering women an advantage in the context of connoisseurship. Their honest good sense was especially highly valued. Bernard Mandeville had promoted the 'natural' taste of women in his *Fable of the Bees, Part II* (1729), for example, where the figure of Fulvia undercuts male pretensions to the *grand goût* by standing up for common sense and truth to nature. 'I have no skill in painting,' she declares, 'but I can see whether things are drawn to the life or not Pray, cousin, has good sense ever any share in the judgment which your men of true taste form about pictures?'¹⁵ Allan Ramsay, too, emphasized the value of the innocent eye that took nature as its guide. Even an illiterate farmer's daughter, he claimed, would recognize that George Lambert's landscapes were '*vastly natural*'.¹⁶ Hogarth specifically included women among those who could become connoisseurs, claiming that people who trusted to their experience of nature,

are in a much fairer way, ladies, as well as gentlemen, of gaining a perfect knowledge of the elegant and beautiful in artificial, as well as natural forms, ... than those who have been prepossess'd by dogmatic rules, taken from the performances of art only¹⁷

He considered women's untutored judgment superior to that of painters, whose minds were blinkered by rules drawn from art, rather than nature. This belief in women's instinct for good taste is found in Joshua Reynolds' obituary of Theresa Parker (1745–75), wife of his patron John Parker of Saltram. Acknowledging her 'skill and exact judgement', he says 'she seemed to possess, by a kind of intuition, that propriety of taste and right thinking, which others but imperfectly acquire by long labour and application'.¹⁸

Assumptions about women's more sensitive nervous systems and more vivid imaginations, dating back into the classical past, may also have enhanced their acceptance as skilled art-viewers. Alexander Gerard, in his *Essay on Taste* (1759), had claimed that women had more lively passions and therefore greater 'sensitivity of taste' than men.¹⁹ The *Artist's Repository* (1784–94) also acknowledged that women possessed an ample share of

the 'seeds of taste', excelling especially in 'sprightliness of imagination' and 'impressive sensibility'.²⁰ Certain aspects of female biology were therefore positively perceived in relation to art-viewing, an attitude further encouraged by the vogue for Sensibility, which raised the value of feeling in relation to reason.²¹

Women's innate sense and sensibility therefore made them apparently more 'naturally' perceptive in their response to the fine arts. However, this was not the only quality required to form a good critic. Webb had defined taste as 'a facility in the mind to be moved by what is excellent in an art', but he also stressed the need for science, or culture, stressing that although nature had bestowed feeling on all, understanding was limited to the few.²² Women were consistently seen as having the aesthetic sensibility component in abundance, but not the ability to develop a more rational appreciation of art. To be polite, taste must be transformed from the mere sensual and emotional into the intellectual.²³ It was a stage novice connoisseurs – even aristocratic males – had to pass through, but one they could potentially move beyond, whereas women were often considered unable to do so.

Women were believed by many to lack the seriousness necessary for critical judgment. Hannah More, an advocate of improved female education, is typical in maintaining the notion of essential difference in women's brains. In 1777 she declared:

Women have generally quicker perceptions; men have juster sentiments Women prefer ... a sparkling effusion of fancy, before the most accurate reasoning, or the most laborious investigation of facts.

She accepted that women were unable to think logically, lacking 'wholeness of mind, in the integral understanding'.²⁴ Many women writers concurred with this view, which held consistent force throughout the nineteenth century. It is hardly surprising, then, to find that women were not generally thought to possess the qualities required of a connoisseur. They might respond with ready empathy to pictures, and judge the accuracy of imitated details, but were considered unable to assess compositions as a whole. While still-life, landscape and portraiture might appeal to them, therefore, history painting, which expressed general truths and demanded rational analysis, appeared beyond their capacities. Richardson, in his influential *Two Discourses* (1719), had insisted that connoisseurs should not 'flutter about in Confusion' from one idea to another. If women's minds were seen as incapable of logic, it is no wonder that the female connoisseur appeared to be a contradiction in terms.²⁵

In her *Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Taste* (1785), Frances Reynolds declared, 'To the man I would give the laws of taste; to the woman its sensibility. The taste of the former seems more derived from reason; that of the latter from instinct'.²⁶ For

Reynolds, however, true taste was as far removed from mere instinct as from mere reason, implying that connoisseurship was open to women if they cultivated the more reasoned aspect of their nature. Writers such as Mary Wollstonecraft and Mary Robinson also argued in the 1790s that women's intellectual failings were not innate, but the result of their inadequate education.²⁷ The achievements of the Bluestockings and their followers clearly demonstrated women's abilities, and although opportunities were restricted mainly to the upper and middle classes, by the late eighteenth century the number of women engaged in serious study was considerable.²⁸

Resistance to female learning remained, as many believed it should not interfere with women's primary religious and domestic duties. Even within supportive households, education was often sporadic, with girls acquiring a rag-bag of self-taught information, rather than the broad, humanistic curriculum required for connoisseurship. Diarist Mary Berry (1763–1852) felt acutely the damage done by her patchy education:

Desultory and heterogeneous reading is the great evil of all young women. Our education (if education it can be called) is nearly ended by the time that our minds begin to open and to be really eager for information²⁹

This haphazard approach threatened to undermine women's confidence in their own judgment, as we see from the young Fanny Burney (1752–1840). Though she benefited from access to a well-stocked library, she remained insecure about her responses because of the self-led nature of her study: 'you must consider how very, very, very bad a Judge I am, as I read with nobody, & consequently have nobody to correct or guide my opinion'.³⁰ The inadequacy of women's education affected the way they were viewed as connoisseurs, and as I will show, continued to have consequences for later women art-writers.

Although definitions vary, a fairly consistent set of requirements for the would-be connoisseur emerges from eighteenth-century art treatises and handbooks. In considering the extent to which women matched up to the necessary qualifications, it is instructive to examine Matthew Pilkington's *Gentleman's and Connoisseur's Dictionary of Painters* (1770), which remained influential into the early nineteenth century. Pilkington's first prerequisite for a 'well-founded taste for painting' was that viewers should be conversant with history, both sacred and 'profane'. He also advised the intensive study and comparison of artworks, combined with 'a competent skill in Drawing, and a knowledge of Anatomy', in order to judge proportions and artists' skill in execution.³¹

As far as Pilkington's educational demands are concerned, biblical history would have presented no difficulty for women, as 'studious perusal of the Bible' was a major part of their schooling. Classical history presented more of a challenge. Like Pilkington,

Richardson and Webb agreed that viewers should be well versed in the classics in order to understand history painting.³² Such learning was largely inaccessible to women, because history was considered too taxing, and many ancient texts were ‘very improper for Ladies’.³³ Some women deeply resented this restriction, and many taught themselves Latin and Greek, or studied classical texts in translation.³⁴ As we shall see, most of the published women writers on art display considerable knowledge of classical culture, even though it was rarely acquired through formal teaching. Nevertheless, women’s perceived lack of classical education continued to be seen as a major impediment to their understanding of art, preventing their being taken seriously as connoisseurs.

Was it really impossible to appreciate history painting without a knowledge of the classics, however? In spite of the theoretical need for a classical education, male connoisseurs, especially in the middle classes, were often just as deficient as women in this department. Reynolds declared that all artists should have a classical education, but as Brewer has indicated, most did not.³⁵ Women were therefore not alone in lacking what were ostensibly essential skills. By way of compensation, they were often able to understand art texts in French and Italian, as upper- and middle-class women were taught modern languages in place of Latin and Greek. Pilkington was motivated to publish his work by a desire to serve those ‘of all ranks and stations, who may feel the utmost fondness for the imitative arts, and yet be totally unacquainted with several of those languages, from which the knowledge of the most memorable artists can be acquired’.³⁶ By the late eighteenth century, such texts were more widely available in English, allowing less privileged women access to knowledge on art. Connoisseurial expertise was not simply a matter of access to classical learning, then. If women were seen to be excluded from connoisseurship, it was more than a matter of their educational qualifications.

Educating the gaze

Looking at art was equally important for the formation of a connoisseur, according to Pilkington. Only through the ‘frequent and studious inspection’ of artworks could critical judgment be improved.³⁷ Richardson and Reynolds also encouraged training of the eye by frequent conversing with images and the making of comparisons. The essential thing was to see plenty of good art in order to develop a ‘chaste eye’, as Webb described it, otherwise viewers would display a ‘boyish and wanton imagination’, preferring the ‘false beauties’ of Rubens or the ‘theatrical grace of Guido’ to the ‘elegant simplicity of Raphael’.³⁸

So to what extent did women enjoy opportunities to educate their eyes? Until the opening of the national collections in the early nineteenth century, access to art tended to be dictated by class position, so it is largely women of the middle and upper classes to whom I refer here. Within this social bracket, however, art-viewing was frequent and widespread. Lippincott, for example, has underlined the importance of women in the art world of the early to mid-eighteenth century.³⁹ A highly visible presence in the public art scene, they attended auctions as avidly as their male counterparts, for example. As Gibson-Wood points out, the prominence of women buyers at auctions had been indicated by the gender-inclusive language in conditions of sale from the seventeenth century, with specific references being made to 'Ladies' present.⁴⁰ Comments in journals of the late eighteenth century indicate that women continued to enjoy these events. Burney, for example, noted who bought works and the sums paid for them, just as Walpole did.⁴¹ Dr Johnson was extremely scornful about women at auctions, accusing them of being carried away with excitement.⁴² He positioned women's interest firmly in the context of acquisitiveness, rather than connoisseurship, and later writers continued to see auctions as mere social amusement, rather than educational opportunity, as we see from *The Woman of Fashion* (1778).⁴³ Whatever women's motivation for attending, their presence at auctions indicates their participation in art culture and their equal opportunity to view pictures (figs 7, 8).

Women's role as decorators of the home meant they were courted as important consumers of art, who were central to an artist's economic success. Pointon and Vickery have shown that domestic chattels, especially pictures, were often 'under the custody' of the wife, and itemized in women's wills.⁴⁴ In spite of their acknowledged role in acquiring art objects, few eighteenth-century women are well-known as collectors or patrons, but this may largely be due to the fact that purchases by married women are hidden by their husband's name. Pears comments on the minor impact of English female collectors, as compared with their French counterparts, such as Madame de Pompadour.⁴⁵ Exceptions include the Duchess of Portland (1714–85) and Lady Betty Germaine (1680–1769), both widowed, which, significantly, enhances their visibility in historical records.⁴⁶ The wealthy Duchess of Portland 'gratified her taste for Virtù' by buying pictures 'she did not understand' according to Walpole. His scornful attitude is typical of the way in which women's understanding of art could be belittled in this period.⁴⁷ Clearly, women who collected art were most often in the highest ranks of society, but many lower down the scale also commissioned works, especially family portraits and miniatures. Lawrence indicates that female patronage was not confined to portraits, but included large-scale monuments and architectural projects.⁴⁸

Artists relied heavily on women's social networks to forge links with patrons. They often established contacts in aristocratic and court circles by giving art lessons to women, for example.⁴⁹ Artists actively sought to attract women to their studios by promoting them as places of fashionable encounter, and encouraged them to attend Vauxhall Gardens and the Foundling Hospital, where art was on public display.⁵⁰ One indication of women's importance as patrons can be found in James Barry's *The Distribution of Premiums* (1777–84) in the Great Room of the Society of Arts, where Elizabeth Montagu and the Duchess of Northumberland are shown recommending the work of a young girl to the Duchesses of Devonshire and Rutland (fig. 9). The Society of Arts was from the first open to women, and though they represented only a small minority of members, this image reflects a desire to encourage their patronage of the arts.⁵¹

Many of women's leisure activities involved picture-viewing. Diaries often refer to looking over prints as an evening pastime, visiting country houses and artists' studios, where they studied the art on display.⁵² Women frequently expressed opinions on what they saw – privately, if not in print. The travel journals of Dorothy Richardson, a rector's daughter from Yorkshire, for example, describe her visits to the studios of Reynolds and Benjamin West, in 1775 and 1785, respectively. In judging their work she deploys the language of connoisseurship with ease, as Pointon has shown.⁵³ Above all, women were a major presence at public art exhibitions, where they would have been able to join in discussions of style and content.

Increasingly, women went abroad to see artworks, especially after the end of the Seven Years War in 1763.⁵⁴ This was absolutely crucial for their ability to judge art with authority, as it enabled them to compare original masterpieces with the unsatisfactory prints by which most English viewers knew them. Berry certainly felt the educational benefits of such a tour, feeling 'my mind, my understanding, and my judgment increasing every day'.⁵⁵ Although this was still seen as a quintessentially aristocratic practice, Continental tours were not confined to noblewomen, but were also undertaken by those who wished to save money, to improve their health, or to train as painters. Burney mentions Anne Forbes, for example, 'a Paintress ... for whose improvement, the Family resided 3 years in Italy', while playwright Mariana Starke (Chapter 3) accompanied a consumptive relative, and Jameson went as a governess (Chapter 7).⁵⁶ Pointon has shown how travel could represent a source of empowerment for women, as they laid claim to a process of viewing and recording that was traditionally masculine.⁵⁷ Women's writing on art often appears in the context of published travel-writing, in letters home or private

journals. Such sources reveal that travel was crucial to women's sense of themselves as connoisseurs.

It is clear that despite certain restrictions, art culture of the eighteenth century was substantially a shared culture in which women were enthusiastic participants, though the extent of their involvement has been hidden by the patriarchal focus of art-historical studies and their relative invisibility in official records. Women's considerable engagement with visual culture ably demonstrates that they met Pilkington's requirement for experience in art-viewing.

The making of art

Pilkington's final demand was for practical training in art to develop taste and judgment. By the late eighteenth century, art education was sharply differentiated for men and women. Boys tended to be taught the more practical aspects of drawing, useful for geometry and map-making, while art-making for its own sake became primarily a female preserve (fig. 10).⁵⁸ Initially, instruction had been restricted to aristocratic women, but this spread down through the classes, with art being taught in most girls' boarding schools by the end of the century. By 1800 the Society of Arts had awarded premiums to at least a hundred young women in the 'Polite Arts' category.⁵⁹ The life-drawing and historical prizes were restricted to young men, but girls were encouraged to compete in landscape-drawing, etching, and in modelling wax ornaments, busts and medallions.⁶⁰ From 1762 honorary premiums were awarded to aristocratic young Ladies, 'Daughters of Peers or Peeresses in their own Right', who would become the arbiters of taste, while separate categories were aimed at the daughters of professional artists.⁶¹ Some prize-winners, like Mary Moser and the Dietz sisters, went on to become successful painters themselves.⁶²

As Pullan points out, the daughters of artists were in a privileged position as far as training was concerned, which meant women's art-making was not confined to aristocratic and gentrified ladies.⁶³ Even though women were largely excluded from formal training, many worked as painters and engravers, even after marriage.⁶⁴ Mary Darly (fl. 1756–79), for example, partner in Matthew Darly's print business, produced caricatures for sale and published *A Book of Caricaturas* (c. 1762). She is depicted as 'The Female Conoiseur', according to Walpole's annotated collection of the Darly *Macaroni* series (1772; fig. 11), though the title is clearly ironic, as she holds a print of the suggestively posed 'Martial Macaroni', rather than an example of high art.⁶⁵

Pullan has stressed that class was a central factor determining the nature of women's access to art, but notes that by the end of the century sketching and painting were almost universally encouraged as suitable pastimes for women.⁶⁶ Educational writer Priscilla Wakefield, writing in 1798, encouraged aristocratic woman to develop an interest in art because they had a duty to provide patronage, while for middle- and lower-class women, it offered an acceptable way of earning a living. Women excelled in invention and taste, Wakefield claimed, and could acquire judgment 'by a perseverance in examining, comparing and reflecting' on the works of Old Masters. There appeared to be 'no natural deficiency, either mental or corporeal, to prevent them from becoming proficient in that art, were the bent of their education favourable to the attempt'.⁶⁷ For Wakefield, it was only experience that set the limits on female achievement. Sloan underlines the time women devoted to their art studies, and the high level they attained in certain cases.⁶⁸

So was this education in art-making seen to give women an advantage in judging art? The combined activities of amateur and professional women artists began to convince some writers that their skills were potentially equal to those of men, at least within certain genres, as we see from a flower-painting treatise of 1799:

the great progress that some ladies have made in painting, is a convincing proof, that taste or genius for painting is not confined to the other sex; on the contrary, I am inclined to think, that ladies would make much greater progress than men, were they first taught the proper rudiments.⁶⁹

In spite of such compliments, however, as Bermingham and Yeldham have demonstrated, women's art-making tended to be denigrated in the context of 'accomplishments', being seen as a polite skill, rather than an education in aesthetic judgment.⁷⁰ It therefore transformed daughters into marriageable commodities without lending them authority as connoisseurs. The separation Pears describes between the making of art and the judging of art meant that painting skills were not in themselves sufficient to qualify women as critics of art.⁷¹ Although male artists increasingly stressed the value of 'mechanick' knowledge, to enhance their status as experts, many considered this only a minor requirement. The detached objectivity obtained through an all-round education was still seen as the ideal preparation for connoisseurship. Webb, for example, had declared that painters 'seldom, like gentlemen and scholars, rise to an unprejudiced and liberal contemplation of true Beauty'.⁷² Most women, of course, were perceived as having neither the detachment of the educated gentleman, nor the experience of the professional artist. If a woman developed her artistic skills to a high level, she was invariably seen as falling victim to an 'enthusiasm', which further detracted from her ability to judge in a reasoned fashion. Though their art practice undoubtedly gave women an enhanced understanding of

materials and techniques, it apparently did little to alter perceptions of them as connoisseurs.

This would seem to support the view that women were excluded from connoisseurship, even though they met most of Pilkington's criteria.⁷³ The question remains, then, whether women were considered capable of making the transition to mature taste, or whether perceptions of their innate inadequacies precluded such a development. Even with the best education in the world, the opportunity to see art on a regular basis, and practical skills developed to a high level, were women still seen as being debarred from connoisseurship?

Fripperies and finery: the problem of women's taste

In this context, it is helpful to consider portrayals of the female art-viewer in the late-eighteenth-century press. Significantly, she makes a more frequent appearance in satirical sketches than in serious art texts, and these representations are often far from complimentary. Though doubtless tongue-in-cheek, they reveal the underlying prejudices of writers, which helped to mould the perceptions of their readers through the constant repetition of certain conventional notions of female viewing.

Satirical writing often stresses women's inappropriate behaviour within the art gallery. There was a common complaint, for example, that women went to exhibitions to see other visitors, rather than to study works of art – a consistent theme well into the late nineteenth century. A dialogue in the *Ladies' Miscellany* for 1770 illustrates this clearly:

Miss Plumptree: 'Pray, Miss Pert, have you been at the exhibition?'

Miss Pert: 'Which, ma'am?'

Miss Plump.: 'The Spring-garden you may be sure, for that is fullest.'⁷⁴

This focus on the human element derives from ideas about women's innate sociability. Hume, for example, had described women as essentially conversable, rather than learned creatures, describing the fair sex as 'sovereigns of the empire of conversation'.⁷⁵ When this sociability enters the exhibition room, it appears unsuited to the serious business of judging art, however. Women are seen as trivializing exhibitions by treating them as 'glitt'ring kill-time shows', and their participation is characterized as frivolous and disruptive.⁷⁶

Although excessive female sociability was frequently disparaged, this aspect was of vital importance to the Royal Academy. Given that private views and exhibitions were designed to forge relationships between wealthy patrons and artists, it is ironic that

women's skill in social interaction should have been treated with such contempt. Indeed, inattentiveness was not a purely female tendency, as men were also criticized for not paying attention: 'the greatest part never descend into minuties in looking at a picture, and not a few go to these exhibitions only for the sake of saying they have been there'.⁷⁷ Women bore the brunt of criticism for superficial viewing, however. *The Exhibition of Painting* (1775), for example, likens them to bees drifting idly from flower to flower, as if 'collecting sweets'.⁷⁸ A similar image had been used by De Piles, when he recommended that the male student of art should 'keep up his taste' and 'feed his eye' by studying a range of fine works, just as bees gathered honey from several flowers.⁷⁹ When the image of the bee is applied to women, it evokes their inability to focus; when applied to men, it conjures up application and industry.

Part of the problem was that women were believed to distract other viewers by their presence. Images such as Charles Brandoin's *Exhibition of the Royal Academy of Painting in the Year 1771* (1772; fig. 12) show women disrupting the gaze of male visitors, and many writers declared that the real reason women went to exhibitions was to attract men's attention, often eclipsing the art:

... beauty, in attractive motion
Engrosses all that warm devotion,
The Arts, ambitious, hop'd to share.⁸⁰

This attitude finds expression in the *Morning Herald*, in 1781, when a gentleman declares the impossibility of concentrating on art when there are beautiful ladies present, and suggests separate viewing days for the sexes:

Were the Exhibition ... appropriated to the inspection of the ladies only on one day, and to the gentlemen on the other, the connoisseurs of each sex could pronounce their opinions with more certainty on the merits and defects of the most capital paintings. For my part, ... I have too much feeling to admire the most perfect imitations when the animated originals are in view.

Ladies also found the presence of gentlemen distracting. When her male chaperon picks up a fan dropped by another young lady, the woman in this article finds that jealousy prevents her from concentrating: 'None of the paintings could afterwards please her – the fan was written in her eyes – the fan heaved in her bosom'.⁸¹ The female gaze was perceived to be equally disrupted by desire.

Closely linked to the ostensibly feminine interest in people is women's supposed preference for portraiture over history painting. Likeness in a portrait was considered easy for women to judge, while history painting, representing civic ideals and heroic virtue, was seen as a more demanding, masculine genre.⁸² As painter Joseph Highmore put it,

'Children, servants, and the lowest of the people are judges of likeness in a portrait.'⁸³ Portraits were also thought to appeal to women's essential vanity and desire for self-display. This obsession with their own appearance meant that women were not sufficiently neutral to judge beauty in art, especially when assessing portraits of other women. Judgments on Ozias Humphry's female miniature portraits were perceived to depend on the viewer's sex, for example:

the beauty, grace and modesty of the lady in the picture numbered 62, must particularly attach the eyes of all beholders; at least, of all *male* beholders. Many of her *own* sex will, perhaps, see nothing engaging in her.⁸⁴

Women's vanity therefore not only interfered with academic hierarchies of genre, but distorted their judgment of individual portraits. Again, this was not seen purely as a female failing. The satirist Anthony Pasquin (John Williams) complained that vanity had infected the British nation as a whole, leading to the triumph of portraiture over history.⁸⁵ It was mainly women, however, who were blamed for seducing artists away from history painting.

Long-held beliefs about the nature of women's taste dictated how female art-viewers were characterized later in the century. The *Spectator* had reflected on the 'unaccountable Humour in Woman-kind, of being smitten with every thing that is showy and superficial', and deplored 'this Natural Weakness of being taken with Outside and Appearance':

In short, they consider only the Drapery of the Species ... When Women are thus perpetually dazzling one another's Imaginations, and filling their Heads with nothing but Colours, it is no Wonder that they are more attentive to the superficial Parts of Life, than the solid and substantial Blessings of it.⁸⁶

Such ideas are echoed in the satirical writings of Pasquin and Pindar, who had much to say on the subject of women viewers – little of it positive. For Pasquin, women constituted an important part of the 'base and groveling [sic] horde' he saw as corrupting artists, leading them into brightly coloured and flashy styles of painting, which pandered to the lowest taste.⁸⁷ He accused John Hoppner, for example, of appealing to women through his 'childish propensity to render his objects gaudy', while Richard Cosway's work revealed 'more of a feminine than a masculine ambition' because it aimed at the 'accomplishment of trifles'. In the case of Richard Westall, Pasquin remarked 'Had I known the private history of this gentleman less, I should have believed that he had been exclusively educated among ladies, and rendered, by the means of a perverted tuition, more delicate

than aspiring'. His latent capabilities are poisoned by a bad taste which is specifically registered as female.⁸⁸

Pasquin talks of 'the Vulgar' in general in his tirades against public opinion, but vulgar taste is closely identified with women's taste, and is constructed in direct opposition to a masculinized academic model. Above all, women were blamed for encouraging artists to employ an over-bright palette. Writing in 1796, Pasquin criticized Thomas Lawrence for his dazzling hues: 'I know if his colouring is too *sombre* it will not please the ladies, but if it is too glaring it will offend the eye of the connoisseur.'⁸⁹ Such formulations reveal how female taste could be directly opposed to that of the connoisseur. There may even have been a perceived connection between women's taste for gaudy colour and their use of cosmetics.⁹⁰ Pasquin described Westall's drawings, for example, as being 'tinted with what may be termed *nicety*, perhaps with Milk of Roses [a cosmetic], and consequently alluring to the vulgar.'⁹¹ The vulgar were therefore associated with women who wore make-up. It was acknowledged that male viewers were also drawn to bright colour, of course. According to Webb, the universal taste for colour was linked to men's fascination with the female blush. Reynolds, too, acknowledged its power over the spectator, calling colour the 'seductive sister' of painting.⁹² In men, however, this was seen as an immaturity of taste, typical of 'unfledged students', whereas in women it was perceived as an inescapable condition, linked to their supposed greater materiality and sensuality.⁹³

Fashion was another factor that was believed to dominate female taste in art. As we have seen, Pindar sneered at women's delight in the portrayal of colourful fabrics. He comments on female portraits, for example, in terms that mock their use of fashionable costume. One is 'trick'd out' with 'laces, yellow, red, and blue,/ And wig and comb, in graceful order', depicting 'A handkerchief of check, that makes a blaze;/ ... An infant's pudding, and a pair of stays'.⁹⁴ These jumbled elements reflect the female mind, which was perceived to assemble details, but without a rational sense of order. Pindar also relates the fickle taste of the viewing public to the mutability of female fashions. One moment, he says, crowds will praise an artist's painting to the skies, 'When, perhaps a ribband, (fie upon it!)/ A feather, or a tawdry bonnet,/ Caught, by its *glare*, their *wonder-spying* eyes'. Soon, however, taste moves on, and 'the million pitches on a Ruff,/ A Balloon Cap, – a Shawl, – a Muff' instead.⁹⁵ The association with women's taste for fashionable portraits led to artists such as Westall and Cosway being described as 'man milliners', or '*Retainers of the Brush*', feminized lackeys corrupted by the desire to create colourful concoctions for their mistresses.⁹⁶ The artist who appealed to women was therefore lacking in proper masculinity, a foppish fellow more interested in finery than in fine art.

Women's 'innate' love of fashion was closely connected with their supposed preference for French art. As Pasquin put it,

The French school has been too much marked with the love of finery, and has evinced more of prejudices bordering upon feminine, than the bold decided character necessary for those who undertake to delineate the virtuous fury of a Brutus⁹⁷

Women's taste for finery was therefore directly opposed to history painting, and was seen to undermine national good taste through its association with the perceived frivolity of French art. This preference for foreign works often caused women's taste to be represented as deeply unpatriotic, as well as un-academic.

There was a perception that women had a natural taste for high finish, too. Shiny, polished surfaces were thought to appeal to them, a quality closely related to the allure of luxury goods, such as tea-boards, porcelain, fan-painting and lacquerwork, and even to the shininess of glazed French complexions.⁹⁸ Again, this was seen as a vulgar preference dictated by inappropriately commercial values:

Be smooth as glass – like DENNER, finish high:
Then every tongue commends –
For people judge not *only* by the eye,
But *feel* your merit by their finger-ends:
Nay! Closely *nosing*, o'er the Picture, dwell;
As if to try the *Goodness* by the *Smell*.⁹⁹

Pindar's description associates art-viewing with the bazaar and the quintessentially female activity of shopping, seen as utterly opposed to the values of the true connoisseur.

Associated with high finish was the taste for excess detail. Pindar condemned women's desire to see every hair on a head, because it typified the vulgar assumption that mimetic veracity represented the height of achievement in painting:

If at a *distance* you would paint a Pig,
Make out each single bristle on his back:
... Else all the Lady Critics will so stare,
And angry vow, "'tis not a bit like hair!"¹⁰⁰

This connection is maintained well into the nineteenth century, as we see from a poem entitled *The Exhibition* (1811). The writer warns artists that there is no value in the 'monkey Art' of slavish copying, even though 'wondering Misses cry with wond'ring *La's!* "How like the tea-cups to our grand-mamma's."¹⁰¹ The ability to judge imitation from nature was central to the contemporary perception of women as art-viewers, for representations drawn from familiar life were considered open to them in a way that history was not.¹⁰² They were thought to prefer depictions they could recognize from their

own experience, lending women an affinity with Dutch art especially. However, this mimetic style was considered to be of a lower order in art, as Reynolds made clear in *Discourse V*. The lowest style is the most popular because 'it falls within the compass of ignorance itself; and the Vulgar will always be pleased with what is natural'.¹⁰³ As Webb pointed out, because observers had the least to do in judging the 'mechanick' part of art, as compared with the ideal, inventive part, it was much easier to appreciate the Dutch 'servile copiers of the works of nature', than the more intellectual work of Raphael or Correggio.¹⁰⁴ Women's taste, then, was associated with laboured imitations from life, but not with the highest achievements of idealized academic art.

Female viewers were not the only ones with a taste for the 'natural', however, which was to become increasingly popular with audiences in the nineteenth century. Admiration for detail was virtually universal, cutting across class and sex, because it denoted labour and skill.¹⁰⁵ Theoretically, this was a stage viewers should move beyond if they were to become true connoisseurs, but in fact most were content to leave their taste 'undeveloped'. If women's taste was presented as anti-academic, in its preference for portraiture over history, for laboured imitation over idealization, then this taste was not confined to women alone, though women were often seen as being confined to this taste.

Policing the female gaze

Owing to both classical and Judaeo-Christian traditions, women were generally accepted as naturally subordinate to men, and therefore tended to be seen as passive recipients of culture rather than as leaders of it. They were not entirely excluded, but were included 'marginally, either as passive consumers ... whose taste may be controlled or dominated, or as producers of their own sub-culture'.¹⁰⁶ The many scathing comments in satirical exhibition pamphlets certainly indicate an underlying mistrust of female taste and a desire to control their influence. Pasquin, for example, pointed to the dangers of allowing women to dominate art patronage, demanding that proper limits be affixed to their 'ominous agency'.¹⁰⁷

Women's taste was also seen as vulnerable to corruption, however, requiring protection and guidance. Conduct-writer Hester Chapone warned young ladies in 1773, 'Would you be of the number of those blessed, "who are pure in heart," – you must hate and avoid every thing, ... that conveys any impure ideas, however neatly cloathed [sic] in decent language'.¹⁰⁸ This undoubtedly included painting and sculpture, and in 1797

Anglican priest Thomas Gisborne warned that exhibitions, as part of the seductive dissipations of the social round, were potentially threatening to a young girl's virtue.¹⁰⁹ Unease about art-viewing was closely related to religious anxieties, particularly among Dissenting sects. Art was part of a culture of vanity and display representing 'the lust of the eyes and the pride of life', which distracted people from their Godly duty.¹¹⁰ Moral concerns applied to both men and women, of course, but excessive involvement in the arts was additionally seen as taking women away from their duties as wives and mothers.¹¹¹

The rules of decorum were a further barrier to women's art-viewing. How women behaved in any public arena was crucial to their reputation, and conduct books insisted that they should avoid staring hard at people or things in an impudent fashion. For women artists, the piercing, unprotected gaze could easily be misconstrued. Dr Johnson declared, 'Miss Reynolds ought not to paint. Publick practice of staring in men's faces is inconsistent with delicacy'.¹¹² According to Chapone, 'a very young woman can hardly be too silent and reserved in company'; the best mode they could adopt was 'a respectful and earnest attention'.¹¹³ A young woman's best policy in an exhibition, therefore, was to keep her gaze lowered and to say little, while absorbing the views of her male chaperon – not an easy way to judge the art on display.

Viewing of the nude in particular was seen as violating Christian principles, and any hint of a woman's gaze being directed at the male body met with salacious suggestion (figs 13, 14). Such sensitivities are clear from Angelica Kauffman's determination to stress that she worked from casts, rather than live human forms. Famously, Kauffman and Moser were assigned to the wall as portraits in Zoffany's painting of the Royal Academicians (1771–2, Royal Collection), because of the impossibility of their appearing in a life-class. Yet in Henry Singleton's version (1795), they appear in person, even though the room is brimming over with muscular male nude statues. Casts seem to have been relatively acceptable for women, while life-study was most certainly not (figs 15, 16).

Even today, an artist's gaze may be misinterpreted if the bearer of that gaze is a woman. Wassyng Roworth, for example, suspects Kauffman of lasciviousness in studying the buttocks of a cast she is sketching, in Nathaniel Dance's portrait of c. 1764–6 (fig. 17).¹¹⁴ Is this really a 'mildly crude joke' on the part of Dance, as Roworth suggests? This would place Kauffman's portrait in the same category as Cosway's ogling *Group of Connoisseurs* (1773–5; fig. 18). Or is the portrait rather a tribute to Kauffman as a serious artist, comparable with pictures of men staring critically at artworks, such as Hugh Douglas Hamilton's *Antonio Canova in his Studio with Henry Tresham* (1788–91; fig. 19)? Given the context of the portrait, painted by a friend as a private gift, the latter would seem

the most likely explanation. It appears Kauffman's gaze is misconstrued as sexual by Roworth purely because the image represents a woman contemplating a male nude. Even today the situation is interpreted as titillating, and the intensity of the connoisseurial gaze was especially alien to eighteenth-century concepts of female vision. The fluttering glance, peeping coyly from behind a fan, as in J. R. Smith's *Miss Macaroni and her Gallant at a Print-Shop* (1773), was the very antithesis of the steady attention required of the connoisseur (fig. 20).

Waves of protest surface regularly throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries against women's exposure to nudity in art. In 1780, for example, a writer expressed outrage at the re-positioning of classical statuary in the Royal Academy. Figures that had formerly 'deterred ladies from ever entering the apartments of the Old Academy', he complained, were now 'obtruded on their view without the least reserve'.¹¹⁵ This criticism obviously had some effect, as an 'amputation of a most singular nature' was performed on each cast. In May 1781 George Cumberland complained that plaster fig-leaves had been imposed on the statues, thanks to the vulgar prudery of 'ignorant fanatics'. He asserted that classical nudity could never give offence to a person of 'refined and polished manners':

I can assert with every lover of truth, and every admirer of Greek sculpture, that their former unmutated state had no tendency whatever, to raise a blush on the cheek of modesty; whereas in their present condition they become the constant subject of animadversion¹¹⁶

Polite women, he implies, would not be shocked by nudes, but only the vulgar, of either sex, who were unacquainted with the aesthetics of Greek art.¹¹⁷ The same arguments were to be repeated on both sides for the next century at least, as we will see in Chapter 2.

It was not just representations of the nude that were considered unsuitable, but anything that might shock the more impressionable female nervous system. Olivier's *Massacre of the Innocents* was considered 'too horrible even for men to look at and may be productive of much mischief for the female sex'.¹¹⁸ Women were perceived to be more physically affected by scenes of torture and horror, again limiting their access to history painting.¹¹⁹ Their freedom to contemplate art alone was therefore in question, and chaperons were required to decide which pictures were appropriate for them. *The Exhibition of Painting* (1775), for example, stresses the need for men to teach women about the art on view, while prints frequently show women with male companions explaining works to them.¹²⁰ Women's taste was therefore infantilized, because the guidance of men was essential if they were to gain acceptance in the 'Republic of Taste'.

As the female gaze was restricted in such ways, women were denied the independent judgment necessary to qualify as connoisseurs.

'Behold me now a female connoisseur': satirical constructions

Published in the widely read *Public Advertiser*, 'A Conversation' (1782) offers in microcosm an array of stereotypical notions of the female art-viewer, while allowing us to investigate the interaction of class and gender in such representations.¹²¹ This sketch, in which the recently ennobled Sir Jasper Jocelyne and his family are visiting the Royal Academy exhibition, typifies the attitudes found in much satirical writing of the period.

Throughout, the women's behaviour as art-viewers is characterized by self-consciousness and intense awareness of the assembled crowds. However, their sensitivity to how they are viewed is closely linked, not only to their sex, but also to their role as *parvenues* from the City.¹²² Expressing regret that the family has been unable to sit to Reynolds in time for the exhibition, Lady Jocelyne equates the display of a portrait with the publicity to be gained from visiting the theatre:

As we have been too late for shewing ourselves this Season in the Exhibition, and to be remarked upon in the News-papers, I shall persuade Sir Jasper to take us into the Side-Boxes of the Play-house ... – We shall then see every Body, and every Body will see us.

Viewing is therefore less important than the desire to be viewed, whether as picture or spectator. Portraiture, picture-viewing and theatre-going are all seen as important forms of public exposure for those keen to establish themselves within polite society.

Lady Jocelyne is especially conscious of this, as we see from a discussion over the use of an opera-glass. When her daughter expresses concern that she is having trouble with her eyes, her mother replies,

My pretty, inexperienced girl, if you will peep into the Stage-Boxes of the Play and Opera Houses, when certain great Personages are there, you may observe them every Moment taking their Spying-glasses out of their Pockets, in order to see It is from thence become an universal Fashion among all polite People The *Ton*, in all Cases whatsoever, shall be the future Guide of my Conduct.

Use of the eye-glass was a common visual short-hand for the myopic obsessions of the connoisseur (fig. 21).¹²³ For Lady Jocelyne, however, its use is explicitly prompted by emulation; her eye-glass is a fashion accessory rather than a connoisseurial tool, designed to enhance her social standing rather than expand her knowledge of painting. The epilogue to Charles Macklin's play *Man of the World* (1781) also wittily brings together the social

and connoisseurial aspects of the eye-glass, playing on the ambiguous use of it that we find in prints of this period (fig. 12). Again, a connection is made between the theatre and picture-gallery as places of social display, as the text derives comedy from the confusion between female viewing of portraits and people:

Behold me now a female connoisseur,
Deep skill'd in pictures, and with your permission,
I'll give my judgment of this exhibition.
[Takes out a pocket-glass, and looks round the house]
The room's well fill'd – here's some enchanting faces –
That's a good picture – yet it is the Graces –
The outline's fine – the aspect rather haughty,
The worst on't is, the colouring is faulty.
That Kit-kat of a General wants strength,
But that's indeed a soldier at full length.¹²⁴

The clear innuendo of the last line indicates the fine distinction between picture-viewing and sexual interest – especially suggestive in the case of female viewers. It is interesting to compare this text with James Gillray's *A Peep at Christie's* (1796; fig. 22), where the actress Elizabeth Farren is shown using an eye-glass to study an image of *Zenocrates and Phryne*. Images of male viewers using an eye-glass to study female nudes were common, as for example in Rowlandson's *The Connoisseurs* (1799; fig. 23), and the sexual dimension of art-viewing was a frequent source of humour, as we see in the lewd *double-entendres* of much periodical art criticism. Pindar, for example, advised painters to 'Paint by the yard' because bulk was popular with men and maids: 'All folks love *size*'.¹²⁵ Such comments seem unsuitable for polite ladies, yet Mary Berry for one certainly read Pasquin, who could be equally suggestive, and no doubt women enjoyed such satires as much as men.¹²⁶ Macklin's epilogue suggests that women theatre-goers were equally amused by innuendo, despite the insistence on strict decorum in the conduct manuals.

Lady Jocelyne's art-viewing is itself a form of theatre, in which she performs the role of knowledgeable connoisseur. Similar concerns had been emphasized by 'Cosmetti', writer of *The Polite Arts* (1767), in advising readers on how to view paintings:

take particular care not to go, like ignorant people, excessively near; but rather beginning far off, approach gradually, till it appears rough; then recede a little, till it looks sweeter; it is what connoisseurs call finding the proper light of a painting.¹²⁷

Such helpful hints, ostensibly 'dedicated to the ladies', indicate that one of the primary concerns of the spectator was not to view art, but to be seen viewing it correctly. This anxiety was not confined to women, of course, and is a constant theme in art-writing of the period.¹²⁸ It is an equal concern for Sir Jocelyne, who senses himself out of place in 'these Regions of Taste'. As someone who has spent his life in the 'Compting House', he finds

himself 'bewildered' in the gallery, afraid of admiring, 'with a foolish Face of Praise, what a good judge will hardly approve'. He is anxious to produce the appropriate phrases that will fit his image as newly created baronet.

The importance of articulating an honest reaction to art is another familiar theme, and stands in a long tradition of common-sense writing. Interestingly, it is Sir Jocelyne's sister, Mrs Priscilla, who criticises his insecurity. She reminds him of the maxim of the 'great Hogarth' – 'To Nature and yourself appeal,/ Nor learn from others how to feel' – and urges him to trust his own eyes:

I warrant you, brother, we shall be able to distinguish the Performances of the best Masters for ourselves We are old enough, and I hope wise enough, to entertain Opinions of our own upon all Subjects. For my Part, I will judge for myself.

Here, then, the inadequate male viewer, fraught with social insecurity, is lectured by a woman, who stresses that age and experience are important factors in connoisseurship. Mrs Priscilla is equally aware of social expectation, however, and seconds Sir Jocelyne's view of the importance of displaying knowledge in art, as he has become 'a Man of Consequence, and your Notions will probably be attended to'. Oliver Goldsmith, among others, had satirized the way in which professed knowledge of art was exploited as a means to social climbing: 'Painting is now become the sole object of fashionable care. The title of connoisseur in that art is at present the safest passport in every fashionable society'.¹²⁹ Sir Jocelyne therefore turns to a male connoisseur, Mr Cognoscenti, for advice, borrowing his catalogue, which is marked up in accordance with De Piles' 'Balance of Painters'. So often we find female art-viewers guided by men, and yet here is a man seeking instruction. It is interesting to note how far his uncertainty is tied to notions of class. The upwardly mobile, middle-class male is in the same infantilized position as a woman, mocked for both his ignorance and his pretensions to knowledge.

For Sir Jocelyne's daughters, the self-consciousness displayed by their parents is doubly intense, for they feel themselves to be judged not just as art-viewers, but as young ladies. Even their spoken responses are patrolled. Miss Gertrude and her sister are advised by their aunt that 'young ladies in such a Place as this, ... should be rather seen than heard. The Eyes and Ears of Every Person will soon be upon us', and 'fewest words are best'. In other words, their role is not to express an opinion on the artworks, but to behave as viewed objects. Sir Jocelyne is equally concerned about being overheard, however. When his sister calls for a portrait of Washington to grace the walls of the Academy, he replies: 'Enough of Politics, dear sister, at this Time and Place! We do not know who may be

listening to our Conversation, and taking Advantage.’ The anxiety of the socially mobile cuts across the sexes here, dictating what they feel able to say about art in public.

Nevertheless, the young ladies clearly do have their own opinions. Miss Gertrude, for example, makes political comments, just as her aunt does, calling patriotically for portraits of English military heroes. Nor can she repress a burst of enthusiasm for a particular flower-piece. The association between women and flowers has been extensively discussed by Bermingham, and it is not surprising to find this sketch portraying an affinity between female viewers and flower-painting.¹³⁰ Miss Gertrude’s preference for the still-life derives mainly from its being easy for her to judge; the flowers are ‘as fresh as if they were just gathered I am sure they are as natural as the Bouquet in your Bosom.’ As we have seen, this instinctive response to imitation from nature was characterized as quintessentially feminine, and academic discourse tended to class such judgments as being of a lower order. However, the naïve viewing of Miss Gertrude is contrasted with the more sophisticated approach of her aunt. Mrs Priscilla considers that although flowers are ‘proper Attractions for one of your Sex and tender Years’, she, as a more sophisticated viewer, prefers history painting. What is acceptable for an older woman, she hints, may not be for a young girl, again pointing to age as a factor in taste, alongside sex.

Given the primarily negative portrayal of women’s taste, the figure of Sir Jocelyne’s sister is an intriguing one. She is presented as a form of female connoisseur, who prides herself on her knowledge of the arts:

every body has not so learned an Eye, as I flatter myself I am possessed of. I should not be at a Loss in the Tribunal at Florence to pronounce in their best Dialect on the Figures of the Venus of Medicis, of the Apollo, of Antinous, of the Farnesian Hercules, and the Torso

Certainly, her cataloguing of classic works and knowledge of Italian would please Pilkington, and when she discusses Reynolds’ portrait of Colonel Tarleton in relation to Homer and Virgil, she reveals the extent of her classical learning. Yet she is clearly intended as a figure of fun. Her immodesty marks her out as an unfeminine oddity, and her pretensions to knowledge are mocked in the flowery exaggeration of her language. When she declares, ‘History Pictures and Portraits ... extort my Praise. Men and Manners for me!’, we are intended to smile at the fact that she prefers political portraits and battle scenes to flower paintings, which are seen as more suited to feminine sensibilities.

Mrs Priscilla has evidently studied several works on how to judge paintings. Her comments on portraiture echo Reynolds, for example: ‘Likeness is but a second or third Merit in a Piece The Drawing and Colouring are of an higher Order.’ She has all the right phrases, but lets slip her own method, perhaps, in her advice to Sir Jocelyne:

You should get some of the technical Words by Heart. A few, well applied, may induce your Hearers to fancy you know a great deal For present Use, the Terms, *Costume*, *Contours*, *Chiaro obscuro*, *sbozzo*, *pasticcio*, *Coup d'oeil*, and the *Nud*, may be sufficient.

Deploying a superficial smattering of terms was a common complaint made about pretended connoisseurs.¹³¹ Yet Mrs Priscilla possesses many of the attributes demanded of a serious connoisseur. It seems these are presented as comic simply because they are deemed unsuitable to her sex. She therefore embodies the contradictions inherent in conceptions of the female connoisseur that are so characteristic of this period.

As vulgar social climbers, naïve young girls and pretentious Bluestockings, the female comic types in this sketch are all designed to entertain the reader. They nevertheless demonstrate underlying attitudes to female art-viewers, suggesting the difficulties women faced in adopting the role of connoisseur. The sketch stresses the extent to which such portrayals were nuanced by attitudes to class and age, however, and indicates that inappropriate viewing could be seen as a failing of both sexes, rather than of women alone.

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated the coexistence of positive and negative images of the female art-viewer in the late eighteenth century, and indicated a complex interaction between class and sex in such constructions. The constant repetition of certain stereotypes – that women went to exhibitions to see the crowds, rather than the pictures, that they preferred portraits to history and gaudy colour to a subtle palette – implies that they were considered to have some basis in reality, and their very repetition no doubt contributed to their being accepted as fact by many readers. Yet, as we have seen, these preferences were often perceived to be those of male viewers, too. The ignorance of the middle-class viewing public was a constant source of humour for writers like Pasquin and Pindar, and it is often difficult, therefore, to distinguish class prejudice from gender stereotypes.

In exhibition reviews and treatises, the conflation of women's taste with that of children and lower-class viewers suggests a belief in their limited understanding of high art. Nevertheless, I conclude that Barrell goes too far in his assertion that women were excluded from art culture in this period. My study of women's involvement in the art world supports Pullan's suggestion that the culture of taste resisted the vulgar of all classes, but could nevertheless include women.¹³² Journals and letters reveal them to be sophisticated spectators, while praise for the taste of certain individuals points to greater respect than

Barrell's thesis would lead us to expect, creating a parallel discourse that endorsed women's taste. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, as we shall see, women were engaging in aesthetic discourse within the public domain, revealing considerable faith in their right to be accepted as full citizens of the 'Republic of Taste'. The following chapter will explore how stereotypes developed in the first half of the nineteenth century, as women became increasingly involved in publishing on art.

¹ Copley, 'The Fine Arts', p. 18. Pears, *Discovery of Painting*, p. 193.

² Daniel Webb, *An Inquiry into the Beauties of Painting*, London, 1760, pp. 18, 37–8.

³ Carol Gibson-Wood, *Jonathan Richardson: Art Theorist of the English Enlightenment*, New Haven and London, 2000, pp. 185–6.

⁴ Pears, *Discovery of Painting*, p. 206. Harry Mount, 'The Monkey with the Magnifying Glass: Constructions of the Connoisseur in Eighteenth-Century Britain', *Oxford Art Journal*, 29 (2), 2006, pp. 167–84.

⁵ Brewer, *Pleasures of the Imagination*, pp. 273–6, 288–93.

⁶ Matthew Pilkington, *The Gentleman's and Connoisseur's Dictionary of Painters*, London, 1770, p. viii.

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¹⁰ Gill Perry and Michael Rossington (eds), *Femininity and Masculinity in Eighteenth-Century Art and Culture*, Manchester, 1994, pp. 1–2, 19–20. Jones, *Gender and the Formation of Taste*, pp. 15–16, 77.

¹¹ Pullan, 'Fashioning a public', pp. viii–xi.

¹² Sylvana Tomaselli, 'The Enlightenment Debate on Women', *History Workshop Journal*, 1985, 20 (1), pp. 105–6, 120–2. Brewer, *Pleasures of the Imagination*, pp. 76–9.

¹³ David Hume, *Essays, Moral, Political and Literary* (1741–2), Oxford, 1963, p. 571.

¹⁴ Kim Sloan, *'A Noble Art': Amateur artists and drawing masters c. 1600–1800*, London, 2000, pp. 216–17. Morris R. Brownell, *Samuel Johnson's Attitude to the Arts*, Oxford, 1989, pp. 57–8. Pullan, 'Fashioning a public', pp. 37–8.

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¹⁶ Allan Ramsay, 'A Dialogue on Taste', *The Investigator*, 322, 1755, p. 57. Ramsay uses the figures of Lady Modish and Lady Harriot [sic] to discuss questions of aesthetics, pp. 27–8.

¹⁷ William Hogarth, *The Analysis of Beauty* (1753), ed. Ronald Paulson, New Haven and London, 1997, p. 18.

¹⁸ *GM*, 46, 75, Feb. 1776, p. 47.

¹⁹ Alexander Gerard, *An Essay on Taste*, London, 1759, p. 200.

²⁰ Francis Fitzgerald [Charles Taylor], *The Artist's Repository and Drawing Magazine*, 5 vols, London, 1784–94, I, pp. 137–9.

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- ²⁶ Frances Reynolds, *Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Taste* (1785), ed. James L. Clifford, London, 1951, p. 45.
- ²⁷ Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), ed. Miriam Brody, London, 1983. [Mary Robinson] Anne Frances Randall, *A Letter to the Women of England on the Injustice of Mental Subordination*, London, 1799.
- ²⁸ Gordon and Walker, *Rational Passions*, pp. 6–8.
- ²⁹ *Extracts of the Journals and Correspondence of Miss Berry*, ed. Lady Theresa Lewis, 3 vols, second edn, London, 1866, II, p. 313.
- ³⁰ *The Early Journals and Letters of Fanny Burney*, ed. Lars E. Troide and Stewart J. Cooke, 4 vols, Oxford, 1994, I, p. 24, 10 Aug. 1768.
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- ³³ Dolan, *Ladies of the Grand Tour*, pp. 44–5. Maura Henry, 'The Making of Elite Culture', in H. T. Dickinson (ed.), *A Companion to Eighteenth-Century Britain*, Oxford, 2002, p. 316.
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- ³⁷ *Ibid*, p. x.
- ³⁸ Gibson-Wood, *Jonathan Richardson*, pp. 192–5. Sir Joshua Reynolds, *Discourses on Art*, ed. Robert R. Wark, New Haven and London, 1997, II, p. 28. Webb, *An Inquiry*, pp. 11–15.
- ³⁹ Lippincott, *Selling Art*, pp. 38–42.
- ⁴⁰ Gibson-Wood, *Jonathan Richardson*, p. 16.
- ⁴¹ *Early Journals and Letters of Fanny Burney*, I, pp. 245–6. See also *The Autobiography and Correspondence of Mary Granville, Mrs Delany*, ed. Lady Llanover, 6 vols, second series, London, 1862, V, p. 195.
- ⁴² Pears, *Discovery of Painting*, p. 187. Samuel Johnson, *The Idler*, 35, 16 Dec. 1758. This attitude persists into the nineteenth century. See 'London Lyrics. The Auctioneer's Ode to Mercury', *New Monthly Magazine*, 25, 100, April 1829, p. 339.
- ⁴³ *The Woman of Fashion: A Poem. In a Letter from Lady Maria Modish to Lady Belinda Artless*, London, 1778, pp. 14–16.
- ⁴⁴ Amanda Vickery, 'Women and the world of goods: a Lancashire consumer and her possessions, 1751–81', in John Brewer and Roy Porter (eds), *Consumption and the World of Goods*, London, 1993, pp. 274–301. Marcia Pointon, *Strategies for Showing: Women, Possession and Representation in English Visual Culture 1665–1800*, Oxford, 1997, pp. 44–7.
- ⁴⁵ Pears, *Discovery of Painting*, p. 187.
- ⁴⁶ See also Nadia Tscherny, 'An Un-married Woman: Mary Edwards, William Hogarth, and a Case of Eighteenth-Century British Patronage', in Cynthia Lawrence (ed.), *Women and Art in Early Modern Europe*, University Park PA, 1997, pp. 237–54. Pullan, 'Fashioning a public', p. vi.
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- ⁵⁰ Pointon, *Hanging the Head*, pp. 41–4. Solkin, *Painting for Money*, pp. 137–74.
- ⁵¹ Alicia Percival, 'Women and the Society of Arts in its Early Days' (pts i–iii), *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts*, 125, April, May and June 1977, pp. 266–9, 330–3, 416–18. Charlotte Grant, 'The Choice of Hercules: The Polite Arts and "Female Excellence" in Eighteenth-Century London', in Elizabeth Eger et al. (eds), *Women, Writing and the Public Sphere, 1700–1830*, Cambridge, 2001.
- ⁵² See, for example, Maria Edgeworth, *Letters from England*, ed. Christina Colvin, Oxford, 1971, pp. 12–13, and Burney's visit to Reynolds' studio in 1781, *Diary and Letters of Madame d'Arblay*, ed. Charlotte Barrett (1854), intro. Austin Dobson, London, 1904–5, I, p. 329.
- ⁵³ Pointon, *Strategies for Showing*, p. 109.

- ⁵⁴ Dolan, *Ladies of the Grand Tour*, p. 8.
- ⁵⁵ *Extracts of the Journals ... of Miss Berry*, I, p. 11.
- ⁵⁶ *Early Journals and Letters of Fanny Burney*, I, p. 216. See also Victoria Manners, 'Catherine Read: The "English Rosalba"', *Connoisseur*, Dec. 1931, pp. 376–86, Jan. 1932, pp. 35–40, March 1932, pp. 171–8.
- ⁵⁷ Pointon, *Strategies for Showing*, pp. 90–4, 105. See also Chloe Chard, 'Effeminacy, pleasure and the classical body', in Perry and Rossington (eds), *Femininity and Masculinity*, pp. 156–7.
- ⁵⁸ Pears, *Discovery of Painting*, pp. 181–4, 186–7. Pointon, *Strategies for Showing*, p. 98.
- ⁵⁹ Percival, 'Women and the Society of Arts', p. 332.
- ⁶⁰ The category of drawings made after pictures and prints could include historical subjects and human figures, however. See Royal Society of Arts, *Register of Premiums*, 1771, p. 25.
- ⁶¹ They included Sarah Kirby, later educational writer Mrs Trimmer (daughter of painter Joshua Kirby), and the daughters of painter Robert Smirke, engravers Robert Strange and François Vivares, and of drawing-master Henry Pars.
- ⁶² Diana and Amelia Dietz were daughters of George Dietz, jeweller (*Register of Premiums*, 1775, pp. 68–9; 1779, p. 51). Moser was awarded a medal for 'Extra-ordinary Merit' (*Minutes of Committees*, 1759, p. 65).
- ⁶³ Pullan, 'Fashioning a public', p. vi.
- ⁶⁴ Pointon, *Strategies for Showing*, pp. 131–71.
- ⁶⁵ Shearer West, 'The Daryl Macaroni Prints and the Politics of "Private Man"', *Eighteenth-Century Life*, 25 (2), spring 2001, pp. 170–182. See also Donald, *Age of Caricature*, pp. 3–7, for Hannah Humphrey.
- ⁶⁶ Pullan, 'Fashioning a public', p. iv.
- ⁶⁷ Priscilla Wakefield, *Reflections on the Present Condition of the Female Sex* (1798), quoted in Pullan, 'Fashioning a public', pp. 48–57.
- ⁶⁸ Sloan, 'A Noble Art', pp. 212–18.
- ⁶⁹ G. Brown, *A New Treatise on Flower Painting* (1797), quoted in Pointon, *Strategies for Showing*, p. 147.
- ⁷⁰ Ann Bermingham, *Learning to Draw: Studies in the Cultural History of a Polite and Useful Art*, New Haven and London, 2000, pp. 183–96. See Yeldham, *Women Artists*, pp. 7–11, for persistence of this attitude into the nineteenth century.
- ⁷¹ Pears, *Discovery of Painting*, pp. 188–206.
- ⁷² Webb, *An Inquiry*, p. 18
- ⁷³ Women's exclusion from the study of anatomy meant that they failed to meet one of Pilkington's requirements. Damer did learn anatomy, however, indicating that some women ignored social constraints, *The Berry Papers*, ed. Lewis Melville, London and New York, 1914, p. 19.
- ⁷⁴ 'The Visiting-Day', *Ladies' Miscellany*, 2 vols, Dublin, 1770, p. 214.
- ⁷⁵ Hume, *Essays*, p. 570.
- ⁷⁶ *The Exhibition of Painting*, p. 20. This propensity of the female art-viewer to chatter seems to have been a cross-European stereotype, as the figure of Louise shows in August W. and Friedrich Schlegel's 'Die Gemälde', *Athenaeum: Eine Zeitschrift* (1799), Berlin, 1960, II, pp. 44–6.
- ⁷⁷ R. Baker, *Observations on the Pictures Now in Exhibition at the Royal Academy, Spring Gardens, and Mr. Christie's*, London, 1771, p. 21.
- ⁷⁸ *The Exhibition of Painting*, pp. 27–8.
- ⁷⁹ Roger de Piles, *The Principles of Painting*, transl. 'By a Painter', London, 1743, pp. 246, 250.
- ⁸⁰ *The Exhibition of Painting*, pp. 21–4.
- ⁸¹ 'Female Politics of the Week', *Morning Herald, and Daily Advertiser*, 7 May 1781, p. 4.
- ⁸² Perry and Rossington (eds), *Femininity and Masculinity*, pp. 41–2.
- ⁸³ Joseph Highmore, *Essays, Moral, Religious, and Miscellaneous*, 2 vols, London, 1766, II, p. 88.
- ⁸⁴ Baker, *Observations*, p. 28. See also Solkin (ed.), *Art on the Line*, p. 61.
- ⁸⁵ Anthony Pasquin [John Williams], *An Authentic History of the Professors of Painting, Sculpture and Architecture*, London, 1796, p. 57.
- ⁸⁶ [Joseph Addison] *Spectator*, 15, 17 March 1711, ed. Gregory Smith, 4 vols, New York and London, 1945, I, pp. 47–9.
- ⁸⁷ Anthony Pasquin, *A Critical Guide to the Exhibition of the Royal Academy, for 1796*, London, 1796, p. 28.
- ⁸⁸ Anthony Pasquin, *Memoirs of the Royal Academicians*, London, 1796, pp. 93, 118, 139–40.

- ⁸⁹ Pasquin, *Memoirs*, pp. 90–1.
- ⁹⁰ Caroline Palmer, 'Brazen Cheek: Face-Painters in Late Eighteenth-Century England', *Oxford Art Journal*, 31 (2), 2008, pp. 195–213.
- ⁹¹ Anthony Pasquin, *A Liberal Critique on the Present Exhibition of the Royal Academy*, London, 1794, p. 36.
- ⁹² Webb, *An Inquiry*, pp. 71–4. Reynolds, *Discourses*, VII, p. 136.
- ⁹³ *Morning Post*, 4 June 1795, quoted in Kay Dian Kriz, *The Idea of the English Landscape Painter*, New Haven and London, 1997, p. 45.
- ⁹⁴ Peter Pindar, 'To Another', *One More Peep at the Royal Academy*, London, 1808, pp. 37–8.
- ⁹⁵ Peter Pindar, *Lyric Odes, for the Year 1785* (1785), 7th edn, London, 1787, Ode XIII, p. 33.
- ⁹⁶ Pasquin, *Memoirs*, p. 139. Pasquin, *Critical Guide*, p. 25.
- ⁹⁷ Pasquin, *Memoirs*, p. 47.
- ⁹⁸ Solkin (ed.), *Art on the Line*, pp. 233, 237–8. Pasquin compares Westall's work to fan-painting and china, *Memoirs*, p. 139.
- ⁹⁹ Peter Pindar, *More Lyric Odes to the Royal Academicians* (1783), third edn, London, 1786, p. 28. Denner (1685–1749) was a German artist renowned for his high finish.
- ¹⁰⁰ Pindar, *More Lyric Odes*, p. 27.
- ¹⁰¹ *The Exhibition; A Poem. By an Artist*, Edinburgh, 1811, pp. 6, 24.
- ¹⁰² Copley, 'The Fine Arts', pp. 27–9.
- ¹⁰³ Reynolds, *Discourses*, V, p. 89.
- ¹⁰⁴ Webb, *An Inquiry*, pp. 3–5.
- ¹⁰⁵ Dianne Sachko Macleod, *Art and the Victorian Middle Class*, Cambridge, 1996, pp. 125–7.
- ¹⁰⁶ Timothy J. Reiss, 'Revolution in Bounds: Wollstonecraft, Women, and Reason', in Linda Kauffman (ed.), *Gender and Theory*, Oxford, 1989, pp. 12–14.
- ¹⁰⁷ Pasquin, *Critical Guide*, p. 25.
- ¹⁰⁸ Hester Chapone, *Letters on the Improvement of the Mind, Addressed to a Young Lady*, second edition, London, 1773, pp. 78–9.
- ¹⁰⁹ Thomas Gisborne, *An Enquiry into the Duties of the Female Sex*, London, 1797, p. 208.
- ¹¹⁰ I John, 2:15–17. Brewer, *Pleasures of the Imagination*, p. 72. See also Marcia Pointon, 'Quakerism and Visual Culture 1650–1800', *Art History*, 20 (3), Sept. 1997, pp. 397–431.
- ¹¹¹ Pointon, *Strategies for Showing*, pp. 244–5.
- ¹¹² Yet he sat to Frances Reynolds for his portrait. Brownell, *Samuel Johnson's Attitude to the Arts*, p. 81.
- ¹¹³ Chapone, *Letters on the Improvement of the Mind*, pp. 180–1.
- ¹¹⁴ Wendy Wassying Roworth, 'Anatomy is Destiny', in Perry and Rossington (eds), *Femininity and Masculinity*, pp. 48–50.
- ¹¹⁵ *Morning Post*, and *Daily Advertiser*, 15 May 1780, quoted in Solkin (ed.), *Art on the Line*, p. 58.
- ¹¹⁶ 'Candid' [George Cumberland], *Morning Chronicle*, 5 May 1781.
- ¹¹⁷ Barrell, 'Dangerous Goddess', p. 103.
- ¹¹⁸ *Morning Chronicle*, 4 May 1772.
- ¹¹⁹ Chard, 'Effeminacy, pleasure and the classical body', p. 153. See also Chloe Chard, 'Horror on the Grand Tour', *Oxford Art Journal*, 6 (2), Dec. 1983, pp. 3–16.
- ¹²⁰ *The Exhibition of Painting*, p. 23.
- ¹²¹ *Public Advertiser*, 25 May 1782, p. 2 (for all references below).
- ¹²² Pears, *Discovery of Painting*, p. 22.
- ¹²³ Mount, 'The Monkey with the Magnifying Glass', pp. 171–6.
- ¹²⁴ *Morning Herald*, 26 May 1781, p. 4.
- ¹²⁵ Pindar, *More Lyric Odes*, Ode VIII, p. 20.
- ¹²⁶ *Extracts of the Journals ... of Miss Berry*, I, p. 70, 4 Jan. 1784.
- ¹²⁷ *The Polite Arts*, p. 16.
- ¹²⁸ Webb, *An Inquiry*, p. xiii.
- ¹²⁹ Oliver Goldsmith, *Letters from a Citizen of the World* (1760–1), London, 1820, I, p. 185.
- ¹³⁰ Birmingham, *Learning to Draw*, pp. 202–24.
- ¹³¹ Laurence Sterne, *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* (1760), ed. M. and J. New, London, 1997, pp. 148–9.
- ¹³² Pullan, 'Fashioning a public', p. 24.

Chapter 2

Empathy and embroidery: women art-viewers in the nineteenth-century press

As we have seen, satirical sketches and poems of the late eighteenth century often delighted in presenting women exhibition-goers as figures of fun, implying that they occupied a position of immature development as regards art appreciation. I have suggested that such representations did not accurately reflect women's role in the art world, and as the number of women artists, writers and patrons burgeoned in the nineteenth century, it is perhaps reasonable to assume that stereotypes of female viewing would begin to evolve in response to social change.¹ This chapter investigates whether this was indeed the case, by considering constructions of the female connoisseur across a range of nineteenth-century texts, from women's magazines and the specialist art press to satirical writing in *Punch*.

Targeting the female viewer

In the late eighteenth century, Wakefield and Frances Reynolds stressed that women did not lack the capacity to understand art, but only the education needed to develop their taste. The first part of this chapter will consider whether writers in the periodical press of the early nineteenth century agreed with this view, and whether the way in which they targeted female art-viewers differed from their approach to male art-viewers. As women constituted an increasingly important proportion of art audiences, were they characterized by the press as serious participants, or did they continue to be addressed as lesser members of the 'Republic of Taste'?²

Pullan considered the construction of female art-viewers by studying magazines aimed specifically at women of the upper and middle classes up to 1820.³ Her detailed study suggested that entrepreneurs such as Rudolph Ackermann and John Bell fashioned the female spectator primarily as a consumer – of materials for amateur art practice, of prints, publications and exhibitions. Bermingham supports this conception of the female art-viewer, who was encouraged to acquire artistic skills only in order to enhance the domestic environment, reproducing images rather than displaying creativity.⁴ According to both Pullan and Bermingham, there is evidence of a desire to constrain women within the role of secondary consumers of art. Their function was to encourage male professional

artists, through their patronage, or to influence their husbands and children, in order to raise the national taste. The intention was not to equip women as serious art critics, but to give them a smattering of knowledge necessary to engage in polite conversation. That is, they concluded that women were not treated as full members of the 'Republic of Taste', but merely as honorary associates.

The image of the female reader that emerges from Pullan's study is one with a relatively slight interest in art, as far more space in women's magazines is dedicated to theatre, literature, music, fashion and interior decoration. Where fine art material is included, in periodicals like *La Belle Assemblée* and the *Repository of Arts*, Pullan indicates that women were fed a diet of random facts, as exemplified by Ackermann's 'Conversations on the Arts' series (1809–15).⁵ There was no attempt at in-depth art education, she claims, but women were instead offered disjointed, often trivial facts. Such information, she suggests, was deemed appropriate for women's minds, which were seen as skilled at assembling details. Pullan stresses that the concentration on artist biographies and on narrative content in exhibition reviews was considered particularly suitable for women, and she underlines the old-fashioned nature of the aesthetic principles conveyed.

While many of their conclusions are certainly valid, both Pullan and Bermingham tend to overstate the extent to which such constructions are based on sex. A comparison of periodicals for women with those aimed at a mixed audience, for example, reveals that there are more similarities than differences in the ways male and female art-viewers were targeted. To a great extent, art coverage in periodicals for men was also patchy, disparate and old-fashioned in tone. Exhibition reviews generally focused on narrative content, as opposed to technique, while manuals teaching drawing and painting to young men also encouraged the mechanical copying and assembling of parts. There are certainly numerous biographies of artists in women's magazines, as Pullan points out. However, most publications aimed at a mixed readership also focused on biography, as the traditional framing of art history, inherited from Vasari. Biography was not uniquely aimed at women, but continued to dominate art-writing well into the nineteenth, and indeed the twentieth century. Many early publications on the arts, such as Charles Taylor's *Artist's Repository* (1784–94), sought to educate men and women equally, addressing a polite class rather than one or other of the sexes. Ackermann's *Repository*, which Pullan presents as quintessentially feminine in its readership, was initially aimed at both sexes, and while it became increasingly targeted at female readers from about 1812, there is evidence that it strove to improve the art education of all within polite circles.⁶ John Bell, publisher of *La*

Belle Assemblée, also declared that an understanding of painting was expected 'from the polished of both sexes'.⁷

In order to establish whether the female viewer was constructed as a separate entity, it is instructive to compare *Bell's Weekly Messenger (BWM)*, intended for a mixed readership, with the monthly *La Belle Assemblée (LBA)*, aimed mainly at women. Although they differ in frequency of publication, it is valid to compare the art content of the two, as they were produced by the same publisher, John Bell. Taking the year 1808, when *LBA* launched its fine art series 'The Artist', we find frequent duplication of the art content, with articles, reviews and images reprinted wholly unchanged from *LBA* to *BWM*.⁸ There is also more overlap in readership than one might expect. Although *LBA* is 'Addressed particularly to the Ladies', and is advertised as the best publication for the 'British Fair', it was clearly not intended entirely for women.⁹ Announcing in *BWM* the new fine arts features in *LBA*, Bell declared that they would be characterized 'by profound, classical criticism, and accurate and useful biography, in such a manner as shall both instruct and amuse the professional man and general reader'.¹⁰ As a specimen of its dignified style, he reprinted unaltered in *BWM* the first articles from *LBA* on Benjamin West's *Death of General Wolfe* and Raphael's *Paul Preaching at Athens*, two eminently respectable history paintings.¹¹ On 28 February, the 'Fine Arts' column of *BWM* advertised a print of West's *Death on the Pale Horse*, first published in the February edition of *LBA*, which Bell declared 'deserves to be enrolled in the collection of every man of taste and lover of painting'. Yet it was also part of a series, as we find on 6 March, in another puff for *LBA*, 'calculated to form a complete Ladies' Library'.¹²

Bell was no doubt trying to maximize his sales by directing his publications towards as many readers as possible, regardless of sex, but it is nevertheless clear that the same images and articles were thought to interest both the gentleman and the lady of taste.¹³ The promotion of history painting is shared by both publications, with no concessions to women's supposed penchant for other genres; the same academic principles are endorsed, the same exhibition reviews reprinted without change. This was no doubt to save money, but indicates that separately written articles were not considered necessary. Although women's magazines certainly contain more articles on fashion and needlework than those aimed at a mixed readership, there is very little difference in the fine art content itself. Pullan found exhibition reviews in the *Lady's Magazine* reprinted directly from the *Morning Chronicle*, for example, and, even in the few reviews written specifically for women, as in the *Lady's Monthly Museum* and *British Ladies' Magazine*, she noted very little differentiation in style and content. Indeed, Pullan seems to have found only one

exhibition review explicitly stating that adjustments had been made for female readers. In the *Lady's Monthly Museum* for June 1812 a reviewer says he will focus on subjects likely to be engraved, as these are destined to become 'objects of discussion in the female coterie'.¹⁴ It is likely, however, that the same engraved subjects would have been of interest to the male coterie, had they been the target audience of the magazine.

Certainly, *LBA* encouraged women to remain confined within a traditional stereotype of domestic femininity, as described by Pullan and Bermingham. They must be taught drawing because it would have a 'favourable influence in the choice of the patterns of articles of furniture and dress', and they are advised to avoid the serious pursuit of painting unless impelled to do so by innate genius. They are expected to consider matters of art in the context of fashion. 'The Ladies' Toilette', for example, advises them to enhance their skin tones by the careful choice of colours in their dress, just as 'a skilful painter sets off his figures by the colours of the grounds of his pictures'.¹⁵ Yet the fine art articles that appear in *LBA* are solid and demanding, with no hint of influence from the satirical stereotypes of female taste. Guido's work, often seen as being particularly favoured by women viewers, is criticized for displaying 'the grace of theatres', for example. Domenichino's 'chaste' pencil is preferred instead, and Raphael is as always the undisputed master, suggesting that he is not considered too difficult for polite ladies to appreciate. The articles published in a supplement to the fourth volume, including 'On Taste' and 'On the Arts', are wholly academic in tone, making no allowance whatever for a frivolous female readership.¹⁶

In terms of promoting genres or media seen as favoured by women, Pullan's periodicals made little effort to construct a separate realm of taste for their readers. Given women's evident interest in watercolour, Pullan found surprisingly little coverage of watercolour exhibitions in the magazines she studied, with the exception of the *Repository*, which was clearly a vehicle for advertising Ackermann's art materials. She also found remarkably little on landscape or portraiture, always deemed the feminine genres par excellence.¹⁷ And if there was increasing praise for domestic genre in exhibition reviews, this was part of a trend in periodicals for both sexes, indicating changes in taste and patronage generally, rather than being in any way gender-related.¹⁸

Nor do women's magazines offer much evidence of increased attention to female artists, with the exception of the *Lady's Monthly Museum*.¹⁹ A letter to the *British Ladies' Magazine* in 1815, complaining that there had been no mention of female artists in an exhibition review, may indicate that female readers were ill-served by editors, and were keen to have more such information.²⁰ However, even where women's work is described,

there is no guarantee of increased sympathy for the artist or her achievement. Exhibition reviews continue to discuss women's work after that of men, in the traditional manner. If anything, articles tend to focus slightly more on their moral qualities as women, rather than their artistic skill, and many of the biographies are just as critical as those in magazines aimed at the general reader. Kauffman's 1808 obituary in *LBA*, for example, states that, though compared with other women her work is impressive, compared with men, 'we must greatly abate the encomium' as her pictures have a 'spiritless beauty, and insipid monotony'. Her draperies have nothing of the 'severe majesty of the antique', but are 'the light, female fashions of a tasty mind; ... loose, elegant, and fanciful'.²¹ The writer criticizes other newspapers for comparing Kauffman's draperies with those of Poussin. Such articles deploy the traditional academic framework of criticism familiar from writing for men, with no special pleading for women artists or increased praise for 'feminine' qualities. The same gendered language is employed regardless of readership.

There is, therefore, little evidence to suggest that women's periodicals sought to guide the taste of women art-viewers in a particularly feminine direction, or to restrict their appreciation of fine art to a lower level. Instead, the focus on history painting, in *LBA* for example, suggests a desire to fashion female knowledge of the arts within the same mould as for men. The fine art material aims to maintain traditional hierarchies, to school readers in classical principles, to encourage support for the major art institutions, such as the Royal Academy and British Institution, and so to form the type of patronage sought by the art market. Pullan suggests that the gradual reduction in fine art content in women's magazines of the 1820s, combined with a move from line engravings of history paintings to coloured fashion illustrations, indicates an increasing frivolity in the construction of the female viewer.²² Oddly, however, this dwindling of serious art discussion coincides with the rise of female art-writers. It may be, then, that any woman with a serious interest in art in this period turned instead to newspapers or the more specialist art periodicals beginning to appear on the market.²³ The fact that publications such as the *Art-Union* (later *Art Journal*), begun in 1839, were aimed at a mixed readership again implies that publishers perceived an essential unity in male and female connoisseurship.

Apart from separate contexts for the exercise of connoisseurship, which varied according to sex and class, this therefore seems to have been substantially a shared culture, in which – though women might be seen as having further to travel in terms of education – the overall critical framework was the same as for men. Whatever their interest in fashion and interior decoration, as far as the fine arts were concerned, women were not perceived as operating within a separate realm of taste, but were expected to adhere to identical

academic values. By implication, then, these magazines encouraged the idea that women could become connoisseurs, just as Frances Reynolds and Wakefield had maintained.

The advantages of 'female' taste?

Although women's magazines did not focus on landscape, portraiture or still-life, texts of this period most definitely reveal that certain genres and media were considered more appropriate to women than others. Women art-writers did not restrict themselves to these topics, nor did women artists confine themselves to 'feminine' subjects or media, yet comments in the press reveal the perception that history was alien to women, for example, while portraits, flower-painting and landscape were their forte.²⁴ The association of women with these genres was essentially demeaning, given their low rating within the classical canon, but within that overall frame of inferiority, women were nevertheless seen to possess positive skills. Ability in portraiture, for example, was considered quintessentially feminine, as we see from one of Kauffman's obituaries:

perhaps females are best adapted to this branch of the art; for they have received from Nature a susceptibility to seize and express every trait of the countenance, and every peculiar gesture. It is a gift with which, as the weapon of the weaker sex, Nature has evidently provided them.²⁵

This gift could be applied to the viewing, as well as the painting, of portraits, implying an advantage for the female spectator. Landscape, too, was described as 'a pursuit most congenial with the female character', in which women were considered to excel.²⁶ Miniature-painting, watercolour, pastel and etching were seen as particularly well-suited to woman's delicate touch, while soft materials, such as wax and clay, were also seen as more appropriate to them.²⁷ *Ackermann's New Drawing Book of Light and Shadow* (1812) ascribed recent improvements in watercolour painting almost entirely to 'our lovely countrywomen' and their cultivation of the medium.²⁸ Women would never be anatomical painters or sculptors, claimed the *Athenaeum*, in 1860, but as illustrators, they 'disclose a purity and grace beyond the achievement of most masculine fingers'.²⁹ Where women did tackle 'unfeminine' history painting, certain subjects were seen as more suitable than others, as in the case of Harriet Jackson's *Mars Subdued by Peace*: 'Few subjects could have been invented more becoming to the mind of a lady than this'.³⁰ In history painting, nudity was problematic, because of sensitivity to issues of feminine modesty. In 1813 the *Repository* criticized Mary Anne Ansley's work as unbecoming: 'If subjects are occasionally painted wherein the human figure is shown entirely naked, we cannot but

express our wish, that the composition should not be chosen by a lady'.³¹ As we will see, there is a sense even among women art-writers that some subjects are more fitting for female artists than others, indicating that they often accepted such conventional restrictions.³²

It is important to bear in mind that this was a time when women's qualities were seen as essentially different, but of value nonetheless. Modern perceptions, coloured by feminist sensitivities, should not lead us to assume that feminine stereotypes always stood in the way of women, as artists and critics; they could also work to their advantage. Above all, women continued to be seen as having more lively powers of imagination than men, combined with an emotional understanding that was of increasing importance in responding to images. With the growing emphasis on the more sensual dimension of painting, as encouraged by Richard Payne Knight and Uvedale Price, for example, women's perceived qualities seem to become more important in appreciating art, potentially lending female viewers greater authority.³³ Allan Cunningham, writing in 1828, further encouraged women's inclusion by insisting that art should be intelligible to anyone, because it represented universal feelings. Rules should be discovered in the human breast, he asserted, rather than in the mystic jargon of connoisseurship.³⁴ The more direct imitation of nature, promoted by Hazlitt and Ruskin, also seems to mark a move towards viewing skills traditionally associated with the female eye.³⁵

In art criticism there was a gradual move away from judgment based on classical theories, rules and technicalities, and towards the individual experience of the spectator. Hazlitt and Ruskin, for example, were never afraid to express their responses to art in highly personal terms. There was a growing taste for images that brought out qualities of sympathetic feeling in the viewer, whether male or female, and many male critics focused on conveying the imagined emotions of protagonists within an image.³⁶ Indeed, the ability to appeal to a heterogeneous crowd that included all ages and classes, as well as both sexes, was highly valued, as we see from a review of David Wilkie's *Chelsea Pensioners* (1822), in which the figures were 'alike pleasing to the most delicate Miss, the most fastidious Gentleman, and humble boor. None blush to look upon them, while all feel and enjoy them'.³⁷ This increasing equality in viewing, rooted in shared human emotion, allowed increasing space for the female art critic (fig. 24).

One area deemed especially suitable for female viewing was domestic genre, particularly images of children. Pullan says that cottage door scenes and domestic interiors were considered to interest specifically the 'young mamas who may frequent the exhibition'.³⁸ We may see this now as evidence of how women's taste was condemned, by

being confined to the sentimental – and there certainly were instances where such images were sneered at in contempt. The *Repository* critic in 1822, describing Henry Perronet Briggs' *Cradle, or a Present for the First Child*, questioned what could 'be made out of such objects out of the limits of a nursery?'³⁹ Male writers did not always dismiss images of children as beneath their attention, however, but gave them serious consideration.⁴⁰ Thackeray's 1846 Royal Academy review, for example, praised C. R. Leslie's *Mother and Child* for its 'almost sacred' qualities; it is 'all purity, grace, playful tenderness, and exquisite innocent affection'.⁴¹ He saw paintings like Thomas Webster's *Please Remember the Grotto* as uniting the sexes, by appealing to the 'philoprogenitive organ', while his *Good Night* would charm 'every frequenter of a nursery' (fig. 25).⁴²

Male writers tend to defer to the greater authority of women in viewing pictures of children. They often invent female spectators to respond on their behalf, or attribute their own appreciation to the opposite sex. A writer in the *Quarterly Review* (1860), for example, describing Leslie's images of women and children, wrote: 'No mother, I should think, can see that little picture of his in which a lovely young woman nestles her face in the chubby neck of the crowing baby on her knee, without a thrill of maternal love at her heart.' Clearly, the male writer has responded positively to the image, but displaces his praise onto an imagined female viewer, who is seen as better qualified to judge in matters of the 'deep domestic', as he describes it.⁴³

There is occasional confusion on the part of male writers as to how to respond to such pictures. 'Jack Easel' in *Punch* expresses the mingled emotion and embarrassment provoked by images of children:

I don't pretend to be a good judge of babies, which to my bachelor prejudices appear classed under two great heads: viz. brown, and pink, with more or less propensity to squall; but I defy the most confirmed misopoeidist ... to look without interest at MRS. [Henrietta] WARD's *First Step in Life*, at that little tiny tottering thing just learning to feel its legs. My first impulse was to say *kitsey-kitsey*, which I am given to understand is the correct form for baby salutation, and I don't know how long I might have looked at it but for the exclamation of an enthusiastic young lady close behind me. "Oh, Mamma! Look here; what a little duck!" The associations connected with that expression ... were too painful, and I rushed precipitately from the spot.⁴⁴

Obviously, this passage exaggerates the writer's feelings for comic effect, but it makes the point that men saw their emotional response to these images as, at some level, threatening to their masculinity, and more in tune with feminine sensibilities.

Although judging images of children came far down the list of requirements for a connoisseur, we cannot assume that contemporary critics felt women were inadequate for appreciating what modern cynicism now tends to class as images of gushing

sentimentality. Women's perceived qualities of empathy seem to have been especially highly valued in relation to domestic genre. As the *Englishwoman's Review* stated in 1857:

It may be that in the more heroic and epic works of art the hand of man is best fitted to excel; nevertheless there remain gentle scenes of home interest, and domestic care, delineations of refined feeling and subtle touches of tender emotion with which the woman artist is eminently entitled to deal.⁴⁵

Such attitudes had equal implications for women as art critics.

Women's greater visibility in print, as poets and novelists, could only enhance their standing as spectators of feeling. The annuals, by combining women's poetry with engravings, acted as a form of literary showcase for the female connoisseur, and the ekphrastic poetry of Felicia Hemans (1793–1835) and Letitia Elizabeth Landon (1802–38; fig. 26), for example, enjoyed enormous popularity, giving the female art-viewer a public voice.⁴⁶ Much of Landon's work in the 1820s was inspired by particular artworks, as the titles indicate, and she expressed her response to art in highly emotional terms: 'Beautiful art! My worship is for thee, – /... Pictures, bright pictures, oh! They are to me/ A world for mind to revel in'.⁴⁷ Between 1821 and 1824 she contributed a 'Poetical Catalogue of Pictures' to William Jerdan's *Literary Gazette*, offering a series of imaginative responses to paintings by Lawrence, Pickersgill, Etty, Danby and others.⁴⁸ These poems enjoyed a cult following among men as much as women, attracting many readers to the magazine.

An analysis of issues for 1823–4 reveals a complex interaction between Landon's poems, and the exhibition reviews and advertisements, indicating a symbiotic relationship between the various aspects of the *Literary Gazette*. Among Landon's first poems were the 'Medallion Wafers', explicitly prompted by an advertisement in the magazine for decorative letter seals. Made of isinglass and white lead, these were described as cheap copies of the 'finest gems, cameos, and intaglios of the antique', and of modern works by sculptors Canova and Thorwaldsen.⁴⁹ It seems Landon's poems may have been intended to advertise the wafers. In the same way, her poems were often directly inspired by works on current exhibition, at Glover's Bond Street gallery or the British Gallery, which advertised regularly in the *Gazette*.⁵⁰ The paintings Landon selects are often favourably mentioned in the *Gazette*'s reviews, as in the case of her 'Improvisatrice' of July 1824, based on Henry Pickersgill's painting of the same name (fig. 27).⁵¹ Occasionally, Landon's poems are puffed in the art reviews, too.⁵²

In this way, Jerdan, editor of the *Gazette*, exploited the female art-viewer, as represented in Landon's poetry, to forge links between polite readers and his own self-interest, by promoting exhibitions and thereby raising advertising revenue.⁵³ This intimate relationship between art, poetry and commerce within a leading periodical read by both

sexes has the personal responses of a female spectator at its heart. Landon's popularity once more points to a shared culture in which the perceived feminine qualities of emotional sensitivity and imagination seem to be gaining greater value in relation to art-viewing.

Persistent anxieties: protecting modesty

Although periodicals of the early nineteenth century seem to credit women with certain limited areas of expertise, there remained specific anxieties related to the female viewing of art. There were concerns about women's exposure to sordid or morbid subject-matter, for example, such as the 'Fallen Women' pictures of the 1850s and '60s, including Holman Hunt's *Awakening Conscience* (1853) and Augustus Egg's *Past and Present* triptych (1858).⁵⁴ The *Athenaeum* complained that the latter was 'an impure thing' which seemed out of place 'in a gallery of laughing brightness, where young, happy faces come to chat and trifle'.⁵⁵ The spiritual and literary themes of later Pre-Raphaelite art were considered more suited to women viewers than these squalid reflections of contemporary corruption.

The most powerful concern was to protect women from nudity. As we have seen, this was one of the main factors excluding women from the eighteenth-century 'Republic of Taste'. The heated discussions about women being exposed to nude statues at Somerset House in 1780 re-emerge throughout the nineteenth century, with waves of outrage surfacing at particular moments of crisis, as Smith has shown.⁵⁶ More than a century later we find precisely the same concerns expressed by John Callcott Horsley, in the 'British Matron' controversy (1885), and in every case it is the desire to protect young women that is stressed (fig. 28).⁵⁷ Given the enormous social changes that took place over this period, in terms of women's growing independence and experience as published art critics, the continuity of this theme is extraordinary.

It is clear that both sexes were sensitive to issues of nudity in art, and that nineteenth-century periodical editors felt the need to educate their public in the principles of polite viewing. In Ackermann's *Repository* for May 1822, an advertisement for Canova's *Three Graces*, on display at 'Mr. Day's Exhibition', admits that the public eye is 'not much accustomed in this country' to contemplating figures in a state of nature, and turns away with 'too fastidious a glance'. The writer encourages people to view the statue, however, as a work that is 'chaste' even to most 'severe eye'.⁵⁸ By the 1840s the situation had not altered. The publisher Samuel Carter Hall speaks of the complaints he received about nudes in the early days of the *Art Journal*:

So little was the grand art understood that, when I ventured on the issue of 'statue plates,' I had numerous warnings that I was ruining the publication; and not once, but several times, a plate of semi-nude figure, torn through, was sent to me by post, with protests against such attempts to introduce 'indecencies' into families.

He suggests that publications like the *Art Journal* helped to counter the public's unease regarding nudes:

At this time statues were covered up on reception nights – I can call to mind one case in which each statue of marble was gifted with an apron. Ladies then were rarely seen in the sculpture-room of the British Museum and it is to me a happy conviction that I overcame a prejudice then almost universal in England.⁵⁹

There was a similar attempt to educate working-class taste in the *Penny Magazine*, the first issues of which, in 1832, contain numerous full-page plates of classical male nude statues, including the Apollo Belvedere and Laocoön.⁶⁰ By 1857 *The Art-Treasures Examiner*, aimed primarily at the middle classes and working man, was still doing its best to enlighten readers. Discussing Joseph Durham's female nude *Sunshine*, the writer insists: 'How soon we forget that we are looking upon a nude figure, in the contemplation of this fair marble. The sensual has no place here.'⁶¹

Anxieties persisted for young men, as well as women. There were calls for life-classes to be stopped because of their corrupting influence on male artists and female models alike.⁶² Even in the 1860s, the young Edmund Gosse was forbidden to look at engravings of Greek statues, which his intensely religious father condemned as 'shadows cast by the vices of the heathen' (though fears of homosexuality may also have been a factor in this prohibition).⁶³ Older men could find nudes offensive, as indicated by an anonymous writer in 1851, who happened upon a 'naked female figure' in a copy of the *Art Journal*, and had to return the magazine to the bookseller, 'quite ashamed that he had seen me accidentally look at it at all'.⁶⁴ It seems the *Art Journal's* educative campaign was not quite as effective as Hall had hoped. Given such sensitivity among male viewers, it is not surprising that women were considered doubly 'at risk'. Belief in women's greater physical impressibility underwent little change in the nineteenth century, as Flint has shown in her discussion of Victorian medical beliefs and the dangers to women of unguarded reading.⁶⁵ Sensory overload was threatened by art-viewing, too. The fashionable young woman, noted medical doctor E. J. Tilt in 1852,

moves in the midst of contradictions which must bewilder her ... she is told to be all modesty, and still she is taken to see ... collections of statues and pictures representing every form, semi or wholly clothed. This sensual mode of education often leads to derangements in the monthly function, to hysteria or to other nervous disorders.⁶⁶

As in the eighteenth century, however, most periodicals represented these concerns as ridiculous prudery, insisting on the essential difference between art and life. Whenever complaints were voiced, the desire to control viewing of the nude was broadly resisted, by both sexes. Lord Haddo's 1860 campaign to prohibit study of the female nude in art schools, for example, met with considerable opposition. He was ridiculed for resembling the 'celebrated American matron' who clothed the legs of her piano with trousers, and the Pope, who had draped nude statues in the Vatican. Haddo was described as one of the 'once zealous Protestants who have gone over to the camp of the enemy' through his sympathy with 'Popish prudery'.⁶⁷ In other words, Protestantism was seen as a more liberal religion, which permitted viewing of the nude, in contrast to unenlightened Catholicism.

The greater modesty of Protestant women was also presented by writers as evidence of England's moral superiority, however, and the purity of the Englishwoman's gaze was often contrasted with that of foreign females. In 'Letters from Italy', first published in Ackermann's *Repository* in 1809, for example, the lewd interest of Italian females is contrasted with the proper reticence of English ladies. The male traveller describes a certain Donna Nicoletta's drawing of the Farnese Hercules:

... the young artist had faithfully copied rude antiquity in all its parts, owing probably to her having taken the design previously to the visit which a high personage lately paid to the gallery of antiques ... on which occasion, I have been told, an immediate and copious supply of brazen foliage, of various dimensions, was ordered to be attached ... to all the inhabitants of Olympus⁶⁸

The male visitor is clearly uncomfortable about a young lady drawing a male nude 'in all its parts', and yet smiles at the prudery that demands the covering of antique statues. What is most surprising, however, is that this discussion, with all its risqué references to nudity, should have been published in a magazine targeted at young women. The writer goes on to describe a bas-relief in Pompeii depicting a 'monstrous emblem, of more than Patagonian dimensions', which in England would 'render the street ... impassable to the fair sex'. He encourages his readers to make allowances for historical variations in custom, but his encounter with an Italian woman in the Herculaneum art gallery implies that cultural differences are still in force between different nationalities. 'Donna Anna' has a tendency to view unsuitable pictures he would expect ladies to pass by with 'at least, affected indifference' (fig. 29). She focuses on images that 'a British female would have disdained noticing through any other medium than her fansticks'. This 'female antiquarian' undertakes a microscopic examination of a satyr, for example, with a 'pretty little tail, briskly cocked up ... to correspond with the state of mind of its owner'.⁶⁹ The unerring way she is drawn to sexually charged images is portrayed as thoroughly unladylike, and yet the

suggestive comedy of the scene was presumably deemed perfectly acceptable for the English women readers with whom Donna Anna is unfavourably compared.

The patriotic belief in the superiority of Englishwomen's modesty remained in force, as we see from a pamphlet of 1851, in which the writer describes 'that sterling, ingenuous, noble English virtue, which is at once the safeguard of domestic happiness and the glory of our land'. Nudity in art, he declares, promotes 'the inevitable ruin and downfall of the British Empire'. Referring to statues at the Great Exhibition, he asks 'What parent can ever stop before any such production of art, ... and point out its excellences to his daughters' or to 'any British female leaning on his arm'?⁷⁰ Yet watercolours of the Great Exhibition show plenty of women viewing nude statues (fig. 30). Evidently it was perfectly acceptable to show women (and even children) contemplating the nude. Polite ladies frequently visited galleries displaying classical sculptures, and would often have looked over prints and magazines depicting male nudes. Parian marble copies of Hiram Powers' *Greek Slave*, which provoked moral outrage in 1854, were bought in their thousands by women, many no doubt for display on their dressing-tables (fig. 62). As long as nudes were 'tastefully' presented as sculpture or painting, it seems they were judged suitable for female viewers.

Some women were certainly outraged by nudity in art. Gosse reports, for example, the case of Plymouth Brethren member Susan Flood, a shoemaker's daughter, who in the late 1850s had 'run amok among the statuary' at the Crystal Palace, attacking the offending statues with her parasol, before being dragged before a magistrate for expressing her Christian principles in this fashion.⁷¹ A female student also objected to casts of male nudes at the York School of Design in 1847, so the penises were removed, even though other women students complained.⁷² Such sensitivities continued to make life problematic for women artists, whose access to life-classes was restricted throughout the nineteenth century.⁷³ Nudity seems to have been far less of an issue for women art critics than it was for artists, however. Turning to what women wrote, we find there is rarely any expression of embarrassment, the equanimity with which they viewed the nude being seen as a test of their politeness. John Gibson's *Tinted Venus* (c. 1851–6) prompted Richard Westmacott (Jr) to declare that the sensuality of coloured sculpture made life especially difficult for female viewers.⁷⁴ Nevertheless, women writers such as Jameson and Rigby were among the first to defend the technique.

The issue of the nude became increasingly tempered by class considerations, from the 1830s onwards, with fears intensified because of the socially mixed nature of art audiences. Upper-class ladies were considered relatively safe from corruption, while the

nude was instead thought to be dangerous for the working man, who, not having been 'stoically trained', would fail to exercise the polite skill of de-sexualized viewing.⁷⁵ As we will see, increasing numbers of middle-class women were demonstrating through their published work that viewing of the nude was perfectly respectable. If men wished to protect the female gaze, there is a parallel desire in women's writing to protect the lower-class viewer. Women writers did not question their own right to judge the nude, positioning themselves as members of an enlightened elite, but displaced anxiety onto those less well-educated than themselves.⁷⁶

As Smith has shown, by mid-century the middle classes were collecting nudes, hoping to be accepted among the select few who could appreciate them. The fact that these collectors included women, such as Eustacia Smith, Isabella Elder and Euphrosyne Cassaretti, indicates that their reputations were not at risk in purchasing nudes. A lead had been given in this regard by Queen Victoria, who emphasized through her patronage that a woman could combine a taste for the nude with impeccable virtue. She and Prince Albert exchanged nudes as birthday gifts from 1837, building up an impressive collection, published in the *Art Journal* in 1851. Victoria's social position overrode criticism, but it is clear that this taste in a woman continued to create a frisson of discomfort among certain male chaperons.⁷⁷

It seems there was a growing disparity between women's views on this matter, and the attitudes of those concerned for their well-being. Whether inspired by moral scruples or medical concerns, a desire to patrol the female gaze is evident throughout the nineteenth century, leading to resentment on the part of women. This is illustrated by Charlotte Brontë's *Villette* (1853), where the heroine Lucy Snowe resists attempts to divert her attention away from a voluptuous *Cleopatra*, displayed in a gallery, and towards images of female Christian virtue, which she deems 'bloodless, brainless non-entities'. The autocratic French schoolmaster M. Paul insists that no 'demoiselle' should even glance at the *Cleopatra*, but Lucy declares 'I could not agree in this doctrine, and did not see the sense of it'.⁷⁸ The heroine's irritated response to the male desire to direct her viewing, and her ironic appraisal of men viewing the female nude, hint at women's increasing resistance to the double standard requiring 'protection' of their gaze. Women's writing was therefore beginning to question certain stereotypes of spectatorship, but in spite of women's ubiquitous role as artists, patrons and critics, periodicals reveal persistent anxiety regarding the female gaze.

Crinolines and cross-stitch

Despite the growing popularity of women's poetic responses to art, the notion that female taste was in general poor taste persisted in satirical magazines, as well as in more serious exhibition reviews. Comic skits are not necessarily an accurate reflection of what the reading public believed about women's abilities in the field of connoisseurship. However, they are important for revealing underlying assumptions about female taste. It is important to remember that there were also many critical representations of the male art-viewer in this period, just as in the eighteenth century. The *New Monthly Magazine* (1829), for example, describes a dozen men passing by a fine work entitled *Necklace* 'with a growl', who are then 'in rapture over a hunting-scene, where the country dolts were riding in scarlet jackets over a plot of green turf'. Fox-hunters, the writer notes, are the best patrons of art 'in what may be called the tally-ho line'.⁷⁹ Such writing deploys knowingly exaggerated types, but reveals the different ways in which the sexes were characterized as inadequate viewers.

The eighteenth-century view that women required males to help them develop towards a maturity of taste, was evidently still current in the early nineteenth century, as we see from the fictional Amelia in the *Repository* (1809). Accompanying her aunt to an exhibition, she listens in 'attentive silence' to her male chaperon, as he imparts art-historical knowledge. A man who will educate her in matters of fine art is seen as an excellent marriage prospect, who will rescue her from the young girl's tendency to 'catch at every toy in the shew-glass of dissipation' and fly to 'glare and glitter' with a 'baby sort of eagerness and curiosity'.⁸⁰ The implication is that masculine taste will counteract this natural female propensity. Here, then, is the familiar stereotype of the female viewer requiring male guidance. By 1878 ideas have shifted to the point where a woman can be shown educating a man in art, as, for example, in the article 'Pamela in Piccadilly', where Pamela teaches her father to appreciate the works of Burne-Jones, Watts, Morris and Whistler. There is more than a hint of irony in the portrayal of this 'Aesthetic' lady connoisseur, however, whose exaggerated views on 'gracious tonality' and 'inner dualities' match the 'wild utterances' of other visitors to the Grosvenor Gallery.⁸¹ It seems unlikely, therefore, that this female 'chaperon' indicates any major change in attitudes towards women art-viewers, though it does suggest a hint of development.

Left to their own devices, women were portrayed as being naturally inclined towards lower forms of visual entertainment, such as Mary Linwood's embroidery

pictures, rather than high art. In the *Athenaeum* (May 1830), for example, an article on an exhibition at 'Le Petit Louvre' gallery concludes:

Tempted by certain female prattle, which assailed us right and left from outside of this gallery, we were Goths enough to go immediately from a collection of ancient masters, to that sublimest of all standing Exhibitions, THE COSMORAMA.⁸²

The dangers of listening to 'female prattle' are underlined here, indicating continuing scorn for women's judgment and for their inability to comply with academic hierarchies. Within the gallery itself, women were still mocked for being attracted to paintings for the wrong reasons. In a Royal Academy review of 1837, *Blackwood's Lady's Magazine* described women's reactions to *The Meeting of her Majesty's Stag Hounds, & c.*, by Francis Grant:

As soon as we could get a peep at this picture through the crowd of young ladies who surrounded it, we discovered that the & c. was of some importance. The picture is composed of hounds, horses, and men – among the latter we recognized some well-known Nimrods. That's him – 'that's D'Orsay,' said a young lady to her sister. 'Which? which?' 'That handsome fellow in front,' was the reply. In fact, this portrait of the Count seemed to be a point of attraction for every young lady in the room.⁸³

The main draw for female viewers is the portrait of a notorious and good-looking man, presumably exciting gossip and sexual attraction. Questions of composition and colouring are not uppermost in their minds, it seems.⁸⁴

Numerous references imply that women were still seen as having a pernicious effect on artists, encouraging them to paint flattering portraits rather than noble histories. A reviewer in the *Athenaeum* (May 1830) found Thomas Lawrence's society portraits disappointing, making the writer regret that 'he should have fallen among courtiers and fine ladies'.⁸⁵ Here women's taste is associated with aristocratic circles, but in the main women continue to represent middle-class vulgarity in the socially mixed body of viewers increasingly invading the galleries. For art critic Thomas Wainewright, for example, they form part of a vulgar crowd demonstrating an inappropriate preference for detail in David Wilkie's *Reading of the Will* (1819):

it offends me to the soul, to see a parcel of chuckleheaded Papas, doting Mamas, and chalk-and-charcoal faced Misses ... crowding and squeezing, and riding upon one another's backs, to get a sight – not of the faces of the folks reading the Will, but of the brass clasps of the strong box.⁸⁶

Despite the academic tone of art-writing aimed at women in *LBA*, an instinctive taste for the decorative and the fashionable continues to be seen as interfering with their correct viewing of art. This is particularly evident from a study of *Punch* 1840–60. In 1842 *Punch* offered advice on courtship to young men. If your conversation with a young lady

comes to a complete standstill, the writer says, and she is staring intently at the patterns in the carpet,

This will afford you an admirable opportunity for inquiring into the state of her taste for the fine arts. If she have not been to 'the Exhibition'... drop the subject at once; if otherwise, and she praises the portraits and laughs at Turner, say a few words about Poonah painting, and inquire the practicability of squaring off one of Rembrandt's pictures for a Berlin-wool pattern.⁸⁷

The praise for portraits and an inability to understand Turner are, of course, indications of her lack of proper understanding, and the references to Poonah painting and Berlin-wool embroidery show how women's interest in the fine arts was associated with decorative domestic accomplishments.⁸⁸

Women's association with minor crafts is also brought out in a *Punch* article on the first exhibition of the Society of Female Artists in 1857. Contrary to expectation, the writer declares, this is not 'an exhibition of stitching or embroidery of Berlin-wool work, or potichomanie, or any other mania that occasionally seizes hold of young ladies' fingers'.⁸⁹ There are no 'mossy baskets of blooming fruit', modelled in wax, 'nor vases of paper flowers, so faithfully rendered as actually to cause maid-servants to water them'. These examples are all minor accomplishments, exhibiting skill without taste. Astonished to find so many genuine works of art on display, the writer goes on to suggest a close connection between the portraits and women's propensity to paint their own faces:

If cheeks are delicately coloured – if lips are strung into the precise shape of Cupid's bow ... if eyelashes are artistically pencilled – the pencilling and the painting are not upon their own fair features, but on the faces of others

So just as in the eighteenth century, the work of women artists is seen as a surprising departure from their more 'natural' leaning towards cosmetics and vanity.

The writer's response to the paintings on display is highly revealing of contemporary attitudes to women within art culture, whether as artists, viewers or writers. Coloured throughout by the most patronising gallantry, his comments indicate the difficulty of expressing straight criticism on women's efforts. Highly conscious of his position as a man reviewing women, he feels constrained to 'be tender, be courteous, be complimentary'. The male viewer, he says, must be careful of his remarks:

Drop not an ugly word, lest you do injury to the memory of some poetic creature, who at some time or other handed you a cup of tea, or sang you the songs you loved, or conferred on you some bright fleeting happiness

What this critic says about the art is in fact relatively complimentary. He finds 'plenty to admire, ... and very little to condemn', comparing many works favourably with those of

male artists. Fanny Mc'Ian's '*Emigrant Ship*' is a work many an Academician 'would have been proud to have launched into fame', for example. Yet his praise is so wrapped up in condescension and flattery as to seem insincere.

Critical responses to women's art depend very much, of course, on the tone of the publication, and the comic focus of *Punch* is thrown into relief if we compare this piece with an *Illustrated London News* review of the same exhibition. Certain prejudices are still in evidence, however, in spite of the more moderate tone:

Strength of will and power of creation belonging rather to the other sex, we do not of course look for the more daring efforts in an exhibition of female artists; but observation, taste, or the art of selection, ... are to be found in this Oxford-street display.⁹⁰

Praise for achievement is still couched in terms of traditional femininity. Mc'Ian's 'vigorous powers' are again applauded, but 'as a woman' she has 'seized the pathetic side of a great social question', stressing female emotional tendencies. The writer has the same difficulty with conventions of gallantry, declaring that he is forced to offer criticism only because he does not want to do women a disservice by flattering them. Such comments reflect the difficulties male critics faced when dealing with women's writing. Constrained to be critical, they felt bound to compliment, by the sheer fact of the writer's sex. Even in serious publications like the *Athenaeum* and *Quarterly Review*, they were rarely able to avoid making some reference to the 'fair lady writer' in question, though there was growing recognition of the fact that women deserved genuine criticism.⁹¹

Despite the serious contributions made by women art-writers by mid-century, *Punch* reveals the continuing power of stereotypes of female connoisseurship which had been entrenched since the eighteenth century. The continuing association between women and vanity is the most dominant aspect of the way in which the female art-viewer is constructed. This is revealed by an article referring to the setting up of a Female School of Art and Design – 'as if Females were not sufficiently artful and designing by nature'. The writer refers to it as a 'dangerous institution' for the 'cultivation of feminine cunning'. In addition to jewellery, he expects to find on display a range of cosmetics, perfumes, coquettish bonnets and corsets, articles 'commonly employed by Females with artful and designing views'.⁹² The link between female viewers and vanity is also brought out in an article on the Manchester Art-Treasures Exhibition of 1857, in which the writer discusses women's excessive use of the looking-glass (fig. 31).⁹³ The editor apologizes for the 'misogynic sentiments' of this 'confirmed old bachelor', but, just as in the eighteenth century, we find the clear suggestion that women are more interested in viewing themselves than in viewing art.

It is not just humorous articles that associate women art-viewers with fashion, however. There are numerous references in more serious art reviews, too. The presence of women at exhibitions is often signalled by descriptions of their clothes, which represent an obstruction for the male viewer. As a reviewer complained in 1822, 'The occupation of stations by the hour in front of favourite pieces, is hardly fair in an Exhibition crowded by visitors; and especially when ladies get their poke-bonnets within the frames, the pictures are endangered and all vista shut out.'⁹⁴ In 1857 a critic described how crinolines obscured landscapes hung below the line at the Royal Academy, while in 1860, another declared that the 'sight of a ravishing red bonnet, in juxtaposition to Mr. Hunt's works, is not calculated to improve the observer's appreciation of their subtleties of colour'.⁹⁵ These material obstructions to vision perhaps stand as a metaphor for the continuing notion that the female gaze was disrupted by fashion and vanity.

Descriptions of the Manchester Art-Treasures Exhibition frequently refer to the presence of fashionable women. Writers simultaneously appreciate these 'forms of witching beauty and female loveliness', and object to the crush caused by their dresses. The women viewers are transformed into art objects within the gallery, forming 'a parterre of colours of every tint and hue'. But as ever, the elegant crowd proves distracting: 'Lely's "beauties," as they smile or pout on the glittering cavalcade, are as powerless as the masterpieces of the sculptors to win even a momentary admiration'.⁹⁶ Just as in eighteenth-century reviews, women distract men from the proper business of concentrating on art. The *Art-Treasures Examiner* criticizes 'frivolous and idle' viewers for turning the exhibition into a parade ground for the 'silly vanities of fashion'. If people had to go solely to look at the pictures, rather than their neighbours, he asks, 'how many season tickets would have been sold, how many crinolines have choked the turnstiles?', though he admits that 'even the most thoughtless block of millinery in the place, intent upon robe and bonnet, ... will unconsciously imbibe some of the better spirit of the scene'.⁹⁷ The references to millinery, bonnets and crinolines unmistakably hint that most of these vulgar viewers are women.

Women's association with fashion often coloured responses to their writing. Hazlitt's review of Lady Morgan's *Life and Times of Salvator Rosa* (1824), for example, is typical. Morgan has 'been ambitious to string the flowers of literature and the pearls of philosophy' on the meagre thread of biography, Hazlitt declares, and the reader is constantly 'intercepted by ... clouds of perfume'.⁹⁸ Indeed, the association of women and fashion continues to have implications for women art-writers as late as the 1880s and '90s. A *Punch* cartoon of 1887 entitled 'A Jubilee Private View' shows three women taking notes at an exhibition (fig. 32). One is a gossip columnist, while another, 'Lady

Crewelstown', is a fashion-writer. The third, the 'Duchess of Dilwater', is art critic to the *South Pentonville Gazette*. She describes a portrait of 'Mrs. Blazer' as 'an impassioned Adagio in the Minor Key of Blue, tenderly embroidered with a sub-dominant Fugue in Green and Gray and Gold!'⁹⁹ In spite of the fact that numerous women were working as professional art critics by this date, women's art-viewing continues to be associated with gossip, fashion and embroidery.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown that constructions of the female viewer remained complex and contradictory in the first half of the nineteenth century, in many respects offering a picture of continuity from the eighteenth century, rather than any dramatic transformation. Encouraged by the art press and by women's magazines to participate in a shared artistic culture based on academic principles, women nevertheless still found themselves portrayed by satirical writers as lacking in proper taste, their engagement with art associated with vanity, fashion and decorative accomplishments. With the growing body of middle- and lower-class audiences, issues of class became more evident in relation to art-viewing, but the female spectator remained the focus for anxiety, particularly in relation to the nude. It seems reasonable to conclude that, despite women's increased public participation as artists, writers and patrons, negative stereotypes continued to frame the way in which female connoisseurs were perceived. Yet alongside these negative views, women's emotional sensitivity and imaginative responses to art were increasingly valued, while their association with landscape and genre came to reflect changes in taste more generally.

Pullan rightly recognized that textual constructions of women viewers should not lead to assumptions about the ways in which real women responded to art. As she shows, images of the female art-viewer in Ackermann's *Repository* could unwittingly prove subversive. Although the character of Miss Kitty in the 'Conversations on the Arts' was clearly not intended as a model for the average female art-viewer, she represented exciting possibilities, attending lectures and life-drawing classes by cross-dressing.¹⁰⁰ She was presented as an exceptional case, modelled on an Anne Damer or Rosa Bonheur, but her single-minded devotion to art could nevertheless have been inspiring for real women.

Though periodical editors may have aimed to construct the female spectator primarily as passive consumer, this did not mean that women were actually confined by such stereotypes. Even superficial material on art provided by a periodical could spark

serious interest in a particular topic. Birmingham has shown, for example, how Mary Gartside used the 'feminine' genre of flower-painting to gain access to scientific study.¹⁰¹ Engaging in publishing and research worked against women's domestic marginality, so that what appears to have been restrictive could in fact prove liberating. Even though prejudices regarding the female viewer are still evident late in the nineteenth century, they were continually resisted by individuals, as we will see. The following chapters explore what women wrote on art, and consider how their responses resembled, or differed from, the stereotypes of the periodicals.

¹ Gerrish Nunn, *Victorian Women Artists*, pp. 68–124. Sachko Macleod, *Art and the Victorian Middle Class*, pp. 171, 215–16. Campbell Orr, *Women in the Victorian Art World*, pp. 12–25.

² Pullan 'Fashioning a public', p. vii.

³ Including Ackermann's *Repository of Arts, La Belle Assemblée, Lady's Magazine, Lady's Monthly Museum* and *British Ladies' Magazine*.

⁴ Birmingham, *Learning to Draw*, pp. 128–9.

⁵ Ann Pullan, "'Conversations on the Arts': Writing a Space for the Female Viewer in the *Repository of Arts* 1809–15', *Oxford Art Journal*, 15 (2), 1992, pp. 21–3.

⁶ It was not aimed exclusively at women until 1820, according to J. Ford, *Ackermann 1783–1983: 'the business of art'*, London, 1983, pp. 81–2. Pullan, 'Fashioning a public', p. 275.

⁷ *La Belle Assemblée*, Dec. 1807, quoted in Pullan, 'Fashioning a public', p. 96.

⁸ Compare *BWM*, 27 March 1808, p. 103, on Nollekens' monument to Mrs Howard, reprinted from *LBA*, 4, March 1808, p. 112; *BWM*, 1 May 1808, p. 143, 'Smirke's Conquest', from *LBA*, 4, April 1808, p. 152. Kauffman's obituary was also reprinted unchanged: 'Fine Arts', *BWM*, 17 Jan. 1808, p. 22; *LBA*, 4, Jan. 1808, pp. 11–12.

⁹ *BWM*, 24 Jan. and 28 Feb. 1808, pp. 30, 69.

¹⁰ *BWM*, 7 Feb. 1808, p. 47.

¹¹ *LBA*, 4, Jan. 1808, 'The Artist. No. I', pp. 5–10, and Feb. 1808, 'The Artist. No. II', pp. 52–5.

¹² *BWM*, 28 Feb. and 6 March 1808, pp. 71, 77.

¹³ In order to increase advertising revenue, Bell similarly stresses that his works are read by 'persons of all ranks'. See for example, *BWM*, 24 Jan. 1808, p. 30.

¹⁴ Pullan, 'Fashioning a public', pp. 197, 230–1.

¹⁵ *LBA*, 4, March 1808, p. 130; April 1808, p. 157.

¹⁶ *LBA*, 4, April and June 1808, pp. 153, 249; supplement, pp. 20–33.

¹⁷ Pullan, 'Fashioning a public', p. 308.

¹⁸ Kriz, *Idea of the English Landscape Painter*, pp. 55–6.

¹⁹ Pullan, 'Fashioning a public', pp. 224–9, 233.

²⁰ *BLM*, II, 7, July 1815, pp. 47–9. Pullan, 'Fashioning a public', pp. 260–2.

²¹ *LBA*, 4, Jan. 1808, pp. 11–12. Reprinted in *GM*, 78, Jan. 1808, pp. 86–7, but deleting paragraph on Kauffman's moral character.

²² Pullan, 'Fashioning a public', pp. 265–6.

²³ Maura Barnett, 'The Contemporary Response to British Art before Ruskin's Modern Painters', unpubl. PhD thesis, University of Warwick, 1993, pp. 9–10.

²⁴ Yeldham shows that women also painted classical, biblical and literary subjects, *Women Artists*, I, pp. 116–73. For history painting, see Kathryn Metz, 'Ellen and Rolinda Sharples: Mother and Daughter Painters', *Woman's Art Journal*, 16 (1), spring/summer 1995, pp. 3–11, and F. Graeme Chalmers, 'Fanny McIan and London's Female School of Design, 1842–57', *Woman's Art Journal*, 16 (2), fall/winter 1996, pp. 3–9.

²⁵ *Lady's Magazine*, 39, Feb. 1808, p. 62.

- ²⁶ 'Exhibition of the British Institution', *Repository*, second series, 13, 75, March 1822, p. 170. The vogue for Picturesque landscape was closely associated with women's amateur art practice. See Bermingham, 'The Picturesque and ready-to-wear femininity', in Stephen Copley and Peter Garside (eds), *The Politics of the Picturesque*, Cambridge, 1994, pp. 88–9.
- ²⁷ Marjan Sterckx, 'Pride and Prejudice: Eighteenth-Century Women Sculptors and their Material Practices', in Batchelor and Kaplan (eds), *Women and Material Culture*, pp. 86–102. Shearer West, 'Gender and internationalism: the case of Rosalba Carriera', in Shearer West (ed.), *Italian Culture in Northern Europe in the Eighteenth Century*, Cambridge, 1999, pp. 60–2.
- ²⁸ Quoted in Bermingham, *Learning to Draw*, pp. 138–9.
- ²⁹ *Athenaeum*, 1685, 11 Feb. 1860, p. 211
- ³⁰ *Repository*, June 1815, first series, 8, pp. 335–6.
- ³¹ Quoted in Pullan, 'Fashioning a public', p. 290.
- ³² Adele M. Holcomb, 'Anna Jameson on Women Artists', *Woman's Art Journal*, 8 (2), autumn/winter 1987–8, pp. 15–24.
- ³³ Kriz, *Idea of the English Landscape Painter*, pp. 53–5.
- ³⁴ [Allan Cunningham] 'On the Natural Sources of Accurate Perception in the Arts', *Athenaeum*, 1, 2 Jan. 1828, p. 12, and 2, 9 Jan. 1828, p. 29.
- ³⁵ Stanley P. Chase, 'Hazlitt as a Critic of Art', *PMLA*, 39 (1), March 1924, pp. 179–202.
- ³⁶ See, for example, *Literary Gazette*, 5 April 1823, review of 'A Maniac Visited by his Family in Confinement, by Davis', p. 219.
- ³⁷ *European Magazine*, May 1822, quoted in Solkin (ed.), *Art on the Line*, p. 171.
- ³⁸ *Ladies' Monthly Museum*, June 1812, quoted in Pullan, 'Fashioning a public', p. 232.
- ³⁹ 'Exhibition of the British Institution', *Repository*, second series, 13, 75, March 1822, p. 167.
- ⁴⁰ See, for example, [W. J. Fox] 'Exeter Hall Exhibition of Paintings', *Monthly Repository*, second series, 6, 1832, pp. 341–2.
- ⁴¹ W. M. Thackeray, *Contributions to the 'Morning Chronicle'*, ed. Gordon N. Ray, Urbana, 1955, p. 145.
- ⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 149. See Christiana Payne, *Rustic Simplicity*, Nottingham and London, 1998, pp. 82–3.
- ⁴³ *QR*, 107, 214, Jan. 1860, p. 512. See also W. M. Thackeray, 'On the French School of Painting', *The Paris Sketch Book and Art Criticisms*, ed. George Saintsbury, New York and London, 1908, p. 52.
- ⁴⁴ 'The Royal Academy', *Punch*, 38, 2 June 1860, p. 220.
- ⁴⁵ Quoted in Chalmers, 'Fanny McIan', p. 4.
- ⁴⁶ Hemans composed poems inspired by Francis Chantrey's sculptures, for example: 'Child and Dove' (1826), 'The Child's Last Sleep' (1826) and 'The Sculptured Children' (1829).
- ⁴⁷ 'Vandyke consulting his Mistress on a Picture, in Cooke's Exhibition', *Poetical Catalogue of Pictures*, *Literary Gazette*, 15 March 1823, p. 171.
- ⁴⁸ *The Poetical Works of L.E.L.*, ed. William B. Scott, London (n.d.), 2 vols, pp. 253–65.
- ⁴⁹ *Literary Gazette*, 4 Jan., 25 Jan., 8 Feb., 1 March 1823. Adverts 4 and 11 Jan. 1823, pp. 11–12.
- ⁵⁰ See, for example, 10 May 1823, p. 299, 'Two Doves in a Grove. Mr Glover's Exhibition.' This exhibition had been praised on 19 April, p. 250, and was advertised 3 and 17 May, pp. 288, 318. See also 22 March 1823, 'Different Thoughts Suggested by a Picture by G. S. Newton, no. 16, at the British Gallery'.
- ⁵¹ Praised *Literary Gazette*, 10 May 1824, p. 298.
- ⁵² 'Watercolour Exhibition', *Literary Gazette*, 3 May 1823, pp. 285–6.
- ⁵³ As neighbour and mentor to Landon, Jerdan would have been well able to influence her choice of topics.
- ⁵⁴ Linda Nochlin, 'Lost and Found: Once More the Fallen Woman', in Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard (eds), *Feminism and Art History*, New York and London, 1982, pp. 220–45.
- ⁵⁵ 'Fine Arts. Royal Academy', *Athenaeum*, 31, 1 May 1858, p. 566.
- ⁵⁶ Alison Smith (ed.), *Exposed: The Victorian Nude*, London, 2001. Smith points to 1851, 1854, 1862, 1870 and 1885 as key moments in the debate.
- ⁵⁷ Alison Smith, *The Victorian Nude: Sexuality, Morality and Art*, Manchester and New York, 1996, pp. 227–9.
- ⁵⁸ *Repository*, second series, 13, 77, 1 May 1822, p. 302.
- ⁵⁹ Samuel Carter Hall, *Retrospect of a Long Life*, 2 vols, London, 1883, I, pp. 341–2.
- ⁶⁰ *Penny Magazine*, 29 Sept., 10 Nov., 15 and 22 Dec. 1832, pp. 249, 313, 361, 372.

- ⁶¹ *The Art-Treasures Examiner*, Manchester and London, 1857, p. 62.
- ⁶² Ilaria Bignamini and Martin Postle, *The Artist's Model*, Nottingham, 1991, pp. 19, 65.
- ⁶³ Edmund Gosse, *Father and Son: A Study of Two Temperaments* (1907), London, 1922, pp. 261–2.
- ⁶⁴ [R. E–H–] *Friendly Observations, Addressed in a Spirit of Kindness and Candour to the Sculptors and Artists of Great Britain*, London, 1851, p. 18.
- ⁶⁵ Kate Flint, *The Woman Reader 1837–1914*, Oxford, 1993, pp. 53–70.
- ⁶⁶ E. J. Tilt, *The Elements of Health* (1852), quoted in Smith, *The Victorian Nude*, p. 39.
- ⁶⁷ *Punch*, 38, 26 May 1860, p. 212.
- ⁶⁸ Reprinted as *Naples, and the Campagna Felice*, London, 1815, pp. 14–16.
- ⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 120–2, 184–7.
- ⁷⁰ *Friendly Observations*, pp. 16, 29, 12.
- ⁷¹ Gosse, *Father and Son*, p. 161.
- ⁷² Smith, *The Victorian Nude*, p. 19.
- ⁷³ Yeldham, *Women Artists*, pp. 18–40.
- ⁷⁴ Richard Westmacott (Jr), 'On Polychromy in Sculpture', *Journal of the Society of Arts*, 4 March 1859, p. 232.
- ⁷⁵ *Friendly Observations*, p. 22.
- ⁷⁶ Jameson, *Companion to the ... Private Galleries*, p. xxix.
- ⁷⁷ Smith, *The Victorian Nude*, pp. 144–5, 82.
- ⁷⁸ Charlotte Brontë, *Villette*, ed. H. Rosengarten and M. Smith, Oxford, 1984, pp. 283, 288.
- ⁷⁹ 'Art and Artists: – A Conversation', *New Monthly Magazine*, June 1829, pp. 568, 572. Cf. Gillray's *A Peep at Christie's* in which the Earl of Derby studies a hunting picture (fig. 22).
- ⁸⁰ 'Amelia's Letters', *Repository*, first series, 5, May 1809, pp. 288–91.
- ⁸¹ *The World*, 29 May 1878, quoted in Andrew Stephenson, "'Anxious Performances": Aestheticism, the Art Gallery and the Ambulatory Geographies of Late Nineteenth-Century London', in Fran Lloyd and Catherine O'Brien (eds), *Secret Spaces, Forbidden Places*, New York and Oxford, 2000, pp. 189–98, 192.
- ⁸² 'Le Petit Louvre', *Athenaeum*, 133, 15 May 1830, p. 300.
- ⁸³ 'Fine Arts', *Blackwood's Lady's Magazine*, June 1837, 2, pp. 231–2.
- ⁸⁴ Painter Harriet Gouldsmith also comments on an image of two warriors in scarlet uniform which attracts 'all the young and gay of the softer sex', *A Voice from a Picture*, London, 1839, p. 21.
- ⁸⁵ *Athenaeum*, 135, 29 May 1830, p. 331.
- ⁸⁶ *London Magazine*, 1820, I, p. 701.
- ⁸⁷ 'The Natural History of Courtship', *Punch*, 3, 23 July 1842, p. 38.
- ⁸⁸ Poonah painting was a form of stencilling, in imitation of Indian decorative work. See Lydia M. F. Child, *The Girl's Own Book*, ed. Madame de Chatelain, 17th edn, London, 1856, pp. 213–14. Berlin wool-work was a type of petit-point embroidery. See Rozsika Parker, *The Subversive Stitch: Embroidery and the making of the feminine*, London, 1984, pp. 147–73.
- ⁸⁹ 'Let us join the Ladies', *Punch*, 33, 18 July 1857, p. 27. Potichomanie involved sticking coloured motifs to the inside of glass vases, then varnishing the inside of the vase. *Girl's Own Book*, p. 200.
- ⁹⁰ *Illustrated London News*, 6 June 1857, p. 545.
- ⁹¹ *Athenaeum*, 1685, 11 Feb. 1860, p. 211.
- ⁹² 'School for Sirens', *Punch*, 38, 16 June 1860, p. 241.
- ⁹³ 'The Ladies and the Looking Glass', *Punch*, 33, 24 Oct. 1857, p. 174.
- ⁹⁴ *Literary Gazette*, 18 May 1822, quoted in Solkin (ed.), *Art on the Line*, p. 171. See also *Athenaeum*, 28, 7 May 1828, p. 439, complaining about the 'ell-wide chapeau of some satiated gazer'.
- ⁹⁵ *Illustrated London News*, 20 June 1857, p. 620. 'Society of Painters in Water Colours', *Athenaeum*, 1697, 5 May 1860, p. 622. Most likely William Henry Hunt.
- ⁹⁶ *Illustrated London News*, 9 and 16 May 1857, pp. 432, 460.
- ⁹⁷ 'The Exhibition Undressed', *Art-Treasures Examiner*, p. 60.
- ⁹⁸ *Edinburgh Review*, 40, 1824, pp. 316–49.
- ⁹⁹ *Punch*, 18 June 1887, in Clarke, *Critical Voices*, p. 157. The Duchess of Dilwater may refer to art critic Emilia Dilke.
- ¹⁰⁰ Pullan, 'Conversations on the Arts', p. 22.
- ¹⁰¹ Bermingham, *Learning to Draw*, pp. 217–24.

Chapter 3

'Fair adventurers' and the authority of travel

One important context in which women first wrote on art was travel-writing, as Sherman and Holcomb have indicated.¹ There was a long tradition in England of women keeping journals to record their experiences of travel, including their responses to art, as we see from the late-seventeenth-century journal of Celia Fiennes.² The aim was often simply to pass their time profitably, and so avoid the depression born of inactivity that was common among the leisured classes. Information on art was also exchanged by letter between family and friends, and it was often in the letter or journal format that women first entered the world of print. This was considered acceptably feminine, in a way that learned treatises were not, allowing women to cloak their authorial ambitions under the guise of writing for an intimate circle.

This chapter will demonstrate how women used travel-writing to negotiate primarily negative attitudes to the female art-viewer and to participate in an area that seemed to construct their taste as Other. I will consider the public persona of polite connoisseur constructed by the travel-writing of Anna Miller (c. 1741–81) and Hester Lynch Piozzi (1741–1821), and compare their approach with the private journals of Mary Berry (1763–1852), who moved in more aristocratic circles. I will then consider the work of Mariana Starke (c. 1762–1838), an educated middle-class woman whose handbooks were influential in the early nineteenth century. I will show that, despite their different backgrounds, these writers shared certain strategies of self-presentation. Above all, I will indicate the importance of travel in establishing the authority of the female connoisseur.³

Anna Miller: an 'Arcadian patroness' in search of 'virtù'

One early published woman art-writer, in the context of travel-writing, is Lady Anna Miller (fig. 33), whose *Letters from Italy* (1776) described a Grand Tour undertaken 1770–1.⁴ The Millers are best known for the 'poetical amusements' they instigated at their grand villa at Batheaston, described by Walpole as a 'very diminutive principality with large pretensions'.⁵ Clearly, Lady Miller created a more forceful impression on society than her husband, because the *Gentleman's Magazine* described him in 1798 as husband to 'the late celebrated Lady Miller'.⁶ In 1770 the couple set off for Italy, leaving their children in Paris

with Lady Miller's mother, Margaret Riggs, to whom the *Letters* were ostensibly written. Publication may have been intended from the first to repair their fortune, Walpole suggests, and the exercise seems to have proved successful, a revised edition being printed in 1777.⁷ Public opinion was not universally positive, however; Mary Delany reported that the book was 'very conceited, they say, and not worth buying'.⁸ Nevertheless, in his *Tour Through Italy* of 1791, Thomas Martyn lists Miller alongside Addison, Richardson and Smollett as one of 'the most esteemed writers of travels'.⁹

Miller's *Letters* are full of lively incident, commenting on the dress, food and politics of the countries she visited. Although this anecdotal aspect was appreciated by reviewers, it is clear that her overriding interest was art, especially that of Italy. She hoped to provide detailed descriptions of individual works, rather than supplying 'the epithet very fine, very good, & c. repeated without end', which she considered the tendency of earlier guides. In an age before colour reproduction and mass travel, Miller perhaps saw a gap in the market for writing that vividly conveyed the experience of viewing art abroad. She is certainly acutely aware of the 'competition', declaring that she will concentrate less on Rome, for example, than on other parts of Italy that are 'less noticed in the books of travels'.¹⁰ The usefulness of the information she provides is backed up by the *Gentleman's Magazine*, which particularly recommends her accounts of the Uffizi and Pitti Palace. Her 'very exact and scientific' descriptions will be welcomed by connoisseurs, the reviewer states, as they give 'a more adequate idea of their subjects, beauties, and defects, than any we have seen'.¹¹

The innocent eye

Miller's fascination with art led her editors, the Dilly brothers, to apologize in the preface for the length of some of her 'extensive criticisms'. Miller certainly supplies a vast amount of detail, minutely cataloguing artworks on view. However, her strategy is to make fun of this obsessive interest, in order to deflect potential criticism: 'Can you hear of more pictures? ... happily for you, there is a law-suit in the family of the present possessor of the paintings contained in the *Palazzo Brignoletti*; so they are taken down and locked up, until the cause shall be decided'.¹² This is typical of the way in which she uses humour to keep the reader's sympathy, constructing a persona that is both serious and yet self-deflating.

The preface is designed to project an image of Miller as an educated, genteel lady, rather than an adventuress in search of fame and fortune. Her 'artless, ingenuous' style results not from a want of learning, the Dillys insist, but from writing on the spot, in moments 'unfriendly to reflection', and they stress that the same pen could have supplied

'farther embellishment of style, apposite quotations, abundant illustrations, & c.... had ... a display of the author's reading been an object of publication'.¹³ In this way, while emphasizing that Miller does not lack learning, they insist on her essential modesty. The portrayal of Miller as an intelligent but unpretentious woman helps to guarantee the value of her judgments on art. The letter format of the book also enhances the sense of Miller as a private individual, writing for family, rather than profit, and so underlines the disinterested nature of her opinions. Readers probably appreciated that this device was purely a literary conceit. In her Grand Tour account *Observations and Reflections* (1789), Piozzi (fig. 34) could be referring to Miller (among other travel-writers) when she says: 'I have not thrown my thoughts into the form of private letters; because a work of which truth is the best recommendation, should not above all others begin with a lie'.¹⁴ Nevertheless, it was central to Miller's self-construction as an art-viewer that she should appear a private lady of taste.

Miller's aim is not to present herself as an expert critic, and she is never afraid to confess her ignorance, giving readers a pleasant sense of their own superiority. She admits, for example, on seeing a Magdalene by Andrea del Sarto, that she is 'so stupid as to mistake it for a family portrait'.¹⁵ There is, however, an assumption that, through travelling, she will become better able to form aesthetic judgments. This is a process we also find in Piozzi's *Observations*, where her early expressions of praise are constantly 'effaced by the sight of greater wonders' as her taste matures.¹⁶

Miller's style is vivid, and the picture she paints of art-viewing is highly entertaining. Of the Pietro da Cortona ceilings in the Pitti Palace, she declares:

I only wish you then to believe that they have great merit as paintings; that they are *symbolical, mysterious*, that I got a pain in my neck from looking up at them, and was tired to death at hearing them explained.¹⁷

She laughs at her own obsessive preoccupation with art when she distractedly trips over a kneeling pilgrim at the Loreto Holy House in Foligno, and when she falls into a room full of ash at Pompeii in her eagerness to inspect some frescoes. Her descriptions of paintings are reminiscent of the burlesque style of periodical-writing, as when she describes an Annibale Caracci *Venus with Two Cupids* as 'a coarse vulgar wench, with a couple of sturdy brats', or Guercino's *Judith*, in the Ducal Palace at Modena, as 'a stout male Israelite in woman's clothes'. The liveliness of her writing compensates for the occasionally interminable lists of paintings. Even approaching a famous work like Correggio's *Notte*, she finds original similes to evoke its appearance. The light from the body of Christ is 'not rays distinct and separate, like those round the face of a sun that

indicates an insurance-office; nor linear, like those proceeding from the man in the almanack; but of a dazzling brightness'.¹⁸ Her comments often puncture the pretensions of high art, bringing Old Masters thoroughly down to earth. A similar tendency is evident in Piozzi, as, for example, when Domenichino's *Diana Among her Nymphs* reminds her of Hogarth's *Strolling Actresses Dressing in a Barn* (figs 35, 36).¹⁹ This irreverence reflects the humorous approach of Smollett and Sterne.

What is striking is the extraordinary confidence with which Miller, as a female viewer, expresses her opinions on artworks, admiring works the experts criticize and attacking works they revere. In Parma, for example, the famous Correggio of the *Madonna and Child with Mary Magdalene, St Jerome and Angels* (fig. 37), 'in favour of which the whole world of *virtuosi* can scarce find words to express the enthusiasm of their feelings', disappoints her bitterly: 'Notwithstanding my prejudices in favour were strong, yet I must confess, though I expose myself to the censure of the first *connoisseurs*, that I do not like this picture'. The Virgin's face is that of a peasant; the Magdalene has 'the face of an idiot; and not of a handsome one', while the 'singing angel opens a mouth like that of a john-dory'.²⁰ Miller rarely bows to the superior discernment of existing authorities, valuing her own responses above the science of the blinkered *virtuosi*.

It is above all this honesty that commends Miller to readers. Rather than flattering herself on her discernment, she aims simply to 'speak the truth to the best of my judgment'. She questions the authenticity of writers who have based their opinions on hearsay, insisting that she has seen everything described herself.²¹ Piozzi is equally keen to stress this: 'I will tell nothing that I did not *see*.'²² The importance of genuine, on-the-spot reactions is a topos of eighteenth-century travel literature, but it is often particularly underlined in women's justifications for their writing, as sincerity and first-hand viewing compensate for any lack of knowledge in the female connoisseur. Miller constructs herself as the common-sense viewer of Hogarth and Ramsay, who sees with her own eyes. She is neither an artist nor an erudite connoisseur, and is therefore free from the 'prejudice and self-opinion [that] perverts our sight'.²³ Making a virtue of potential weakness, she projects herself as a reliable witness.

The serious connoisseur: conforming to the canon

Miller's self-characterization as an innocent abroad disarms accusations of Bluestocking pedantry. Yet she manages simultaneously to convey that she is a serious art-viewer, carefully differentiating herself from the common herd, and positioning herself somewhere

between the ignorant viewer and the pedantic scholar. In Rome, for example, she locates herself firmly among the cultured elite. The Coliseum, she writes,

must ever be admired even by those who enjoy but a moderate share of taste for the fine arts To others, who really delight in that refined study, it must fully gratify their great ideas, being a *definition* of the *sublime* in *architecture*. I think this sounds somewhat enthusiastic; but I don't fear exposing myself to you, who are as likely to give into enthusiasm upon this sort of subject as myself.²⁴

In other words, she belongs firmly to the 'others' who border on 'enthusiasm' (an irrational religious fervour) in their love for the fine arts. In confessing herself to the recipient of the letters, she simultaneously appeals to the sympathy of like-minded readers, defending her obsession with art as one that is acceptable within enlightened circles. This contrasts with the persona constructed by Piozzi, for whom art is just one aspect of polite culture, carefully balanced by an interest in music, theatre and literature.

Miller makes it clear that she is well read in the appropriate literature, demonstrating the breadth of her learning across several languages. She refers to Pliny on Apelles, to Hogarth's 'serpentine line of beauty' and to the work of antiquarian scholars Marcello Venuti and Filippo Bonanni. Her descriptions of individual paintings indicate that she has absorbed key texts on classical art theory, her vocabulary frequently echoing that of Richardson, in particular. She considers all the qualities a good connoisseur should look for – composition, handling, grace, expression – and has a critical awareness of technicalities, such as perspective. Miller also hints at her experience in art-viewing by making connoisseurial comparisons that reveal her familiarity with art collections in England, France and Italy, and with engravings available in England.²⁵ Most people at this time experienced famous artworks only as prints or copies, and Miller lays constant stress on the importance of seeing the originals, thereby emphasizing her role as a privileged viewer.²⁶ Miller's viewing of artworks abroad is central to her construction as an authoritative art critic, outweighing the perceived disadvantage of sex in connoisseurship.

Throughout the text, Miller indicates that she has fully absorbed academic discourse. Greek art stands at the top of the scale, of course, with the Venus de' Medici as her 'standard for female beauty'. At the Belvedere, the Apollo represents her ideal, in spite of the general assumption that the Antinous was more appealing to the female viewer. While Miller recognizes the latter as 'elegant', and a 'model for grace', she nevertheless finds it too feminized: 'his attitude is more genteel than noble'.²⁷ Miller often forces herself to appreciate key classical works in the face of an initially negative reaction. Sometimes she fails, in spite of her efforts, to agree with the judgment she knows is expected. The

Belvedere Torso, for instance, appears to her 'a frightful object'. The same is true of the Farnese Hercules, which, though 'esteemed a *chef-d'oeuvre*', is not to her taste:

It may be very beautiful, and the most perfect model of a man in the world; but I am insensible enough to its charms to own, that if all mankind were so proportioned, I should think them very disagreeable and odious. The muscles of this Hercules ... are like craggy rocks compared with the Belviderean Apollo.²⁸

Chard suggests that travel-writer John Moore later satirized Miller's reaction, but shows that men often shared reservations about the heavy musculature of the Hercules and Torso.²⁹ Other women, like Mary Berry, had no difficulty in appreciating the sculptures, indicating that gender was less important than individual taste in such matters.³⁰

Overall, however, Miller tends to comply with conventional assessments of canonical works of art, her ranking of the major artists, schools and genres having been thoroughly absorbed from academic discourse. Her descriptions of artists often smack of the connoisseurial cant caricatured by Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* (1760), as she praises Titian for the 'glowing warmth of the colours', stresses the sweetness of Guido and Correggio, the boldness of Michelangelo or the 'noble simplicity' of Raphael.³¹ In grading the various schools, her assessments often match those of classical theory. She gives lesser value to the Venetian colourists than to the Bolognese school, for example, criticizing Veronese for concentrating on the detailed depiction of fabrics and ornaments.³² There is no evidence of a 'feminine' interest in fashion here. She also typifies academic discourse in ranking Italian above Dutch and Flemish art, expressing a preference for the ideal, rather than the real.

The veristic detail of the Dutch masters receives due appreciation, and the words 'natural' or 'a deception' are often a mark of respect in Miller's critical vocabulary. However, because imitation is not a valued quality in academic terms, she avoids praising it too highly. In this, she follows texts such as Thomas Martyn's *The English Connoisseur* (1767). Martyn accepts that to deny Dutch and Flemish art 'their proper share of merit, or to refuse them a place in a collection, would be ridiculous; but surely to set them in competition with Italian sublimity is much more so'.³³ In the same way, although Miller greatly admires Gerrit Dou's *The Dropsical Woman* (c. 1663; fig. 38), she concludes:

This picture is too highly finished; In short, there are many sketches, by Italian masters, I should prefer to this, had I my choice: it really is, rather a curious, than a capital picture. One wonders more at the extreme patience and laborious disposition of the painter, than at the superlative merit of the piece.³⁴

There is a tension between her admiration for the painter's skill, and the knowledge that high art theory requires her to reject such 'mimicry' as inferior. It is important that such

inconsistencies are not seen as evidence of an irrational female mind, incapable of forming a coherent philosophy of art, however. On balance, Miller reveals the same taste for the ideal that we find in Richardson and Reynolds, adhering to the notion that art should be raised somewhat above reality. The to-ings and fro-ings she engages in, as she defines what art should not be, rather than precisely what it should be, are equally characteristic of male art-writers in this period. It was by criticizing the extremes that writers sought to establish a middle ground between mannered exaggeration and the mere copying of nature, just as Miller does.

Rather than offering a specifically female interpretation of what she sees, through her adherence to academic principles Miller emphasizes her similarity to male critics. She also shares the same sophisticated vocabulary. In assessing Leonardo, for example, she considers that his works fail 'continually in keeping and the *clair obscure*; yet there is a finish and a colouring, which produces the effect of what the Italians call *soave*'.³⁵ Miller makes it clear that she understands 'official' opinion regarding artists, even when she departs from the canon in the light of first-hand experience. She knows that Raphael 'can never be sufficiently admired by the virtuosi', yet she comments on the idiosyncrasies as much as the merits of the Vatican murals, and even though she admires Correggio's 'sweetness', he often tries her patience with his incorrect drawing. She was not alone in such difficulties, of course. Hogarth, for one, had questioned the 'divinity' of Raphael, and of Correggio, whose proportions 'might be corrected by a common sign painter'.³⁶

Central to the idea of Miller as a serious connoisseur is the time she invests in viewing. It takes her three whole days to examine every 'morsel' in the Uffizi, 'not but that two hours would have sufficed for those who walk as fast as they can through this labyrinth of the powers of art'. This defines her as a true connoisseur rather than a mere tourist. Miller is anxious to accord canonical artworks appropriate respect. Michelangelo's *Pietà* bas-relief in Genoa is contemplated 'in silence for near half an hour', while at least two hours are devoted to the Farnese Bull.³⁷ The careful critiques Miller composes firmly contest the idea that women flitted from work to work like restless bees. Far from being blown to extremes by excessive feeling, as feminine stereotypes suggest, she takes time to form balanced judgments, offering rational grounds to support her criticism.

It is clear that Miller took the duty of reportage very seriously, conscientiously recording facts in a pocket-book. An accurate record is so important to her, that it nearly proves her downfall in Pompeii, where note-taking is expressly forbidden. Here she presents herself as a stubbornly determined seeker after knowledge, not to be put off by

petty rules.³⁸ Writing on art therefore symbolizes her resistance, as a free Englishwoman, to tyrannical political control, further underlining the value of her opinions.

English eyes: the Protestant connoisseur

One way in which Miller positions herself favourably in relation to male writers on art is by pointing out their various errors. She is particularly anxious to define herself as superior to the French travel-writers Charles-Nicolas Cochin and Joseph-Jérôme de Lalande: 'I am sorry to find so frequent occasion to criticize Lalande, but one is under a kind of necessity to expose such gross mistakes'.³⁹ This anti-French stance, which is also evident in Piozzi, would have found much sympathy among Miller's English readers and would have contributed to her opinions being more highly valued.⁴⁰ If a female critic could not equal a male one, she could at least be better than the French.

In a rather patronising manner, Miller points out the nationalistic bias of Cochin and Lalande in favour of French art, suggesting how patriotic feeling could warp the judgment in art-viewing.⁴¹ This again echoes Martyn's *English Connoisseur*. The French, he says, dare to set their 'tawdry productions' on a level with the Italians, 'nay sometimes, with true French vanity, even jostling or thrusting aside the divine proportions of the Italian pencils'.⁴² For Martyn, English viewers are especially unbiased because of the lack of an established British school of art. Miller's neutrality of judgment, which might be questioned because of her sex, is therefore guaranteed by her Englishness, as highlighted on the title page of the *Letters*: 'By an ENGLISH WOMAN'.

It is in confronting Roman Catholicism that Miller most fiercely characterizes herself as an Englishwoman. Like many travel-writers, male and female, she makes constant mocking references to what she sees as the superstitions of 'Popery', the unsuitable theatricality of Catholic churches and 'blasphemous' representations of miracles, Popes, priests and saints.⁴³ This was a common difficulty for English viewers, who felt uneasy when considering overtly Catholic subjects, as Haynes has shown.⁴⁴ Miller criticizes in particular the excessive violence of Catholic art, especially in depictions of martyrdom. Guercino's *Flaying of St Bartholomew*, for example, is 'much too shocking to be represented on canvas'. 'It is my opinion,' Miller declares, 'that in a well-governed Republic, painters whose pictures excite horror and rage ... instead of terror and pity, ought to be severely punished.'⁴⁵ This is not evidence of a particularly feminine sensibility, however, as many male writers express the same abhorrence to the violence of Catholic art.⁴⁶ When Miller openly ridicules the elaborate rituals of Catholicism, proudly describing her refusal to kneel at the elevation of the Host in St Peter's, the fact that she is not

prepared in Rome to do as Roman Catholics do acts as guarantee of her reliability as a critic of Catholic art. Like Richardson, she emphasizes 'we are all *Connoisseurs* as we are Protestants'.⁴⁷

Miller's neutrality as a connoisseur is potentially undermined by her refusal to separate aesthetic quality from religious dogma, but it was clearly important for her credibility with English readers to appear virulently anti-Catholic. While revealing her antipathy towards Catholicism, however, she nevertheless makes an effort to interpret these works for English viewers:

endeavour, if you can, to consider them rather in the light of collections of paintings, of sculpture, & c. Put priests and monks, with their croaking of masses, out of your head, and the separating these ideas which you have (I suppose) connected closely together, may enable you to read with less weariness, what you will frequently have accounts of from these regions of superstition and priestcraft.⁴⁸

Following Richardson, Miller encourages English viewers to overcome their instinctive prejudice against Catholic art, and to see it in the context of art, rather than 'priestcraft'.⁴⁹ Nevertheless, it is Miller's self-presentation as an independent-minded Protestant that guarantees her reliability as an interpreter of religious history painting – an approach that would be adopted by later women writers, such as Jameson (Chapter 7).

A woman's view?

If Miller's Protestantism and Englishness are central to her construction as an art-viewer, what role does gender play, and how does her writing compare with the assumptions about female taste exhibited in contemporary periodicals? As we have seen, Miller tends to reinforce the official canon rather than contesting it. She does not stress any overtly feminine qualities she brings to art-viewing. Nor, in spite of the Dillys' claims in the preface, does she reveal herself as a model of feminine modesty in her forthright comments.

On rare occasions, the fact that she is a woman proves a practical barrier to her art-viewing. In Venice, for example, she is unable to see the Veronese *Wedding at Cana* in San Giorgio Maggiore, as '*no women are suffered to penetrate so far*'.⁵⁰ She accepts this rather more meekly than Piozzi, however, who rails against the injustice:

My disappointment was so great that I was deprived even of the powers of solicitation by the extreme ill-humour it occasioned; and my few intreaties for admission were completely disregarded by the good old monk, who remained outside with me, while the gentlemen visited the convent without molestation.⁵¹

The exclusion is seen as the result of misguided religious practice, rather than anti-female prejudice, however, suggesting the greater freedom of Protestant women as art-viewers.⁵²

As we have seen, one area of concern for periodical-writers was the exposure of female viewers to nudity in art. In the case of Miller, however, there is no evidence of her being shocked. It is clear that she considered nudity perfectly acceptable providing it was sanctioned by classical antiquity and high art. Indeed, the female viewer reveals her politeness through her ability to appreciate the nude as art, rather than life. Miller describes the *Wrestlers*, for example, as 'a group I could never sufficiently admire; I walked round and round them until I was quite weary. Their attitudes are amazing, so regular an entanglement is marvellous'. Though the sculpture shows contorted male nudes in violent action (fig. 39), Miller does not register the slightest sense of embarrassment at being seen to stare at it for a long period of time. Piozzi, too, marvels at the Barberini Faun (fig. 40): 'so drunk, so fast asleep. So like a human body!'⁵³ This contrasts sharply with the unease expressed by male writers regarding women's viewing of nudes.

Indeed, Miller makes fun of male responses to female nudity, as in the case of Titian's *Venus of Urbino*: 'when, lo! a curtain rises and discovers another beauty All mankind are wrapt in silent admiration at the beauty of this lady, called Titian's Mistress'. Her italics are clearly intended to refer to the adoring circle of male viewers and their weakness for the female nude, such as we find in Zoffany's painting of the Tribuna (fig. 41). Miller is also amused by the king of Sardinia, who has a 'mortal aversion to what is called by *connoisseurs*, *le nud*', and reveals the 'most ridiculous prudery' by keeping two rooms of pictures locked at his palace in Turin: 'decency is the pretext: a sight of these pictures (as supposed by the King) may be of dangerous consequence to young people'.⁵⁴ Clearly, she disagrees with the idea that nudity can corrupt the viewer and mocks such elaborate precautions:

I fear your modesty begins to be alarmed, as I am now arrived at the indecent collection. The first objects that strike one's eye on entering, are our first parents [Adam and Eve], in their birthday suits Very indifferently done.

As a more skilled connoisseur than the benighted king, Miller is more concerned with 'verity in the drawing, in the anatomy'. Not even the suggestive wall-paintings of Pompeii can shock her. Miller's equanimity before the nude lifts the supposed barrier to her appreciation of history painting. Contrary to the female stereotype, she is not put off by classical or historical themes, but warmly recommends them to her correspondent.⁵⁵ Far from confining herself to portraits and still-life, she constructs herself as a woman who can appreciate art of all genres.

There are times when Miller betrays a certain feminine sensitivity, emphasizing the frailty of her constitution. At the Duke of Parma's gallery in Naples, she feels faint on seeing pictures by the Bassani: 'one in particular so well done, that it turned my stomach: I began to fancy I smelt that odious faint smell which makes me sick if I go near raw meat'. She is occasionally disturbed by artworks to what seems an excessive degree, but is rarely so overwhelmed by horror that she cannot view works dispassionately, demonstrating that she is perfectly capable of separating emotional reaction from matters of style. In the case of Rubens' *Juno and Argus* (fig. 42), she states:

The trunk of Argus, but just beheaded, is too well done to bear contemplation; the veins of the neck still spouting blood, is very shocking upon the whole, this picture is very disagreeable, upon account of the subject; the drapery being admirable, the grouping fine, and the colouring perfect.

She also indicates her ironic detachment from the extreme violence: 'Miss Iris is picking them [the eyes] out of Argus's head with a bodkin'.⁵⁶

Miller's appreciation of the emotional register in painting is offered as evidence of desirable sensibility in the polite viewer, rather than feminine weakness. Her response to the woman extracting arrows in Caravaggio's *St Sebastian* is typical: 'There is no contemplating this picture without feeling the strongest emotions of pity.' It is a measure of the quality of the painting that it can arouse these feelings in the viewer, and a measure of Miller's quality as a viewer that she is open to receive such stimuli. Her ability to empathize with the emotions portrayed is presented as a positive quality, enabling her to convey the image more forcefully to the reader, and she makes a conscious effort to bring works of art to life by evoking them in multi-sensory terms. At Parma, for example, she describes a *Flight into Egypt* by Camillo Procaccino:

[it] pleased me much for its landscape, and the effect of the high wind I could almost fancy I felt myself colder from its vicinity to me. The landscape represents a wild and romantic country: a stork and wild duck fly screaming over a marsh, in the fore-ground of the picture, extremely well done.⁵⁷

Such poetic descriptions anticipate art-writing of the early nineteenth century, by Hazlitt, for example, which focused on the spectator's imaginative response. For Miller, then, emotional sensitivity is of vital importance in art-viewing, but intense involvement is always balanced by rational detachment.

Throughout, Miller denies constructions of female taste as anti-academic. Although women were often characterized as preferring ornament, for example, her description of the entrance to St Peter's demonstrates a preference for 'noble simplicity'.⁵⁸ Nor does Miller appreciate the 'gaudy' colouring generally considered to appeal to women. In

Guercino's pictures 'there is too much purple and lilac', and Procaccino's are 'too red and flaring'. She also dislikes the excessive use of gold; the Perugino draperies in the Sistine Chapel are 'quite absurd, being for the most part, attired in gold and silver'. Miller is particularly averse to high finish, despite its association with women's taste. Like contemporary male writers, she criticizes Adriaen van der Werff and Gerrit Dou, for example, for their 'excessive high finish'. Miller also rejects the taste for French art that is ascribed to women by writers such as Pasquin. She expresses disgust at Lalande's praise for Pierre Puget's *Assumption*, for example, which she sees only as:

a Virgin ascending to heaven as a *dame d'atour* would ascend the great staircase at Versailles. What flouncing and plaiting of drapery, what plunging and fluttering; ... If she had had but a *chignon à la du Barrie*, ... Laland [sic] would have been in ecstasy.⁵⁹

By appropriating the negative vocabulary of male critics, she denies the connection of female taste with fashion, transferring it instead to the frivolous French.

Rather than being drawn to paintings by their material qualities, Miller reveals a highly sophisticated approach to spectatorship, considering questions of viewing distance and lighting, for example. This marks her out as a very different type of viewer from the chattering socialites described as visiting the Royal Academy. Miller directly contradicts the assumption that women were more interested in seeing people than in viewing paintings when she complains about the distraction of social engagements, which are 'considerable impediments to our seeing the pictures, & c.' In fact, however, these encounters often resulted in her gaining privileged access to collections, as when the Pope grants permission for Miller to visit the Jesuit College in Rome.⁶⁰ Knowing the right people was vitally important for art-viewing in this period. It is Miller's social position that occasionally allows her to bypass the restrictions placed on women viewers, and she is never afraid to stress the exalted nature of the circles in which she mixes.⁶¹ No doubt she hoped that this emphasis on her privileged background would be read as evidence of a more cultured mind. Haynes has suggested that male writers on Catholic art tended to stress their class status, because polite, educated viewers were trusted to resist the seductions of Popery more effectively than the lower classes.⁶² Elevated status was therefore integral to Miller's self-construction as an art-viewer, bolstering her claims to intellectual authority.

Miller's sex is relevant to the idea of her as an 'innocent eye', but only in the title to the *Letters* does she stress the fact that she is a woman. She characterizes herself primarily in terms of her religion, her nationality and her class. Being a member of the leisured elite guarantees her good taste far more than her sex. Rather than presenting

herself as a female viewer contesting the male bastion of established art theory, Miller consistently emphasizes her loyalty to patriarchal modes of viewing.

A 'truly philosophic lady' or a figure of fun?

So how was Miller's publication reviewed? While recognizing her achievement in creating a useful guidebook for art-lovers, the *Gentleman's Magazine* was more impressed by Miller's lively anecdotes of high society than her connoisseurial skills. Above all, the reviewer says, Miller makes herself an 'agreeable' traveller – an eminently feminine quality. When it comes to her serious literary pretensions, however, he is more critical, adopting a condescending tone towards 'this ingenious lady' as he points out errors that require correction.⁶³ He also comments scathingly on the inaccuracy of Miller's French – though, to be fair, his criticism is eminently justified. As Walpole wrote, 'The poor Arcadian patroness does not spell one word of French or Italian right through her three volumes of Travels'.⁶⁴

Why, then, was Miller's book not taken more seriously on an intellectual level, like those by fellow women writers on the Dilly publishing list, such as Catherine Macaulay and Elizabeth Montagu?⁶⁵ Was Miller, perhaps, too witty to be taken seriously? Or were reactions to the book coloured by responses to her as an individual? The preface to the *Letters* stresses the importance of anonymity to the author, but reviews of the work make it clear that everyone knew who Miller was, which may have some bearing on critical reactions to her work.⁶⁶ The *Gentleman's Magazine* hinted at a tendency towards bad taste, or 'unphilosophic delicacy', in Miller, and others also had their doubts. Madame du Deffand, for example, told Walpole that she found the family painfully pretentious, and though Walpole considered the Millers well-meaning, he felt they were spoiled by their Continental tour. He wrote in 1775, 'Alas! Mrs. Miller is returned a beauty, a genius, a Sappho, a tenth Muse'.⁶⁷ Burney had a similarly mixed response when visiting Batheaston with Piozzi (then Mrs Thrale) in 1780, describing Miller as an 'ordinary woman in very common life, with fine clothes on'. Burney's condescending attitude to Miller may have been influenced by the fact that the 'Batheaston follies' were ridiculed by London sophisticates such as Dr Johnson, and sneered at in the press. Yet Burney makes it clear that 'notwithstanding Bath Easton is so much laughed at in London, nothing is more tonish than to visit Lady Miller'.⁶⁸

It may be that Miller's greatest mistake was to publish the *Letters*, as the suspicion that she wrote for money left her open to accusations of vulgarity, while her desire for literary fame was no doubt considered disproportionate to her intellect. Most adverse

reactions seem to be rooted in class prejudice, perceiving Miller as something of a *parvenue*, in the 'Lady Jocelyne' mould. Her Irish ancestry probably did not help matters.⁶⁹ Travel-writer Lady Morgan also received fierce criticism, reflecting the level of prejudice encountered by the Anglo-Irish. At the very least, it seems Miller's location in the West Country may have led to her being dismissed as parochial by London-based writers like Piozzi. In spite of the mockery they provoked, however, the *Letters* gave Miller an entrée into Bath society that money alone would never have given her. The location of her monument by the altar of Bath Abbey suggests the esteem in which she was held (fig. 43).

It seems, then, that the critical reception Miller received may have been bound up with her nationality and class, as much as her sex. Whatever the wry responses of Walpole and Burney, her book demonstrated that well-travelled women art-viewers could speak their minds. Though Miller risked being condemned as 'conceited', her confident pronouncements on art made her a positive role model for women writers in this period.

Mary Berry: 'artists all the morning'

Although Mary Berry's journals, covering the years 1783–1852, were never intended for public consumption, they provide extraordinary insight into the forming of a female connoisseur in private life, revealing the extent to which women could develop their knowledge, despite having no official role within the art world.⁷⁰ Berry (fig. 44) met most of Pilkington's requirements for a connoisseur. Though substantially self-educated, she was widely read, a scholar of Latin and Greek, and spoke fluent French and Italian.⁷¹ Her sister Agnes was considered the better artist, but Mary also sketched.⁷² As a regular visitor to exhibitions, art collections and artists' studios, Berry had ample opportunity to educate her gaze, and travelled extensively, viewing major artworks across Europe. She was a friend of acknowledged connoisseurs such as Horace Walpole, Samuel Rogers, George Beaumont, John Angerstein, Richard Payne Knight and William Roscoe, as well as artists, including Anne Damer, Maria Cosway, Thomas Lawrence, Antonio Canova and Charles Eastlake.⁷³

Berry's journals reveal increasing confidence in judging art as the direct result of travel, and letters testify to the fact that her taste was warmly respected by those around her. Damer, in particular, requested Berry's 'severest criticism' on her sculpture in 1791, because she respected Berry's '*sixth sense*' in taste, while in 1834 the Royal Academy Professor of Sculpture Richard Westmacott asked her opinion on the comparative state of

the arts in France and England.⁷⁴ The extent of her perceived influence within the art world is shown by a letter from Lord Webb Seymour, in 1808, asking Berry to support Charles Bell as candidate for Professor of Anatomy:

Now, though you are not a painter, or a sculptor, or a Member of the Royal Academy, yet, as you have a good deal to say among painters, and sculptors, and Members of the Royal Academy, and Commissioners in the Fine Arts, I must believe your favour and support to be of importance to Mr. Bell.

In 1813 Uvedale Price consulted Berry regarding his project to write a book on 'visible beauty', discussing with her the theories of Payne Knight and Archibald Alison, and while visiting Rome in 1820, she acted as go-between for the Duke of Devonshire, advising him on which works to buy from Lorenzo Bartolini and others.⁷⁵ Berry's private papers therefore reveal close involvement in the social networks of the art world, and demonstrate the extent to which a woman's judgment could be respected during this period. Because such sources have been neglected, women's role has been less visible in historical studies, but though they may not appear in the official records of art institutions, this does not mean women were not acknowledged as key players. Berry certainly saw herself as participating fully in the 'Republic of Taste', and deeply resented the restrictions placed on women's education and field of action.⁷⁶

Like Miller and Piozzi, Berry strongly contests the notion of the female viewer as frivolous and uncritical. She expresses a yearning for serious knowledge, seeking out intellectual superiors in order to benefit from their friendship.⁷⁷ Her writing reveals an interest in history painting, and an academic taste for simplicity and repose over theatricality of effect. She writes of her disappointment with Correggio, for example: 'his boasted grace is to me affectation – has no simplicity, no dignity about it, and never touches me.'⁷⁸ She rejects the 'tea-board' and 'signpost' style associated with female taste, and the high finish of French art. She regrets the influence of the Venetian colourists on British artists, rather than the more sober Roman school, and while she appreciates Dutch works, like Miller, she sets them in the context of the higher achievements of the Italians.⁷⁹ The fact that Berry's writing is wholly private implies that this is not a construction concocted for public consumption, but reflects an internalized set of values wholly in line with academic principles.

When Berry visits the Orléans collection, displayed in London in 1799, she and Damer stand before Sebastiano del Piombo's *Raising of Lazarus* for 'above half an hour' (fig. 45). Berry describes it as 'one of *the fine* pictures in the world – excelling in grouping, composition, drawing, intellect, clearness, expression, and all that constitutes the perfections of the higher order of painting'. The qualities she admires are the intellectual

aspects of art, not the sensual values associated with female viewers. Berry also makes fun of the general mass of spectators who avoid the collection,

for the pictures are all of a sort less understood and less tasted here; and besides, they are without frames; and besides, the Lyceum is out of the way; and besides, it is not near Dyde's and Scribe's, ... nor any of the great haberdashers for the women, nor Bond St. nor St. James' St. for the men⁸⁰

By placing herself at an ironic distance from these vulgar viewers, both male and female, for whom art-viewing is on a par with shopping, Berry claims the role of true connoisseur for herself. Similarly, her class position sometimes gives her a sense of condescension towards male viewers. This is evident, for example, in her description of a lower-class guard in the Grenoble museum, 'in very shabby regimentals, descanting as learnedly on the pictures ... as the best-dressed connoisseurs could have done'.⁸¹ Here her superior social status outweighs any negative associations with her sex in art-viewing.

Despite her extensive knowledge of art and her influence in artistic circles, Berry did not publish in this area, but confined herself to editing Walpole's papers, the letters of Mme du Deffand and Lady Russell, and writing a *Comparative View of the Social Life of England and France* (1828).⁸² Her *Letters of the Marquise du Deffand* were praised in the *Quarterly Review* (May 1811) as the product of an 'enlightened and vigorous' mind, polished by extensive reading and 'intercourse with the best society'. Socially, however, she was criticized for publishing. As Charlotte Bury later wrote,

It would be difficult to account for this outrageous abuse were it not an established fact that all women who meddle with literature, especially those in the higher ranks of life, place themselves in a pillory, at which every impertinent idler conceives he has a right to throw his rotten eggs.⁸³

This suggests that, although they often had greater opportunities to develop the skills of connoisseurship, higher-class women had more reason to be diffident about publishing. This perhaps explains why so many women art-writers are middle-class, and indicates the continuing difficulties women encountered when they chose to 'meddle' in art literature.

Mariana Starke: a practical guide for the middle classes

To avoid accusations of 'meddling', women often wrote on art in the context of giving practical advice, rather than developing aesthetic theories. Sherman and Holcomb have indicated the importance of guidebooks for women writers, who applied their knowledge of languages and experience of travel to the genre.⁸⁴ One of the most successful of these

guides was Mariana Starke's *Letters from Italy*, first published in 1800, which contained much information on the art recommended to travellers in Europe.⁸⁵ Starke's work was frequently up-dated throughout the early nineteenth century, and she was described by Wilkie Collins as the 'Delphic oracle' for travellers as late as 1836. She was enormously important in moulding English taste in this period, as Haskell has emphasized, influencing the approach adopted by a growing class of inexperienced, middle-class art-viewers of both sexes.⁸⁶

Brought up in India, where her father was governor of the British East India Company post at Fort St George, Madras, Starke had enjoyed moderate success as a playwright, but was stung by press attacks on her character. When publishing her plays, she chose anonymity as protection against the difficulties faced by women writers:

I own I have not the confidence to stand the public gaze, nor vanity enough not to feel embarrassed as an avowed authoress. Having too often witnessed the fate of such ... I wish to conceal myself from the censure of individuals, the flattery of sycophants, and the partiality of weak friends.⁸⁷

Suggestions that she wrote for money clearly wounded Starke, and it may be that she considered writing travel handbooks a safer, more appropriate role for a woman, as the guides, unlike the plays, were published under her name.⁸⁸

Having spent six years in Italy (1792–8), caring for her consumptive mother, Starke composed the first of her guides, which combined a personal memoir, focusing on the Napoleonic invasion of 1797–8, with hints for travellers. Starke's format strongly influenced her publisher John Murray, and much of her work was absorbed into his famous *Handbooks for Travellers* from 1836 onwards.⁸⁹ The guides are primarily practical, giving details of itineraries, costs and accommodation; travellers were no doubt gratified to learn that Siena was 'exempt from gnats', for example, or that German beds were short and damp.⁹⁰ Art was a major aspect of Starke's project, however, as specified in the sub-title: 'Likewise Pointing out the matchless Works of Art which still embellish Pisa, Florence, Siena ... & c.' In her later guides, Starke encouraged readers to follow a route from Pisa, through Florence to Rome, in order to trace the historical development of art from the Greco-Pisan school to the High Renaissance.⁹¹ She therefore aimed to provide travel guide and art manual in one.

Dutiful nurse or budding connoisseur?

Perhaps because of her unpleasant experience with the press, Starke was particularly careful to present herself in the handbooks as a model of feminine propriety, emphasizing her amateur status:

I presume not to imagine myself correct in every thing which I have advanced.... Nevertheless, general outlines will sometimes convey tolerably just ideas of a country, even though not shaded by a master's hand.⁹²

In expressing a desire to be useful to her fellow countrymen, Starke implies it is only patriotic duty that drives her to overcome conventional demands for female modesty by publishing. She further stresses that her primary duty while abroad was to care for an invalid relative, enabling her to offer advice to consumptive travellers. It is clear that Starke's nursing duties interfered with the more detailed investigation of art she would have liked to undertake. She apologizes for the fact that the 'Author had so many domestic duties to fulfil, that she could only find leisure sufficient to draw up a hasty statement of facts'.⁹³ This is a frequent apology on the part of women writers, who are distracted from study by the needs of those they care for. Starke's failings as a writer therefore emphasize her proper femininity. Moskal has suggested that the occupation of nurse acts as a 'fig leaf of propriety' for Starke's political journalism in the text.⁹⁴ I would suggest that the 'transgressive potential' of Starke's role as a writer on art is equally dependent on her construction as a virtuous woman.

Starke describes herself as a privileged observer of the French invasion of Italy, but she stresses that in spite of the conflict, people should not be

led by common report to conclude that all her choicest works of genius are destroyed, or removed to Paris. The ... *fresco-paintings*, of Pisa, Florence, and Rome, still remain uninjured; and a considerable number of statues, *rilievi*, and even paintings in oil, have hitherto escaped the ravages of war

Italy, she reassures readers, is still 'a most interesting and useful school of art'. She is a vital eye-witness, then, to the state of the arts, as well as to political events, and she hopes that her descriptions of the remaining works will 'in some measure supply ... the loss of those antiquarians whom war may have constrained to abandon their profession'.⁹⁵ As for Miller, the woman 'on-the-spot' is of equal value to the learned antiquarian.

However, Starke does not construct herself as a connoisseur in this text. Given the nature of the handbook, her comments on art are necessarily limited. Her intention is to summarize the 'objects best worth a traveller's attention', and she restricts herself to listing the subjects of works on display, their location and state of preservation, specifying the artist responsible and the materials used. Initially, Starke's judgments are diffident and pedestrian, restricted to the rather bald 'curious', 'well done', 'strikingly fine' or 'extraordinary'. Impersonal phrases are used, such as 'esteemed one of the finest pictures in the world', or 'said to be the *chef-d'oeuvre* of colouring', implying that she is relying

wholly on the judgment of others.⁹⁶ Starke constantly defers to anonymous sources of authority, labelled simply 'connoisseurs'. Her abbreviated style is of course a factor of the guidebook format, which, unlike the travel memoir, does not call for personal responses. While Miller and Piozzi reveal themselves as characters, Starke suppresses her individuality, because, as Moskal has indicated, the neutral tone of the guidebook erases the writer.⁹⁷ It therefore seems that one way in which women could achieve authority in writing on art was by removing themselves from the text.

One particularly innovative way in which Starke sought to aid her fellow travellers was by grading works of art for those who were short of time and energy. It has been suggested she was one of the first to apply the system of exclamation points later used by Murray's guides: 'In describing painting, statues, & c. I have generally marked the most celebrated with one or more admiration-points, according to their merit.'⁹⁸ The popularity of this scheme reflects the insecurity of middle-class travellers to Europe, lacking knowledge of art, but eager to take in the 'top ten' masterpieces. It is clear that Starke was aiming at a less than wealthy audience, offering herself in place of the guides that such tourists could not afford to hire: 'Persons who are not accompanied to the Vatican by a *Cicerone* may perhaps be glad to read the following account of the *Stanze di Raphael*.'⁹⁹ Her target audience is perhaps the Jocelyne family and their ilk.

Starke never makes clear whose authority is invoked by her star system, but she says that her account of the pictures in Italy, Vienna and Dresden was

materially assisted by the judgment of Mr. Artaud, a young painter, who is travelling at the expense of our Royal Academy; and whose distinguished abilities and close application have already placed him, in the opinion of foreign connoisseurs, at the head of his elegant and fascinating art.¹⁰⁰

The son of an immigrant Huguenot jeweller, William Artaud (1763–1823) had exhibited in London in the 1780s and 1790s, until he won a scholarship to Rome for three years, arriving in January 1796. Artaud often acted as guide to the galleries in Rome, and could have done so for the Starkses.¹⁰¹ They clearly formed a close friendship, exchanging letters and discussing radical politics, as well as art matters.¹⁰² Having followed the Starkses from Rome to Florence, Artaud then travelled to Dresden, and it may well be that he accompanied the Starkses on their trip there.¹⁰³ Writing to his father, Artaud described Mariana as having

an uncommon fund of literature and genius. She is mistress of the Latin, Greek, and oriental languages, has written some very elegant Poetry and two or three tragedies [sic] They are people of considerable fortune and live in a very elegant stile. I go to their conversaciones and frequently dine with them. They are very much attached to all

professors [sic] of art and literature and their house is the rendezvous of the most rational and agreeable society.¹⁰⁴

Starke was also a close friend of Ann Flaxman, referring frequently in letters to her sculptor husband John, 'our British Phidias', and to writer William Hayley.¹⁰⁵ Clearly, the Starkes were well-connected in artistic circles, and Starke reveals great respect for artists' taste: 'The *Royal Gallery of Medicis* contains so many *chefs-d'oeuvre* of art, that artists only can do it justice, in description'.¹⁰⁶ Like Berry and Miller, she stresses the importance of social contacts for gaining information on art.

Starke's comments on art grow in confidence in the course of her travels, and are increasingly presented as her own views, rather than as impersonal borrowings. In Venice, towards the end of her journey, she speaks with greater authority on the skills of individual artists and becomes more openly critical, declaring that the Tintoretto's in the Palazzo Ducale serve 'as an example to shew how entirely great talents may be thrown away from want of proper attention to methodical arrangement'. By the time she reaches Dresden, she declares that 'no one can study the Dresden gallery without becoming a real connoisseur', suggesting that she too has attained this position. Here, her comments are based on the experience she has gleaned in Italy; the Madonna of Holbein 'may vie with the best productions of Raphael, while the colouring would do honour to Titian'.¹⁰⁷ Travel has formed her into an authoritative guide to taste for the middle-class masses.

As with Miller and Piozzi, Starke's patriotic rejection of Catholicism is key to her construction as a writer on art.¹⁰⁸ She is highly sceptical about the superstitions of Catholic art, commenting sardonically on Bartolommeo's *Annunciation* (said to have been finished by an angel after the artist fell asleep), that 'his countrymen were too fond of miracles not to believe him'. As a good Protestant, she holds conformity to scripture to be a guiding principle in religious art; Tintoretto's *Annunciation* in San Rocco, Venice, is 'peculiarly fine, because strictly conformable to Scripture; the blessed mother of our Redeemer being represented as the inhabitant of a humble cottage, instead of being placed in a splendid apartment, which is too frequently the practice'.¹⁰⁹ Her religion is therefore central to her aesthetic judgment.

Like other women writers, Starke registers no anxiety concerning nudity. In describing pictures from Pompeii and Herculaneum, she includes references to the 'sign of a lady of pleasure', to 'Bacchus and Ariadne on their nuptial bed', and to 'a dancer, one of those, perhaps, who used to exhibit undraped in the theatres'. Yet she makes no adverse comment, explaining this nudity in terms of historical context: 'it was the Etruscan custom for female slaves to serve at repast, with scarce any covering'. She is concerned that the

medical models in the Museo d'Istoria Naturale in Florence may be unsuitable for viewing, advising that they 'may be avoided by persons who do not like to see them', but there are no warnings regarding shocking nudes.¹¹⁰ Starke's lack of embarrassment therefore supports her self-presentation as a polite, educated viewer.

Responses to an 'intelligent traveller'

Joseph Moser, in the *European Magazine*, praised Starke's *Letters from Italy* (1800) as one of the 'most useful companions' that readers could obtain.¹¹¹ He admired her abilities as an 'accurate observer' who had improved on the 'defective descriptions' of former travellers, and especially recommended her account of the Campo Santo in Pisa and the Vatican, which was 'founded in a competent knowledge of the fine arts'. He praised Starke's skill in arranging materials from other writers 'with judgment, taste, and precision', but also acknowledged her original contribution, as this information was 'dexterously engrafted on her own genuine stock of knowledge'. In contrast to Starke's own modest claims to amateur status, he refers to the 'masterly hand of our Authoress'.¹¹²

However, Moser implied that Starke had overstretched herself in attempting to revise historical accounts of Hannibal's entry into Italy, putting the attempt down to 'female vanity'. He advised the publisher 'to expunge this piece of learned lumber'.¹¹³ In the same edition of the magazine, there is an account of the late Mrs Montagu, which begins with a hymn of praise to women's literary achievements, claiming that 'in every department of polite literature, female genius has ranged with freedom and success; in many, with manifest superiority; in some, with evident equality to their masculine rivals'.¹¹⁴ Clearly, though, while writers paid lip-service to women's abilities, accusations of pedantry were an ever-present danger for women who sought to theorize. When in Vienna, Piozzi had commented that women there were not as terrified as those in London 'lest pedantry should be imputed to them, for venturing sometimes to use in company that knowledge they have acquired in private by diligent application'.¹¹⁵ English ladies, by contrast, had to hide their learning. Entertaining travel anecdotes and the selection of useful information might be considered appropriate for them, but learned disquisitions were still treated with suspicion.

The neutral tone of the guidebook offered Starke authority at the expense of self-effacement, but she nevertheless had enormous influence on the art middle-class travellers went to see for forty years or more. Starke's guides were never intended as a major contribution to art criticism. Designed as volumes of practical advice, they contain hints on how much to tip guides, rather than eye-opening reassessments of artworks. Nevertheless,

their most interesting contribution was to promote interest in the Greco-Pisan school. Though 'little has been said by English travellers' on the subject, Pisa 'may with truth be called the cradle of the arts', Starke notes.¹¹⁶ While acknowledging the 'stiff' draperies and 'bad' perspective of the Campo Santo murals, Starke points to their historical importance. Piozzi had displayed the more common view, dismissing these works as Gothic horrors, which 'a modern traveler [sic] finds out to be *vastly ridiculous!*'¹¹⁷ Starke also praised paintings of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, which 'however deficient in many respects, cannot but yield pleasure to those who wish, on their entrance into Italy to view the works of the Revivers of art, afterward carried to such exquisite perfection'.¹¹⁸ This interest may reflect Starke's friendship with the Flaxmans, as Ann had expressed a liking for Masaccio's frescoes in the Carmine, Florence, in 1791: 'the simplicity of stile pleas'd me'.¹¹⁹ References to early art can also be found in Berry's journal. Of a collection of monastery pictures, displayed at the Florence Academy in 1818, which formed 'a very complete and curious history of art since the time of Cimabue and of Giotto', she commented 'one sees the immense step made even by those two in looking at a picture of the Virgin, by a painter of the date at which this collection begins'.¹²⁰ This revival of interest in the development of early art prefigures mid-nineteenth-century writers such as Ruskin, and is an area in which women such as Graham and Jameson (Chapters 6 and 7) were to prove extremely important.

On a more practical level, Starke's work gives us an insight into the concerns of women art-viewers in an age before electric lighting and central heating. She reports which galleries are cold and damp, and advises her readers to visit in the morning or on a bright day so the light will be at its best for picture-viewing. Her description of the Palazzo Giustiniani is typical: 'The rooms which contain the pictures are tolerably warm; those which contain the statues, very cold. Give four pauls; and go on a light day, this palace being dark'. Her dire warnings about galleries that are 'so damp as to be dangerous to invalids', necessitating the wearing of over-shoes, underline the down-to-earth difficulties that beset art-viewing for many women, who had other responsibilities to attend to before they could gaze at the paintings.¹²¹ Her comments contrast sharply with the romantic notion of the female viewer absorbed into images in a poetic reverie, such as we find in Landon's poems, for example. Unlike their more leisured, aristocratic counterparts, middle-class women spectators were rarely able to please themselves, often being taken on tour as chaperons or governesses. Even unencumbered women could find their viewing dictated by the wishes of more forceful male companions, as Graham discovered when touring the Vatican with Canova.¹²²

Starke constructs a female viewer for whom nursing care, planning and paying have a far higher priority than any intellectual engagement with artworks, such as we find with the relatively independent Miller and Berry. This preoccupation with practicalities results partly, of course, from the guidebook format, but the popularity of Starke's guides may indicate that her priorities matched those of most middle-class women in this period. Perhaps by sharing her own experience, and helping them to deal with the problems of travelling, she left women free to concentrate on the business of art-viewing itself.

Conclusion

All of the writers discussed here construct themselves as well-travelled, well-educated, polite English Protestants, as well as virtuous women. They modestly claim to be honest innocents rather than experts in art, but simultaneously demonstrate their connoisseurship by complying with academic conventions and denying the negative stereotypes of female taste. Whether writing for themselves, like Berry, or for the public, like Miller, Piozzi and Starke, they demonstrate the importance of social networks for gaining access to art culture, and show that women were participating in this culture alongside men. Reviews of their work indicate a wariness of grand theorizing, but a willingness to acknowledge that women could make useful contributions, within certain acceptably feminine parameters.

Travel-writing remained an important context for women's writing on art, burgeoning especially in the first half of the nineteenth century.¹²³ Many of the same themes persist, with women continuing to emphasize that their amateur status is redeemed by their independence as viewers. In *Art and Nature Under an Italian Sky* (1852), for example, Maria Dunbar, William Beckford's grand-daughter, writes,

I am afraid I may sometimes seem almost presumptuous in thus venturing to form my own opinion about many of these famous works of the old masters ... but, in the first place, I can only speak of the impression they make on my own mind, and, moreover, I never can admire anything because I am bid.

She refuses to admire pictures simply because 'Murray says so'.¹²⁴ Though women could still be criticized for their lack of classical learning, travel-writing was increasingly seen as a genre to which they were well-suited.¹²⁵ Travel was a major factor in establishing women's authority as connoisseurs, and travel-writing continued to act as a 'cover story' for their discussions of art, often providing an entrée to more challenging works, as we will see in the case of Graham, Jameson and Rigby (Chapters 6 to 8).

- ¹ Sherman and Holcomb (eds), *Women as Interpreters of the Visual Arts*, pp. 9–10.
- ² Celia Fiennes, *Through England on a Side Saddle in the Time of William and Mary*, ed. Emily W. Griffiths, London, 1888.
- ³ Another influential travel-writer was actress and novelist Sydney Owenson, Lady Morgan (1783–1859), author of *France* (1817) and *Italy* (1821). See Mary Campbell, *Lady Morgan: The Life and Times of Sydney Owenson*, London, 1988. I discuss here less well-known writers who focused on art.
- ⁴ [Anna Miller] *Letters from Italy, Describing the Manners, Customs, Antiquities, Paintings & c. of that Country*, 3 vols, Dublin and London, 1776. Born Anne Riggs, she was only daughter of Edward Riggs of the Middle Temple, originally from Co. Cork. In 1765 she married Capt. John Miller of Co. Clare, who was created baronet in 1778. For her obituary, see *GM*, 51, 1781, p. 295.
- ⁵ Ruth A. Hesselgrave, *Lady Miller and the Bathaston Literary Circle*, New Haven and London, 1927, pp. 1–3.
- ⁶ *GM*, July 1798, p. 626. Her husband adopted her maiden name, becoming ‘Riggs-Miller’ in 1788.
- ⁷ Hesselgrave, *Lady Miller*, p. 5.
- ⁸ *Autobiography and Correspondence*, ed. Llanover, II, p. 217, 14 May 1776.
- ⁹ Thomas Martyn, *A Tour Through Italy*, second edn, London, 1791, p. iv. He also lists ‘Mrs Piozzi’.
- ¹⁰ *Letters*, I, pp. 270–1; II, p. 391.
- ¹¹ *GM*, 46, Sept. 1776, pp. 471, 418.
- ¹² *Letters*, I, pp. ix, 280.
- ¹³ *Letters*, I, pp. vi–vii.
- ¹⁴ Hester Lynch Piozzi, *Observations and Reflections made in the course of a journey through France, Italy, and Germany*, London and Dublin, 1789, p. vi. Piozzi had read Miller’s work, see *Observations*, p. 490.
- ¹⁵ *Letters*, I, pp. 252, 136–7.
- ¹⁶ Piozzi, *Observations*, p. 35.
- ¹⁷ *Letters*, II, p. 167.
- ¹⁸ *Letters*, III, p. 202; II, p. 306; I, pp. 262, 435, 440–1.
- ¹⁹ Piozzi, *Observations*, p. 301.
- ²⁰ *Letters*, I, pp. 402–5.
- ²¹ *Letters*, I, pp. 270–1; II, pp. 19–20, 155.
- ²² Piozzi, *Observations*, p. 13.
- ²³ Hogarth, *Analysis of Beauty*, p. 20.
- ²⁴ *Letters*, III, pp. 30–1.
- ²⁵ *Letters*, II, pp. 6, 411; III, p. 56; II, 123. Piozzi engages in similar displays of pan-European experience, *Observations*, pp. 510–11.
- ²⁶ *Letters*, II, pp. 14, 116, 406; III, pp. 168–9.
- ²⁷ *Letters*, II, pp. 110–13; III, 66–9.
- ²⁸ *Letters*, III, pp. 69, 85–6.
- ²⁹ Chard, ‘Effeminacy, pleasure and the classical body’, pp. 142–5.
- ³⁰ *Extracts of the Journals ... of Miss Berry*, I, p. 73.
- ³¹ *Letters*, II, p. 127; III, p. 192. Sterne, *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy*, p. 149.
- ³² *Letters*, I, p. 108. Cf. Reynolds, *Discourses*, IV, p. 62–3.
- ³³ Thomas Martyn, *The English Connoisseur*, Dublin, 1767, p. ii.
- ³⁴ *Letters*, I, pp. 115–17.
- ³⁵ *Letters*, II, pp. 9–10.
- ³⁶ *Letters*, II, p. 32; III, pp. 60–4; I, pp. 404, 442. Hogarth, *Analysis of Beauty*, pp. xxxvi, 5.
- ³⁷ *Letters*, II, p. 95; I, p. 303; III, pp. 89, 77. Cf. Berry, who frequently remarks on the time needed for great works, *Extracts from the Journals ... of Miss Berry*, I, p. 111.
- ³⁸ *Letters*, I, p. 278; II, pp. 23, 304–5.
- ³⁹ *Letters*, II, p. 95; III, 292. C.-N. Cochin, *Le Voyage d’Italie* (1758), and J.-J. de Lalande, *Voyage d’un français en Italie* (1769).
- ⁴⁰ Piozzi, *Observations*, pp. 298, 397.
- ⁴¹ *Letters*, I, p. 141.
- ⁴² Martyn, *The English Connoisseur*, p. iii.
- ⁴³ *Letters*, I, pp. 142, 247–8; III, pp. 61, 63, 293. Cf. Piozzi, *Observations*, pp. 60, 177, 184.

- ⁴⁴ Clare Haynes, 'The culture of judgement: art and anti-Catholicism in England, c. 1660–c. 1760', *Historical Research*, 78 (202), Nov. 2005, pp. 496–8.
- ⁴⁵ *Letters*, II, pp. 11–12, 33–34; III, pp. 293, 314.
- ⁴⁶ Chard 'Horror on the Grand Tour', pp. 3–16.
- ⁴⁷ *Letters*, III, pp. 21–2. Cf. Piozzi, *Observations*, pp. 183–4. Gibson-Wood, *Jonathan Richardson*, p. 208.
- ⁴⁸ *Letters*, I, pp. 292–3.
- ⁴⁹ Haynes, 'The Culture of Judgment', pp. 483–505.
- ⁵⁰ *Letters*, III, p. 270.
- ⁵¹ Friends suggest Piozzi should wear men's clothes to get round the restriction, *Observations*, pp. 120–1.
- ⁵² There is little change in this tradition of the bold Protestant Englishwoman invading Catholic enclaves in her quest for art. See [Elizabeth Eastlake] 'Art and Nature under an Italian Sky', *QR*, 91, June 1852, pp. 2–3.
- ⁵³ *Letters*, II, p. 115. Piozzi, *Observations*, p. 292.
- ⁵⁴ *Letters*, II, p. 127; I, pp. 214–15, 118–19. King Victor Amadeus III of Sardinia and Piedmont.
- ⁵⁵ *Letters*, I, p. 124; II, pp. 279–80; III, pp. 256–7.
- ⁵⁶ *Letters*, II, pp. 359; I, pp. 276–7.
- ⁵⁷ *Letters*, I, pp. 438, 400.
- ⁵⁸ *Letters*, II, p. 205. Cf. Piozzi, *Observations*, p. 441.
- ⁵⁹ *Letters*, I, p. 272; III, p. 58; I, p. 126; II, p. 118; I, pp. 303–4. Cf. Pilkington, *Gentleman's and Connoisseur's Dictionary*, p. 690, and Reynolds, *Discourses*, XI, p. 198.
- ⁶⁰ *Letters*, III, pp. 274–5; II, p. 1; III, p. 101. Only she and Queen Christina have been allowed to enter it, Miller claims.
- ⁶¹ The *GM* reviewer was certainly impressed by Miller's connections, 46, Sept. 1776, pp. 419–20.
- ⁶² Haynes, 'The Culture of Judgment', pp. 504–5.
- ⁶³ *GM*, 46, Sept. 1776, pp. 417–18, 471–3.
- ⁶⁴ Letter to Horace Mann, 24 April 1776, *The Letters of Horace Walpole*, ed. P. and H. Toynbee, 16 vols, Oxford, 1903–5, IX, pp. 355–6.
- ⁶⁵ The Dilly brothers were part of Dr Johnson's circle. See Judith Jennings, *Gender, Religion, and Radicalism in the Long Eighteenth Century*, Aldershot and Burlington VT, 2006, p. 87.
- ⁶⁶ *Letters*, I, p. viii. See also *Annual Register*, 1777, pp. 43–5.
- ⁶⁷ *GM*, 46, Sept. 1776, p. 471. Mme du Deffand letter to Walpole, 21 Feb. 1772, quoted in Hesselgrave, *Lady Miller*, p. 4. Letter to Lady Aylesbury, *Letters of Horace Walpole*, ed. Toynbee, IX, p. 134.
- ⁶⁸ *Diary and Letters of Madame d'Arblay*, ed. Barrett, I, pp. 381–2, 415–21. Hesselgrave, *Lady Miller*, pp. 8, 43, 79. Worthies such as Christopher Anstey and David Garrick attended. See Anna Seward, 'Poem to the Memory of Lady Anna Miller', London, 1782, p. 11.
- ⁶⁹ Burney, for example, appears to make fun of Capt. Miller's Irish accent, *Early Journals and Letters of Fanny Burney*, III, p. 225.
- ⁷⁰ *Extracts of the Journals and Correspondence of Miss Berry: From the Year 1783 to 1852*, ed. Lady Theresa Lewis, 3 vols, London, 1865 (referred to hereafter as *Extracts*). Sub-title quotation from *Extracts*, I, p. 114, 29 April 1784.
- ⁷¹ *Berry Papers*, ed. Melville, pp. 14, 38, 236. See *Extracts*, I, p. xxxviii, on the importance of modern languages.
- ⁷² *Extracts*, II, pp. 329–33.
- ⁷³ *Berry Papers*, ed. Melville, pp. 13–19, 288. *Extracts*, II, pp. 88, 135, 183, 340, 379, 431, 493; III, pp. 262, 323–4. Berry also knew Mme de Staël, *Extracts*, II, pp. 141–2.
- ⁷⁴ *Berry Papers*, ed. Melville, pp. 86–7, 413–19.
- ⁷⁵ *Extracts*, II, pp. 373–4, 547–8. Berry had also discussed landscape with Price in Aug. 1798, *Extracts*, II, pp. 67–9; III, pp. 232–3.
- ⁷⁶ Letter to Joanna Baillie, Nov. 1809, *Extracts*, II, pp. 403, 296–7, 313–14.
- ⁷⁷ Letter to Mrs Cholmeley, 22 Jan. 1799, *Extracts*, II, p. 84.
- ⁷⁸ *Extracts*, I, p. 242, 8 Nov. 1790.
- ⁷⁹ *Extracts*, II, p. 202; III, pp. 182, 315; I, p. 26; II, pp. 202, 285.
- ⁸⁰ Letter to Mrs Cholmeley, 5 March 1799, *Extracts*, II, pp. 86–7.
- ⁸¹ *Extracts*, II, p. 250, 12 May 1803.

- ⁸² She may still have exerted influence as a connoisseur, though. Something of a salonière, Berry brought together artists and writers at Curzon Street from 1824, *Berry Papers*, ed. Melville, p. 288. Rigby records that meeting Berry in her late eighties was like 'inhaling history', *Journals and Correspondence of Lady Eastlake*, ed. Charles Eastlake Smith, 2 vols, London, 1895, pp. 263, 271.
- ⁸³ *Extracts*, II, pp. 469–70. Berry moved in the highest circles, being introduced to the Princess of Wales, the Queen of Naples, the Pope, the King of Sweden and Bonaparte.
- ⁸⁴ Sherman and Holcomb (eds), *Women as Interpreters of the Visual Arts*, pp. 9–10.
- ⁸⁵ Mariana Starke, *Letters from Italy, between the years 1792 and 1798*, 2 vols, London, 1800. My references are to the second revised edn, 1815. Obituary *GM*, 10, 1838, p. 111.
- ⁸⁶ Francis Haskell, *Rediscoveries in Art*, Oxford, 1976, pp. 106–8.
- ⁸⁷ Preface to *The Sword of Peace* (1792), second edn, pp. v–viii. See also D. E. Baker, I. Reed and S. Jones (eds), *Biographia Dramatica*, 3 vols, London, 1812, III, p. 313.
- ⁸⁸ It seems unlikely that Starke wrote for money, as the family were relatively well off according to Artaud (see below). She also acted (*The Times*, 7 April 1789, issue 1340, p. 3), and it is interesting to note how many women art-writers were also connected with the theatre (Lady Morgan, Sarah Flower Adams). See Barnett, 'Contemporary response to British art', pp. 59–63.
- ⁸⁹ Samuel Smiles, *A Publisher and his Friends*, 2 vols, second edn, London, 1891, II, pp. 460–1.
- ⁹⁰ Starke, *Letters*, I, pp. 260; II, pp. 77n., 93.
- ⁹¹ Mariana Starke, *Information and Directions for Travellers on the Continent*, fifth revised edn, Paris, 1826, pp. vii–viii.
- ⁹² Starke, *Letters*, I, p. xvi.
- ⁹³ Starke, *Letters*, 'Advertisement'.
- ⁹⁴ Jeanne Moskal, 'Politics and the occupation of a nurse in Mariana Starke's *Letters from Italy*', in Amanda Gilroy (ed.), *Romantic Geographies*, Manchester, 2000, pp. 151, 153, 155–8.
- ⁹⁵ Starke, *Letters*, I, pp. xv–xvi.
- ⁹⁶ Starke, *Letters*, I, 225, I, 329. Starke does not list the sources for her comments, but recommends De Lalande, II, p. 135, and A. da Morrona, I, p. 179.
- ⁹⁷ Moskal, 'Politics and the occupation of a nurse', p. 153.
- ⁹⁸ Starke, *Letters*, I, 150 n. Martyn rates key works with an exclamation point in his *Tour Through Italy* (1791), but applies the system somewhat erratically (see pp. 28, 77, 89).
- ⁹⁹ Starke, *Letters*, I, p. 317.
- ¹⁰⁰ Starke, *Letters*, I, p. 202.
- ¹⁰¹ Kim Sloan, 'William Artaud: history painter and "violent democrat"', *Burlington Magazine*, 137 (1103), Feb. 1995, pp. 76–85 (esp. p. 82).
- ¹⁰² A. C. Sewter, 'The Life, Work and Letters of William Artaud 1763–1823', unpubl. PhD thesis, 2 vols, University of Manchester, 1951. Letters 56 and 58 are to Starke, II, pp. 319–21, 324–7. Artaud mentions being 'very intimate' with the Starkes for the last six months of his stay in Rome, letter 61, 1 May 1798, II, p. 337.
- ¹⁰³ Sewter questions this, but there seems no reason to doubt it. Artaud's letters show that after their joint residence in Rome (Nov. 1797–Feb. 1798), he followed the Starkes to Florence (by April 1798), then travelled to Venice (Sept.) and Dresden (Oct.) via Vienna. He had been in Naples before meeting Starke (March–June 1797), so could have supplied information on the artworks there. Only Bologna is in question.
- ¹⁰⁴ Sewter, letter 41, 20 Nov. 1797, II, p. 262. See also letter 40, II, p. 256. In Florence Mrs Starke introduced Artaud to Signor Fabroni (professor to the Grand Duke of Tuscany), whose conversazioni were 'frequented by all the eminent characters in Literature and Art in Florence', letter 61, 1 May 1798, II, p. 337.
- ¹⁰⁵ Letters exchanged between them 1794–7 are very affectionate, BL Flaxman Papers, Add. 39780, ff. 449–50; 39781, ff. 372–4, 384–5, 397, 408. Hayley is quoted as saying how much he would have liked the 'tender Muse of the Ganges' (i.e. Starke) and Ann Flaxman, 'you two feeling and intelligent creatures', as his guides in Rome (Add. 39789, f. 62b). For John Flaxman, see Starke, *Letters*, I, pp. 356–7.
- ¹⁰⁶ Starke, *Letters*, I, p. 202.
- ¹⁰⁷ Starke, *Letters*, II, pp. 85–7, 116–17.
- ¹⁰⁸ Moskal, 'Politics and the occupation of a nurse', pp. 158–60.
- ¹⁰⁹ Starke, *Letters*, I, p. 223; II, p. 86.
- ¹¹⁰ Starke, *Letters*, II, pp. 24–7, I, p. 213.

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- ¹¹¹ [Joseph Moser] *European Magazine*, 38, Oct. and Nov. 1800, pp. 274–7, 349–53.
- ¹¹² *Ibid*, pp. 274, 277, 349. Cf. John Wilson Croker's attack on Morgan's *Italy*, *QR*, 25, July 1821, pp. 529–34, in which he condemns her 'miserable assortment' of material, 'gleaned from milliners, laquais de place, vetturinos and cicerones'.
- ¹¹³ *Ibid*, pp. 352–3.
- ¹¹⁴ *European Magazine*, 38, Oct. 1800, p. 243.
- ¹¹⁵ Piozzi, *Observations*, p. 528.
- ¹¹⁶ Starke, *Letters*, I, pp. 158–9.
- ¹¹⁷ Piozzi, *Observations*, p. 240.
- ¹¹⁸ Starke, *Letters*, I, pp. 168–9; II, p. 102. In Vienna, Starke also praised the early Flemish and German schools which 'possess great merit, and form a most interesting history of the progress of the art'.
- ¹¹⁹ BL Flaxman papers, Add. 39787, f. 31.
- ¹²⁰ *Extracts*, III, p. 151.
- ¹²¹ Starke, *Letters*, I, pp. 341n., 334, 343n., 366.
- ¹²² Maria Callcott, *Essays Towards the History of Painting*, London, 1836, p. 80.
- ¹²³ Pomeroy (ed.), *Intrepid Women*, pp. 11–25.
- ¹²⁴ Quoted in [Eastlake] 'Art and Nature', pp. 3–4.
- ¹²⁵ For a negative position, see review of *Art and Nature*, *GM*, 38, Dec. 1852, pp. 610–11. For a more positive assessment, see *Church of England Quarterly Review*, 34, 1853, p. 240, and [Elizabeth Rigby] 'Lady Travellers' *QR*, 76, June 1845, pp. 98–137.

Chapter 4

Art's mission: the centrality of religion

If travel-writing was one 'fig-leaf' of propriety used to justify women's writing on art, then religion was another. Whether through personal inclination or publishers' preferences, many women writers throughout this period combined the themes of art and religion, or published separately on religious topics.¹ Some advocated the study of art as a means to promote 'a reverential admiration of the wisdom and goodness of the Great First Cause', as in the case of educational writer Priscilla Wakefield, while others, such as Jameson (Chapter 7), investigated the historical development of Christian art.²

This chapter will consider why religion so often played a role in women's writing on art, how denominational differences influenced their approach, and how religious notions coloured perceptions of women as art-viewers and writers. I will consider women's journals, including that of Quaker Thereza Dillwyn Llewelyn (1834–1926), as well as their publications, in order to investigate the relationship between private belief and its public expression. Focusing on the work of Unitarian writer Sarah Flower Adams (1805–48) and Anglican philanthropist Louisa Twining (1820–1912), I will show how, through writing on art, women could fulfil the twin Evangelical imperatives to spread the word of God and improve the state of man, thereby justifying their intervention in the public sphere.

Religious virtue as a public face

As we have seen, travel-writers such as Miller, Piozzi and Starke were acutely alert to the 'dangers' of Catholicism, and were careful to characterize themselves as reliably Protestant viewers of art. Religious decorum was a vital aspect of their self-presentation, defending them against accusations of impropriety in discussing 'Popish' imagery. While asserting their resistance to the seductions of Catholicism, these women nevertheless expressed great respect for Christian art, which represented a highpoint of achievement in academic terms. Miller, for example, insisted on a clear separation between religious and secular subjects:

though you know my principles are far removed from popery, yet I think there ought to be a sort of decency and respect shown to sacred subjects Was I possessed of a representation of our blessed Saviour's sufferings, or the martyrdoms of his Apostles, I should place them in a room by themselves; for I think it very shocking to see a

Flagellation, a Pieta, & c. forming a pendant to a riotous debauch of wanton Satyrs, or to the ... ridiculous amours of a Jupiter.³

Religious history painting demanded reverence, therefore, despite its Catholic overtones. Indeed, women often acknowledged the relative deficiencies of Protestantism in relation to art, owing to post-Reformation sensitivities to idolatrous images. After a visit to Coventry cathedral in 1819, Berry wrote in her journal, 'The Protestant religion is not intended to please the eye.'⁴ Rigby, too, believed that Protestantism cherished the sciences, while Roman Catholics and pagans achieved greater things in the arts. St Paul's, she said, was 'a great, bare building' and 'all the worse for not having been Roman Catholic'.⁵ For Rigby, however, Protestants enjoyed superior understanding in appreciating art. Writing on the Niobe group, she asserted that only a Greek could have created it, because of Christianity's distaste for the naked human form, but 'a Christian invests it with feelings to which a pagan in the same degree was not sensible'.⁶ For any work of art, it was not the religion of the artist that mattered, but that of the viewer, and only the Protestant spectator could be trusted to look 'correctly'. As we have seen, Haynes pointed to the importance of class and education in the viewing of religious art, suggesting that, for the would-be connoisseur, demonstrating the 'appropriate' religion and class status was of far greater importance than the viewer's sex.

Women of all Protestant denominations wrote on art in this period, and although it is possible to deduce their sectarian loyalties from occasional asides, they are all united by the generalized need to appear devout Christians.⁷ Whether Establishment Anglicans, like Jameson, Merrifield, Twining and Rigby, Unitarians, like Flower Adams, or Quakers, like Sarah Stickney Ellis, rather than concerning themselves with 'unladylike' questions of doctrinal dispute, they all endeavoured to present themselves as virtuous women whose lives displayed their love of God, rather than any desire to shine as writers. This remains true of women writers throughout the period and across sectarian divisions.

The same priorities are reflected in women's obituaries. In 1781 the *Gentleman's Magazine* considered Lady Miller's charitable good works as more important than her publishing ventures, for example, a judgment reiterated by the poet Anna Seward, who stressed that the blessings of the grateful poor would do more to speed Miller to Heaven than all her literary achievements.⁸ A similar set of values is revealed in obituaries of Jameson, in 1860, which stress her qualities as a 'faithful friend' and 'devoted relative', her 'self-relying and self-denying' generosity, as much as her success in print. When she applied herself to social questions, rather than the study of art, Jameson was seen as extending her 'intellectual excellence' in 'nobler directions'.⁹

The difficulty for women writers was that one sign of a good Christian woman was her modest silence. Despite the increasing numbers of women publishing in the early nineteenth century, this remained the common view, as biographies published in the 1860s make clear. Charlotte Yonge, for example, described the difficulty of writing about learned women of the past, as they had gained renown 'by the sacrifice of something more or less womanly: they have done or said something to be talked of'. For Yonge, far more valuable than brilliance or wit was the fact that they had devoted themselves to God and their neighbours. 'The diamond of perfect womanhood,' she declared, 'has many facets, and through all the light of Heaven is ... given back in sparkling radiance'; but, she insisted, 'the light of Heaven it *must* be'.¹⁰ Women's writing was therefore only excusable if it promoted religious principles. The same emphasis on moral virtue is found in Quaker Stickney Ellis' *Women of England* (1839) as in the writing of High Church Tractarian Yonge.¹¹ Male writers also shared these views. Yorkshire publisher Albert Walker described Felicia Hemans as a writer whose pen had 'forced itself forward', but he forgave her this presumption, because hers was 'the voice of a woman, strong in faith ... advocating the cause of God and truth'.¹² Women's writing was therefore justified if it spread the word of God and promoted the public good, particularly through the medium of teaching.¹³

Similar demands existed for men, too, and there is perhaps greater overlap between ideals of masculine and feminine religious virtue than has sometimes been suggested. Domestic virtue, charitable acts and submission to the will of God were desirable in men, as well as women, being rooted in the imitation of Christ and the writings of St Paul. These ideals cut across the sexes, as across denominations.¹⁴ As a strategy of self-presentation, however, religious virtue was even more vital for women, who had to be accepted at the very least as 'good Christians' in order to be taken seriously. Religion offered a way to negotiate negative perceptions of women writers, because it was a context in which women carried considerable authority, traditionally being seen as guardians of the faith.¹⁵ It could act as a form of alibi, compensating for the immodesty of going into print. If virtuous intent shone through their words, women could redeem themselves from the sin of pride. It is scarcely surprising, then, that women's art-writing often focuses on religious themes.

Inner faith and the beauties of nature

This was not simply a conscious strategy of self-presentation, however. It reflected an internalized way of seeing, determined by genuine belief, which influenced women's

responses to art in a way that is virtually lost to our more secular society. For all her sensitivities to Popery, Miller, for example, was deeply moved by Catholic art. Sacred figures had a powerful reality for her, and she measured depictions of them against the very personal pattern formed in her imagination. Raphael's *Foligno Madonna* should be classed as one of his best works, she believed, because 'the Virgin answers precisely the idea I have formed of her; a noble simplicity, blended with perfect innocence, and piety, dwell upon her face'.¹⁶ The religious message, as conveyed by expression, is absolutely central to her judgment of such images. This is equally true for nineteenth-century women writers, who express great intensity of spiritual feeling in response to art, from Jameson's tearful reaction to Rubens' *St Teresa of Avila* interceding for souls in Purgatory, to novelist Margaret Oliphant's close identification with Albertinelli's *Visitation* in Florence (fig. 46).¹⁷ It was this emotional 'instinct' for religion that bolstered the authority of women writing on religious history painting, offering them an area more in line with their perceived qualities than classical subjects.

Women's diaries reveal an intimate involvement in spiritual matters, which meant that their approach to art, as to all areas of life, was seen through a religious lens. For the ordinary female viewer, as for the published writer, whatever they saw was filtered through religion, which was the primary focus of women's education. Graham (Chapter 6) is typical in her response to a ship's figurehead, the first piece of sculpture she encountered: 'I instantly imagined that the idols of the heathen mentioned in the Bible, resembled her, and for many a year, Dagon of the Philistines was identified with this image in my mind.'¹⁸ Art is instinctively associated with scriptural references, which are 'deeply interfused' into all aspects of the visual.

One woman for whom visual experience was closely associated with religion is Thereza Dillwyn Llewelyn, eldest daughter of pioneer photographer John Dillwyn Llewelyn and Emma Talbot, a cousin of Henry Fox Talbot. Thereza's private thoughts, as expressed in her journal, reveal that the fusion of art and religion was not just a matter of responding to public expectation, but was also a highly personal aspect of women's engagement with art. Thereza's grandfather was a Quaker, and the family had a strong sense of moral duty, with the daughters expected to engage in charitable acts towards their more needy neighbours around Penlle'r-gaer in Glamorgan. Given their early prohibition on image-making, one might expect particular difficulties for Quakers in engaging with art, but as Pointon has shown, this did not prevent them from visiting exhibitions, practising as artists and writing on art in the early nineteenth century. Indeed, the spiritual equality

granted to women and their support for female education meant that many Victorian women writers and artists were of Quaker background.¹⁹

In common with many Low Church sympathizers, the Quakers strongly supported investigation of the natural world, whether through the natural sciences or art, believing that such studies encouraged sound morals.²⁰ From a young age, Thereza was encouraged to record plants, shells and fungi through drawing and painting. Such activities reflect her family's scientific interests, and were closely associated with appreciating the richness of God's world.²¹ The tradition of Natural Theology, encouraged by William Paley's 1802 work, but deeply engrained in Protestant culture from at least the seventeenth century, saw nature as an expression of the divine spirit.²² Drawing from nature was therefore encouraged as a way to gain understanding of God and his Creation. Collecting 'sea curiosities' for drawing in Oxwich Bay, Thereza noted: 'There is no place on earth that I am acquainted with that does not teem with His works.'²³

The idea that recording nature would bring women closer to God is also revealed by a letter of 1838 from landscape-painter John Linnell to his daughter Hannah, on honeymoon in Italy with her artist-husband Samuel Palmer:

I am very glad to find that you are struggling with the real difficulties of the Art; as I have no doubt but, with Mr. Palmer's assistance, you will accomplish enough to produce some beautiful works; and, what is of more consequence, increase your capability of receiving those inspiring impressions of beauty and sublimity which nature was intended to produce.... Wrestle skilfully, for you wrestle with an Angel²⁴

It is not the work produced that is important, but the process of grappling with nature, which helps the female viewer to understand God's Creation more deeply; in Linnell's words, this results in 'the obtaining of a blessing'. Such perceptions were not limited to women, of course; Linnell and Palmer both understood their art practice in terms of religious experience, and for Ruskin, the truth of landscape was expressed in deeply spiritual terms: 'the truth of nature is a part of the truth of God'.²⁵ For many women, however, whose art was intended only for the domestic sphere, the religious dimension of art practice would often have been the central inspiration. Certainly, this suggests a more serious, spiritual motive for engaging in art, contesting its classification as a mere marriageable accomplishment.

Flowers were especially recommended to women as objects for art study, but these were not seen simply as botanical specimens, but as richly symbolic. In describing her own love of flowers, Llewelyn paraphrased a passage from Felicia Hemans:

Spring always speaks to me of the Resurrection, and thus, 'when I see the buds opening ... I look at them as emblems of that day when I hope to rise It is the Lord only that can raise

such flowers from such roots, and it must be by thy grace alone that my heart can be loosened from the trammels of sin and death, and ... transformed – into a flower fit for Paradise²⁶

For Llewelyn, flowers offered a more perfect reflection of God's love than man himself:

I have been taught to admire, to search, to inquire into the wonderful productions of Nature, ... and thus, to me, things, not men, lead my soul to their creator. In man I see a ruined creature, the victim of sin, there is no longer the peace that the purity of a flower inspires.²⁷

So how did such religious insights translate into art-viewing? Visiting a London watercolour exhibition in 1850, Thereza picked out for comment 'some pictures by [William Henry] Hunt with nice banks of moss and lichens and ivy for the back with bird's nests with pretty little eggs in them, and flowers lying about' (fig. 47).²⁸ As we have seen, a preference for still-life was often perceived as typical of female taste, because it was easy to judge. For women viewers, however, such images may have carried a deeper resonance, revealing a perception of still-life and landscape that differs from the conventionally dismissive view of mere transcriptions from nature. If flowers were not simply flowers, but symbolic of the reborn soul or the untainted innocence of God's Creation, it is possible to see how a religious mode of viewing, full of metaphorical subtleties, might enrich women's engagement with still-life and landscape.

This religious sensibility influenced women's writing on art, as well as their viewing of it. Many published in the field of botanical art (fig. 48) or produced flower-painting manuals, seeing this as especially suitable for women.²⁹ The works of Maria Graham (Chapter 6), for example, reveal the same fusion of religion, art and botany that we find in Llewelyn. In addition to her art publications, Graham produced *A Scripture Herbal* (1842), illustrated by her own flower studies (fig. 49), which combined biblical with botanical scholarship, and two tales for children, *The Little Bracken-Burners, A Tale; and Little Mary's Four Saturdays* (1841), which convey moral lessons through the lore and language of plants. The chief object of the *Scripture Herbal*, Graham wrote, was to induce all those who loved God's written word, 'to read and love the great unwritten book which he has every where spread abroad for our learning'.³⁰ Her work demonstrates how art, nature and religion were alike considered, by women writers, as appropriate topics for their pens.

Landscape was one area in which women combined art and religion. In *A Voice from a Picture* (1839), Harriet Gouldsmith (1787–1863), writing anonymously, but as 'A Female Artist', created a parable based on the life of a painting (fig. 50).³¹ The work is primarily a plea for more enlightened patronage, but in this work Gouldsmith defends

landscape-painting in religious terms. Emphasizing its uniquely democratic appeal, she speaks of the universal enjoyment of nature's beauties, from the civilized man to the savage, and its benefit in 'increasing content, and improving the mind'. A love and knowledge of art, especially landscape, is the best guide to a love of nature and God. Painting, she says, should carry us 'beyond the limits of humanity, and by the contemplation of all that is grand and beautiful in nature, bring us nearer to the divine source from which we sprung'.³² Her description of the modestly painted landscape as the 'still small voice' of painting ties it more closely to the revelation of religious truth.

In *The Poetry of Life* (1835), Quaker writer Stickney Ellis also looked to landscape-painting to raise the viewer to thoughts of the Creator.³³ Her defence of the poetic ideal and criticism of 'mere Dutch truth' reflect the influence of Reynolds, but she prefers the simplicity of Bewick's engravings and the 'savage dignity' of Salvator Rosa to landscapes portraying mythological figures, because the latter cannot easily be related to human experience. Above all, like Ruskin, she demands a 'heavenward purpose' in landscape art.³⁴ Such ideas were not wildly challenging or original, but they demonstrate the extent to which women shared the views of male writers of the period. The growing popularity of works drawn directly from nature and the raised status of landscape-painting in the early nineteenth century appear to have offered women a more authoritative voice when discussing a genre traditionally associated with them. With Ruskin's promotion of landscape as infused with religious symbolism, women's perceived expertise in 'God's second book' may have worked to their advantage in the context of art criticism.

Scripture for the common people: religious history painting

Surprisingly, women art-writers of the early nineteenth century made their most important contribution in the area of religious history painting, rather than landscape, contesting notions of their exclusion from the higher genres of art. Graham, for example, played a major role in the revival of interest in early religious art, anticipating Ruskin's enthusiasm for the Primitives (see Chapter 6). Though she could be tolerant towards other faiths, Graham's commonplace book of 1806 reveals that she held Christianity to be the one true religion. Commenting on the text from *Matthew* 5:8, 'Blessed are the pure in heart', she writes, 'This blessing alone would be sufficient to give our holy religion the superiority over all other religious systems.'³⁵ The biblical texts that accompany each portion of her description of the Arena Chapel (1835) indicate the importance to her, as a Protestant, of

the written word of God, and her appreciation of early Italian painters is based largely on their ability to communicate biblical stories with directness and dignity.³⁶ Like Graham, Mary Philadelphia Merrifield (Chapter 5) emphasized the value of early religious art as a means of making known the scriptures to the illiterate 'common people'. In her translation of Cennini's *Treatise on Painting* (1844), she advised her readers not to be put off by his frequent invocations to the saints, but to recognize the spirit of genuine devotion that had helped to preserve the arts through the Dark Ages.³⁷ This greater understanding of the context of art production is in contrast to earlier women writers, with their instinctive rejection of all things Catholic.

The call for greater tolerance in viewing medieval and early Renaissance Catholic art was part of an increasing trend in this period, but it was Jameson in particular who helped to popularize an understanding of the development of Christian art, through her *Sacred and Legendary Art* series, begun 1845–6 (Chapter 7). This interest was not confined to women writers, with Jameson reflecting current preoccupations expressed in Alexis-François Rio's *De la poésie chrétienne* (1836) and Lord Lindsay's *Sketches of the History of Christian Art* (1847).³⁸ As early as 1832 W. J. Fox, editor of the *Monthly Repository*, had called for less 'squeamishness' in assessing Catholic art.³⁹ However, Jameson's work was seen by many reviewers as one of the most valuable contributions to this debate.

From her earliest publications, Jameson relied heavily on self-construction as a virtuous Christian to overcome the potential exclusions of class and sex. Her defence of Catholic art represents the increasing confidence of women in debating hotly contested religious issues by mid-century, marking a move away from the more defensive position of Miller and Piozzi. She was not Catholic, she insisted, but she hoped to appeal to readers of all denominations. Jameson's recuperation of Marian imagery was especially important for women, offering them an alternative iconography by restoring the feminine divine within Protestantism.⁴⁰ Her work led reviewers to conclude that only women had the tact to handle such topics, emphasizing the particular authority granted to the female connoisseur in the context of religious art.

Exploiting the more positive stereotype of women as sympathetic interpreters, these writers offered themselves as 'translators' of religious imagery, their 'natural' skills of empathy being brought into play in explicating the art of the past, whether pagan, Catholic, or even Hindu in the case of Graham. Their reappraisal of early art resulted from a willingness to project themselves into the historical moment, interpreting images as an expression of honest piety despite the pre-Reformation context. The imaginative

reconstruction of the mind-set of earlier ages came to be seen as a feminine forte, while their discussion of delicate religious issues was guaranteed 'safe' through the secure Protestant faith of the women writers themselves.

Art as the 'light of Heaven': Sarah Flower Adams

Jameson is one example of a woman who balanced study of religious art with a desire to do practical good within society. As well as her art-writing, she published articles condemning the employment of women and children in factories, and gave public lectures calling for improved educational provision for women.⁴¹ I will now consider two less well-known women writers who combined religious conviction with writing on art and agitation for social reform, in order to demonstrate how religion and philanthropy could define women's relationship with art in Victorian England.

Many art-writers in this period were Nonconformists, and Unitarians were particularly prominent participants in art culture. Hazlitt was the son of a Unitarian minister, while Thomas Griffiths Wainwright, critic for the *London Magazine*, was also from a Unitarian background. There were Unitarian art-collectors, such as William Roscoe, Henry Tate and Thomas Fairbairn, and numerous women painters, including Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon, Margaret Gillies, Anna Mary Howitt, Laura Herford and Helen Allingham. Best known today for writing the hymn 'Nearer, my God, to Thee', Sarah Flower Adams contributed articles and poems on a variety of themes to the *Monthly Repository*, a radical Unitarian journal, between 1833 and 1836 (fig. 51).⁴²

Though not primarily a writer on art, Adams produced several essays that are of interest because of the religious slant they offer on women's experience of art-viewing.⁴³ She was the younger daughter of Benjamin Flower, editor of the *Cambridge Intelligencer*, and Eliza Gould, a former school-teacher of 'considerable intellectual activity'.⁴⁴ Following their father's death in 1829, Sarah and her sister Eliza were left in the care of Flower's friend and trustee, the Revd W. J. Fox, preacher to the free-thinking South Place Chapel congregation of Finsbury, North London. It was no doubt Fox, as editor of the *Monthly Repository*, who encouraged Adams to write for the periodical.⁴⁵ Although her faith was somewhat shaken in her early twenties by discussions with the young Robert Browning, religion was central to Adams' world-view, and pervades her writing on art.⁴⁶

In two articles on the Louvre and Luxembourg galleries, written after a brief visit to Paris in 1833, Adams considers a somewhat eclectic range of artworks.⁴⁷ Although lacking

in art-historical background, she reveals considerable confidence in her opinions on art. In the tradition of women viewers such as Miller, Adams presents herself as 'no connoisseur', but as someone who sees the true value of art, claiming authority as a critic through her religious faith. The female viewer who is able to appreciate the spiritual dimension of an artwork is considered far superior to the dry connoisseur who focuses on unimportant details:

We hate your people who while you ask them to admire a piece of poetry that comes from the canvass like a sunbeam, coolly answer, 'Yes, – but look at that little toe on the left foot, don't you think the nail is too large!'⁴⁸

Although she expresses intensely personal responses to individual works, there is a consistent agenda underlying Adams' writing. Pictures are the springboard for spiritual meditation and the teaching of moral lessons. She does not concentrate on religious art *per se* – far from it, in fact. Although she comments on Annibale Carracci's '*Le Silence*' (*Virgin and Child with St John*, actually a copy by Domenichino) and Anne-Louis Girodet's *Scène de déluge*, mythological subjects are of greater interest to her.⁴⁹ Jacques-Louis David's *Loves of Paris and Helen* and Girodet's *Endymion* (fig. 52) inspire religious commentary, as embodiments of the divine spirit. The *Endymion*, a 'bright glimpse by night, caught from the old mythology', is for Adams a symbol of God's love, reminding her of Jacob's Dream: 'Though the night be dark, though man be weary, there is yet an unseen influence watching over him and working out his happiness, – the light of almighty love.'⁵⁰ In the 'Separation of Orpheus and Eurydice', Adams also sees the figure of Mercury as a personification of divine power, reflected in the tenderness with which he bears away Eurydice:

There is divinity stamped on his form, divine power and divine love There is the "living soul" of love that has been "breathed" into every human being It is in the divine spirit of love, dwelling in our own hearts, that we must seek and find our God.⁵¹

These mythological subjects inspire her with greater spiritual feeling than more overtly religious canvases, suggesting perhaps that Low Church Protestants found it easier to discuss divinity through mythological images than in the context of conventional religious art. Adams expresses a low opinion of most of the art on display – predominantly Catholic, of course – and longs to add feeling to the 'lifeless forms' of 'Fair, unmeaning Virgins', 'saints without souls, priests without pride', images of 'mere form and colour' which are animated by neither good nor evil.⁵² What is important to her, in both religious and aesthetic terms, is the intensity of emotional charge carried by an image, rather than the subject-matter.

Departing from convention, Adams praises modern French artists such as Girodet, whose works, she notes, are generally criticized for their exaggeration, defective colouring and want of proportion. Such faults, she declares, are not to be compared with the absence of soul and expression to be found in works generally admired by 'picture-hunters'.⁵³ For Adams, the conventional academic values of fine colouring and perfect anatomy are downgraded in favour of emotion:

Give us the exaggeration of the French school rather than the vapid nothingness of your mere coloured anatomy. It proceeds from their love of action; they must have something stirring, something under strong excitement, and they are right; (what is called 'the repose of the soul,' is generally its laziness;)⁵⁴

The active energy of French art appeals to her Unitarian instincts and Dissenting rejection of 'luke-warmness'. This is not just emotion for its own sake, but with a will to stir the viewer's soul into action.

Emotional intensity in the artist must be matched by vigour in the viewer, as Adams shows in the opening words of her article:

'Write a chapter on the pictures,' says one; 'call it a lounge in the Louvre,' says another; the alliteration is good, no doubt, but he who could lounge in the Louvre, assuredly deserves to be kicked out of it a brisk insect is better than a lazy slug.⁵⁵

The style of Adams' writing reflects the energy that is required of the spectator. It is vivid and immediate, with a taste for the dramatic. Her description of a painting based on Gottfried Bürger's Gothic ballad *Lenora*, is typical in its evocation of sights, sounds and movement, and the way in which it brings the process of art-viewing to life:

As the wind seizes the white drapery of his victim, you hear in fancy the skeleton bones rattle within the armour of the destroyer, and feel that in another bound they will reach the deep dark grave prepared for them. Up with the lamps; and let us have a scene less gloomy. And we are come to *you*, land of glowing sunshine, and to "Le Retour de la Fête de la Madone de l'Arc près de Naples."⁵⁶

Adams' appeal to the senses is further intensified when she imagines music played in the Luxembourg sculpture rooms: 'What would be the effect of soft music richly blent, "rising like a steam of rich distilled perfumes," in such a place!'⁵⁷ This poetic register, anticipating a Baudelairean, synaesthetic form of art-viewing, may today be seen as the sentimental outpourings of an over-sensitive soul, like the writings of Landon, for instance.⁵⁸ Yet this prose style, reflecting the more sensual register of Romantic literature, was highly valued in the period, as we see from Kingsley's praise for Jameson's reaction to Titian. Of the *Assumption of the Virgin* in Venice, Jameson writes:

I remember standing before this picture, contemplating those lovely spirits one after another, until a thrill came over me like that which I felt when Mendelssohn played the organ, – I became music while I listened it is not here superiority of beauty, but mind, and music, and love kneaded, as it were, into form and colour.⁵⁹

Kingsley quotes this description as an example of ‘what criticism should be’. He does not see it as in any way fanciful in tone. Adams’ encounter with art is expressed in highly emotional terms, as when the sculptures in the Luxembourg move her to tears, but such responses are also found in Thackeray’s art criticism, indicating that this was not a distinctively feminine approach, but reflected contemporary art-writing more generally.⁶⁰

For Adams, art must inspire deep emotion. She describes two children whose experience of a medallion copy of Raphael’s *Paul Preaching at Athens* brings them out of a certain ‘coldness of manner’. The bas-relief tablet proves a revelation to them: ‘There was a rush, and a shout – yes, a shout; ... and the eyes flashed, and the cheeks crimsoned, and their words came thick and fast, as each fresh object was discovered.’⁶¹ It is tempting to interpret this emotional enthusiasm as quintessentially feminine, but Adams’ fellow *Monthly Repository* contributor (and later husband) William Brydges Adams expressed a similar view: ‘The effect of all beauty is to raise and ennoble the attributes of humanity, – to spread universal love.... The sensations passing through my brain seem intense; the blood rushes quicker through my veins, while I dwell on it.’⁶² Such ideas seem to be characteristic of a particular religious sensibility at this time, rather than of the writer’s sex.

Art has a religious mission to fulfil, which is independent of subject-matter, and which is at its most successful when it draws on human emotion. Adams sees art as unquestionably didactic in purpose. The forms and colours ‘it chooses for its script’ are ‘to be read’, and the viewer must be open to the lessons it offers. In searching for these moral lessons, Adams advocates a broad catholicity of taste, and preaches a tolerance of apparently immoral images, including those portraying nudity. This is an extraordinarily bold position for a young woman in a period when female viewing of the nude was still a controversial topic, and again indicates the growing confidence of women art-writers. Adams says that many viewers will be put off by works like Girodet’s *Endymion*, because of the nudity of the figures, but she urges them to ‘turn back, remembering that nothing tends so much to immorality as ignorance’. She likens prudishly ‘immoral moralists’ who look away to the Levite in the parable of the Good Samaritan: ‘a glance, and a passing by on the other side. The richly-robed have no dealings with the naked.’⁶³ By refusing to look, such blinkered viewers miss the moral lessons of these works. Study of the nude is therefore a religious imperative, permitting the female writer to teach others how to ‘read’ it correctly.

Adams puts this theory of tolerance into practice in her own viewing, forcing herself to study images of war, such as Antoine-Jean Gros' *Battle of Aboukir*, even though she is instinctively repulsed by them. In the Luxembourg, she finds the mass of images of 'plague, pestilence, battle and murder, madness and misery' objectionable, and feels the French school needs a 'better choice of subjects'. Yet she recognizes that such images may be 'converted into impressive lessons for the young, provided they have those about them who will read the lesson aright'. She imagines herself as such a teacher:

Come here, little fellow, you who have the longing for a cap and feather, a scarlet jacket, and a love of martial music, your head already filled with ... "the pomp and circumstance of glorious war;"... come hither and see to what your admiration tends: – brother fighting against brother; shouts of vengeance; shrieks of agony; It is well; the fire which the thought of "deeds of arms" had kindled within you is quenched forever by so much blood.⁶⁴

Even the brutalized heart of a soldier, she says, may be redeemed by art, as she describes a young soldier gazing at Carracci's *Le Silence*.⁶⁵ Male writers often displaced the viewing of images of children onto women, as we have seen, but here Adams suggests they have an equal impact on men, as anyone with a human heart may learn from such 'lovely lessons of kindness and gentleness'. For her, there is no difference in male and female viewing; it is the shared humanity that counts. Again, this indicates how a religious outlook could encourage women to see themselves as equal participants in culture.

Nor is there any distinction of class. Adams emphasizes the accessibility of the Louvre, which welcomes all viewers, regardless of social status. It is 'free to be enjoyed by all as the light of heaven It is all that a National Gallery ought to be'. This democratic openness was frequently commented on by travellers to France, but it is significant that Adams likens art in the Louvre to the 'light of Heaven'. Art is seen as something that should be available to all men equally, because it is a reflection of the love of God, which makes no distinction between rich and poor. Whatever their age, class or sex, viewers should be able to come to be 'educated by their favourite pictures'.⁶⁶ Such ideas were not restricted to women writers, of course. The general trend in the early nineteenth century was towards broadening access to art, through the opening up of public galleries and publications like the *Penny Magazine*. *Monthly Repository* articles by William Brydges Adams also reveal great optimism about this development, and he too calls for universal education in the fine arts.⁶⁷ What is interesting is that the context of a religious periodical enabled women writers to see themselves as playing a significant role in effecting this social transformation.

In Adams' writing on the Louvre, political lessons are closely linked to the religious interpretation. She urges England to take a lesson from the French, using the 'people's money' to procure paintings that will improve the national character, rather than wasting it on 'such childish baubles as coronets'.⁶⁸ She praises the expressive liveliness of François Rude's sculpture *Young Neapolitan Boy Playing with a Tortoise* (1831–3), for example, but contrasts the human happiness it represents with the perverted power of kings who deny freedom to the majority.⁶⁹ There is a hard edge to her romantic sensibilities. Emotion inspired by art is not indulged in for its own sake, but is a muscular force leading to practical action, just as positive social intervention countered accusations of self-indulgent religious enthusiasm among Dissenting sects.

Belief in art's power to enact social reform is expressed in Adams' article 'Buy Images!', where she stresses the importance of making art available to the many by rendering the treasures of art 'accessible to eye and pocket'.⁷⁰ She describes a series of encounters with young Italian hawkers of small-scale reproduction sculptures, who reveal to her that the feeling for art is innate, even in children and the poor. Adams contrasts the Italian boys' faces, full of affection for the objects they sell, with the 'thievish eye and harsh voices' of the ragged urchins of England. For her, the Italians are a living embodiment of the 'influence of the master-spirit which lives and breathes throughout the creations of glorious art'. Even the poor Italian boy understands the importance of art as a means of expressing religion: 'he seemed to love art the better that it was the medium through which sacred subjects might be illustrated.'⁷¹ This seems to be the basis for Adams' own interest in art, too.

Adams recognizes that art can encourage a selfish waste of time on lifeless images, 'while the living breathing creature is languishing for the help which is denied it'. She stresses the importance of social responsibility, emphasizing that art should be used to benefit all. The arts will have achieved their highpoint only when their influence is felt universally:

And there is yet another day beyond – when art shall have fulfilled its mission; when the whole world shall be one vast spectacle of moral, intellectual, and physical beauty; when the forms that as yet live but in the far-sighted glimpse of the poet, shall be seen breathing in triumphant life; when universal love shall have wrought out universal beauty⁷²

This new 'Republic of Taste' includes all, whatever their class or sex, and is deeply imbued with visionary faith.

One important factor in achieving this ideal society was a change in the condition of women. The Unitarians were early advocates of sexual equality, seeing men and women as created equal in the eyes of God. Egalitarian sentiments are therefore a frequently

recurring theme in the *Monthly Repository*, with numerous articles by Mary Leman Grimstone (later wife of William Gillies), Harriet Martineau and Harriet Taylor calling for women's equal rights to education and employment.⁷³ Articles by Fox and Brydges Adams show that such ideas were not confined to women writers.⁷⁴ Flower Adams saw art as an area in which women could be highly effective, praising the skilled women copyists in the Parisian galleries.⁷⁵ The situation for women artists was more encouraging in France than England – a situation Adams clearly approved of: 'We wish many more would make similar attempts. As yet the power of woman is unknown.' She attacks the 'timid helpless dependence which has so long dishonoured the name of woman', pointing out the evil effects that follow when women's energies are misdirected:

And what becomes of woman's intellect and woman's soul, and the courage that prompts her to dare do all that may become a woman, feeling that nothing so well becomes a woman as the endeavour to make happy all who come within her sphere of action, and to enlarge that sphere of action to *its greatest possible extent*.⁷⁶

It is not just a matter of personal satisfaction, but a biblical requirement to employ one's energies to the full. For Adams, working as an artist enabled women to fulfil their religious vocation.

Adams seems to have put these egalitarian ideals into practice in her own life. Fortunate in having a husband who shared her views, she first pursued her desire for a career on the stage. Encouraged by William Macready, Adams successfully performed *Lady Macbeth* in 1837, before failing health forced her to concentrate on writing instead. Her story 'The Actress' probably reflects her experiences in the theatre, and shows how putting oneself in the public eye, as a woman, could be fraught with religious anxieties.⁷⁷ Adams expresses the conflict women experienced between social prohibition against feminine ambition, and the moral duty to assert themselves in the public realm. Like so many women writers, she countered objections by claiming a God-given imperative to act for the common good.

As a Christian fighter for social change, one way in which Adams felt she could make a difference was by writing on art. By discussing history paintings, rather than portraits and still-life, and interpreting them in highly political terms, Adams forcefully challenged traditional stereotypes of the female viewer. While the fictional Miss Gertrude was forbidden to mention politics in the 'Conversation Sketch' (Chapter 1), Adams saw it as her moral duty to discuss art from this perspective. It was religion that reinforced her right to do so.

Louisa Twining: from flower-painting to philanthropy

In *Coelebs in Search of a Wife* (1808), Hannah More wrote: 'I have often heard it regretted that ladies have no stated employment, no profession. It is a mistake: charity is the calling of a lady; the care of the poor is her profession'.⁷⁸ Philanthropy was a key duty for women throughout the nineteenth century, especially for those in the wealthier classes, and many women art-writers translated their religious principles into action. Primarily known for her work in the field of Poor Law reform, Louisa Twining (1820–1912), daughter of tea merchant Richard Twining, emphasizes the intimate connection between art, religion and philanthropy in Victorian women's lives.

Twining was closely involved with the church, as her mother Elizabeth (*née* Smythies) was daughter of the rector of All Saints, Colchester. Elizabeth Twining also encouraged her family's art education. Having sketched from the age of six, Louisa joined landscape classes run by the Nasmyth sisters of Edinburgh. Her two elder sisters learned flower-painting and copied works in the Dulwich Gallery.⁷⁹ Louisa was also taught figure-painting by Mary L. Meakin, and in 1856 her 'last and most delightful instruction', in watercolour, was given by Samuel Palmer. She continued to draw throughout her life, describing sketching as her 'chief enjoyment' on trips to Europe in 1878 and 1883.⁸⁰

Twining's art education was therefore that of a privileged middle-class woman, but she clearly took her art studies very seriously, not considering them as a mere accomplishments. Twining also developed a taste for art history. By 1849 she was working on a large folio volume tracing the 'History of Painting from Italian Art and the Catacombs', illustrated by watercolour studies made on regular trips to the Continent, 'the chief object being to show the contemporary progress of Italian and German art'. Although this work was initially undertaken simply for her own satisfaction, Twining later expressed disappointment that it was never published, because the format was too difficult to reproduce.⁸¹

In 1852, however, Twining published *Symbols and Emblems of Early and Medieval Christian Art*. The book must have drawn on her earlier work, as it traces the development of symbols from the earliest Christian art of the Catacombs, through to illuminated manuscripts of the Middle Ages. Inspiration for the project seems to have come largely from the fact that she toured Europe 'armed with Mrs. Jameson's ... book of criticisms':

I had long possessed Mrs. Jameson's charming works on early Italian art, and had become acquainted with her; and the brief notices given in them of the symbolic aspects of art, even from the earliest times, inspired me with the desire to pursue the subject further, and trace and classify its various developments. This study gave me delightful and interesting

occupation for some years, and though begun with no thought of publication, I was advised thus to make it known to the world, as at that time no such work existed.

Twining was further encouraged by discussions with Gustav Waagen, director of the Berlin Gallery, who visited her while in England, emphasizing the advantages of her class position and social networks. She gained evident satisfaction from researching for the book, as she trawled the British Museum library for ‘all the works I could find on the Catacombs, and the earliest Christian monuments; sometimes visiting the manuscript room, and the print room as well’.⁸² Such studies clearly gave shape and purpose to the potentially frivolous life of a leisured young woman.

Symbols and Emblems combined Twining’s researches with her practical art skills. The ninety-three plates include hundreds of line drawings made from bas-reliefs, mosaics, stained glass and illuminated manuscripts in England, Rome and Paris, showing the chronological development of such symbols as ‘The First Person of the Trinity represented by the Hand’ or Christ as the ‘Good Shepherd’ (fig. 53). Twining does not include examples from Italian and German paintings, as they ‘have already been noticed by others’ – no doubt a reference to Jameson’s *Sacred and Legendary Art*.⁸³ The work was painstaking in its research into what the *Athenaeum* dubbed the ‘religious branch of Archaeology’, while the *Spectator* described it as a ‘carefully-compiled work – done *con amore*, ... which dispenses with raptures and sentimentalities, and sets to, in a practical efficient spirit’.⁸⁴ This comment suggests that a woman writing on religion and art was considered inevitably liable to ‘raptures and sentimentalities’. Twining successfully countered such expectations through her solid research.

Twining took great pride in the publication, emphasizing that when the first edition was ‘exhausted, the work was still often asked for, and though many are the books since published on the same subject, none have quite taken its place or superseded it’.⁸⁵ She underlined its novelty, stressing that although French and German authors had contributed to the subject, little had been written in England, except by Jameson and Lord Lindsay. The subject held more than a historical interest for Twining, however. It was closely bound up with her religious faith. She wanted to enable readers to see ‘through the symbol to the thing signified by it’:

With such an object in view, the rudeness of execution, or want of skill in design is forgotten, and the idea appears pre-eminent, – giving a value even to the simplest Emblem of Christian Art, which contains an allusion to something above and beyond itself.

The faith that produced such images, and the feelings of devotion they inspired, were of greater importance than the occasional ‘quaintness’ of design: ‘To the unlearned, they

spoke a clear and intelligible language ... they *had* a meaning, deep, and full of poetry'.⁸⁶ Heavily influenced by Jameson, Twining is not afraid to indicate the roots of Christian imagery in pagan times, exploring the image of Christ as Orpheus, for example, for its symbolic resonances.⁸⁷ She is less disturbed than earlier writers by 'grotesque' medieval representations of Hell and the Devil, because they did not excite irreverent feelings in the minds of contemporary viewers (fig. 54).⁸⁸ For her, these images are interesting because they reveal the minds of primitive Christians. Again, we find a growing confidence in tackling sensitive religious issues, exploiting women's supposed powers of sympathetic understanding and ability imaginatively to recreate historical contexts.

The religious dimension is also evident in Twining's second publication, *Types and Figures of the Bible* (1855). Similar in layout, with fifty-four plates again illustrated by Twining, the work explores typological connections in the context of early Christian art (fig. 55). Twining is careful to avoid detailed theological arguments, but points out the enduring fascination of typological studies of the Bible: 'This mine of inexhaustible wealth, this unfathomable well of living water is still open to all, inviting those who seek in every land to come to it.' There is the same emphasis on a universal right to religious truth that we found in Adams, allowing access to women as much as men. Though the subject is a difficult one, full of 'errors and extravagances' denounced by the Reformation, Twining claims that study of the Older Dispensation, far from lessening belief, leads to a 'more profound faith, containing ... the likeness and shadow of a far higher glory and holiness'.⁸⁹ Art-historical research is therefore undertaken not for its own sake, but as a route to deeper religious understanding.

Twining saw herself as a serious-minded art-writer, but she clearly felt impelled to do something on a more practical level as well, responding to the Evangelical imperative to engage in good works.⁹⁰ When discussing the religious imagery of earlier ages, she draws on her experience of the contemporary poor to illuminate the past, referring to an illiterate dying man who kept a Bible with old woodcuts by him, so that 'he was able to dwell upon sacred subjects with much evident satisfaction and comfort'.⁹¹ This example helps to explain the connection between Twining's art-historical researches and social reforms, which are linked by her faith.⁹² Like Adams, Twining recognized the transformative power of art. She was one of the first subscribers to the Arundel Society in 1849, and her comments on the chromolithographs produced by the society reveal her belief in the potential of religious art to effect moral improvement. With a certain self-satisfaction, she prides herself on recognizing the importance of art in education:

I was, I believe, the first to ... foresee the elevating nature of such instructions. I had a beautiful collection of the subjects by Raffaele in the Vatican, copied in tinted lithography, and some of these I presented to the Boys' School of St. George the Martyr, Holborn, where they still adorn the walls and afford subjects for Sunday School instruction.⁹³

Art-related philanthropy was to become an important concern for Twining, alongside her other welfare work. In 1879, together with Elizabeth Eastlake and Baroness Angela Burdett-Coutts, she established the Art Students' Home for women in Brunswick Square. She also made donations of paintings and prints to associations for working people. In 1882, for example, her copies of Old Masters were given to the Working Men's College in Great Ormond Street, while most of her Arundel chromolithographs were donated to the 'King's College branch for ladies in Kensington Square' and a college for male students in the Strand.⁹⁴ Although it is unlikely she was the first to engage in such activities, she demonstrates that Ruskin was not alone in his efforts to bring art to working people.

It is interesting that many of Twining's efforts were directed towards improving women's lives, and she believed strongly in increasing their opportunities. She approved of new forms of 'usefulness' for women, 'desiring to see still greater powers and privileges conferred on them', and was a supporter of women's suffrage.⁹⁵ Like Adams, she believed that the best interests of society would be served by a shared 'communion of labour', which was perfectly compatible with religious teaching.⁹⁶ Less radical than Adams, however, Twining preserved a more paternalistic attitude towards charity, displaying a relative conservatism that perhaps reflects her higher class position and Anglican perspective.

In an 1835 article for the *Monthly Repository* entitled 'The Fashionable', Mary Leman Grimstone described how art could be used to educate the poor through cottage visiting, a key philanthropic activity for women.⁹⁷ A governess takes her aristocratic young lady pupils, brought up as 'mere pale pretty pieces of dependence', to visit a humble cottage, which she has adorned with her own sketches. She encourages her pupils to employ their talents in the same way, producing pictures to elevate the poor. A mere accomplishment, whose only motive is 'indolent recreation, or emulous display', can then be used to foster fine feelings in the young women themselves, as well as 'implanting them in the minds of the poorer classes'. Twining represents the real-life equivalent of Grimstone's young ladies. Born into a privileged background, she put her interest in art to good use, so that what was in danger of being perceived as self-indulgence could be defended as religious virtue. Such activities represented a valid intervention by women in the public sphere, in a way undreamed of by Shaftesbury or Pasquin.

Conclusion

One might expect the religious views held by Victorian women to lead to conservative thinking and confinement within the domestic sphere. This chapter has instead demonstrated how the Evangelical notion that all were created equal in the sight of God, and had an equal duty to act for good within society, could result in profoundly radical views and public engagement. Such beliefs supported the democratization of art and encouraged the active participation of women artists and writers, helping to break down barriers of class and sex within the 'Republic of Taste'.

For women like Twining and Adams, art was not perceived as a separate realm of self-indulgence, but as a thoroughly practical subject intimately bound up with notions of religious value. Studying art was a way to become a better Christian, and beyond this, art could be carried into a social dimension in order to benefit others. Unitarians Bodichon, Bessie Rayner Parkes and Anna Mary Howitt, and Anglicans Merrifield and Emilia Dilke are further examples of women who combined a love of art with practical philanthropy. Regardless of sectarian loyalties, Victorian women felt duty bound to divide their energies between art and responsibility to society at large.

Women's perception seems to have been that it was their Christian duty to balance art studies with active involvement in society, to integrate private interests into the needs of the broader community. The male perception often appears to be that in so doing, women spread themselves too thinly, failing to demonstrate single-minded dedication to the cause of art. Samuel Palmer, for example, suggested the dangers of allowing religious and social demands to compete with art study. In a letter to his pupil Miss Wilkinson, he deplored the distraction of religious meetings and social engagements for women:

It will not do, just when you are turning a line on which the subject hinges, to be snatched up by a friendly foraging party for a ride to a flower-show, or an Exeter Hall spouting match! ... I believe that, literally, ten minutes of close attention do more for a drawing than a day of self-distraction.

He advised her strongly to 'give your *whole mind* to *one* thing at *one* time.'⁹⁸ Ruskin, too, believed women would never achieve much in art because they were unable to devote themselves single-mindedly to the pursuit of excellence.⁹⁹ Where the male view seems to have been that art should be prioritized, women were expected to balance this interest with other Christian duties, to avoid social criticism and to remain acceptable in the eyes of God. Religious belief could therefore prove the driving force for women's writing on art, but also its limitation.

Nevertheless, Ruskin's maxim that 'All great Art is Praise' offered women a way in to writing as critics and connoisseurs.¹⁰⁰ Religion was not simply a 'fig-leaf' of propriety, but also lent women's contributions greater authority and moral weight. Exploiting their perceived qualities of piety and empathy, it allowed them an important role within art culture, countering stereotypical constructions of feminine frivolity in relation to art-viewing.

¹ Rigby (Chapter 8), for example, wrote *Fellowship: Letters Addressed to my Sister Mourners* (1868), on the consolations of religion for the bereaved.

² Pullan, 'Fashioning a public', pp. 51–2.

³ [Miller] *Letters from Italy*, II, pp. 17–18.

⁴ *Extracts from the Journals ... of Miss Berry*, III, p. 175.

⁵ *Journals and Correspondence of Lady Eastlake*, I, p. 169. Marion Lochhead, *Elizabeth Rigby, Lady Eastlake*, London, 1961, p. 56.

⁶ [Elizabeth Eastlake] 'The Crystal Palace', *QR*, 96, March 1855, p. 324.

⁷ Rigby's religious loyalties can be deduced from her scathing comments on Dissenting costume in *The Art of Dress* (1852), while Merrifield has a dig at the Tractarians in her translation of Cennini's *Treatise on Painting* (1844), pp. vi–vii. Catholic women writers on art will not be considered here.

⁸ *GM*, 51, 1781, p. 295. Seward, 'Poem to the Memory of Lady Anna Miller', pp. 15–16.

⁹ *Athenaeum*, 1691, 24 March 1860, pp. 408–9. *GM*, 8, May 1860, p. 521.

¹⁰ Charlotte M. Yonge (ed.), *Biographies of Good Women* (1862), second series, London, 1865, pp. x, xii.

¹¹ Although a Congregationalist by marriage, Stickney Ellis was born and buried a Quaker.

¹² Albert Walker, *Eminent Women*, London and Otley, n.d. [c. 1865], p. 119.

¹³ As Elisabeth Jay has shown, though not expected to engage in ecclesiastical politics or theological dispute, women were permitted to write on religion in the contexts of fiction, hymn-writing, biography, teaching to children and translation. See 'A self worth saving, a duty worth doing and a voice worth raising', in Joanne Shattock (ed.), *Women and Literature in Britain 1800–1900*, Cambridge, 2001, pp. 251–74. One woman who used art to teach lessons to the young was Lady Jervis White Jervis, whose *Tales of the Boyhood of Great Painters* (1853) offered virtuous artists as moral exemplars.

¹⁴ Jeremy Gregory, 'Homo Religiosus: Masculinity and Religion in the Long Eighteenth Century', in T. Hitchcock and M. Cohen (eds), *English Masculinities 1660–1800*, New York and London, 1999, pp. 85–110.

¹⁵ Gregory, 'Homo Religiosus', pp. 85, 99.

¹⁶ [Miller] *Letters from Italy*, III, p. 192.

¹⁷ Anna Jameson, *Visits and Sketches at Home and Abroad*, 4 vols, London, 1834, p. 248. *The Autobiography of Margaret Oliphant: The Complete Text*, ed. Elisabeth Jay, Oxford, 1990, p. 73.

¹⁸ Rosamund Brunel Gotch, *Maria, Lady Callcott: The Creator of "Little Arthur"*, London, 1937, p. 13. For Dagon, see I *Samuel* 5.

¹⁹ Marcia Pointon, 'Quakerism and Visual Culture 1650–1800', *Art History*, 20 (3), Sept. 1997, pp. 397–431. See also Harry Mount, 'Egbert van Heemskerck's *Quaker Meetings* revisited', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 56, 1993, pp. 213–14. Amateur women artists include the Gurney sisters, Amelia Opie, Stickney Ellis and Mary Howitt, while Mary Ann Schimmelpenninck wrote a treatise on the *Principles of Beauty* (1859). See also Mary Knowles in Jennings, *Gender, Religion and Radicalism*, 2006.

²⁰ Wakefield also published on botany. See Gordon and Walker, *Rational Passions*, pp. 353–9.

²¹ Her grandfather, naturalist Lewis Weston Dillwyn, had published a *Botanist's Guide* (1805), jointly with Dawson Turner.

²² See, for example, Mary Delany on viewing Ehret's plant studies, letter to Miss Dewes, Oct. 1768, *Autobiography and Correspondence*, ed. Llanover, IV, p. 173.

²³ Thereza Llewelyn, 5 May 1856, journal transcript, p. 2.

- ²⁴ A. H. Palmer, *The Life and Letters of Samuel Palmer, Painter and Etcher*, London, 1892, p. 63, 23 Sept. 1838.
- ²⁵ John Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, ed. David Barrie, London, 2000, p. 71.
- ²⁶ Llewelyn, journal transcript, 12 May 1856, pp. 5–6.
- ²⁷ *Ibid*, 11 July 1856, p. 24.
- ²⁸ *Ibid*, 6 May 1850 [n.p.].
- ²⁹ Ann B. Shteir, 'Women and the natural world: expanding horizons at home', in Pomeroy (ed.), *Intrepid Women*, pp. 67–87. Mary Ann Duffield (1820–1914), for example, produced *The Museum of Flowers* (1845) and *The Art of Flower Painting* (1856), which ran to eighteen editions.
- ³⁰ Maria Callcott, *A Scripture Herbal*, London, 1842, preface.
- ³¹ [Harriet Gouldsmith] *A Voice from a Picture, By A Female Artist of the Present Day*, London, 1839. Kathryn Moore Heleniak, 'Money and marketing problems: the plight of Harriot [sic] Gouldsmith (1786–1863), a professional female landscape painter', *British Art Journal*, 6 (3), winter 2005, pp. 25–36.
- ³² *Voice from a Picture*, pp. v–vii, 14.
- ³³ Sarah Stickney Ellis, *The Poetry of Life*, 2 vols, London, 1835, I, pp. 141–67. Briefly taught by Cotman, Stickney Ellis was proficient in watercolour and oils, selling illustrations to Ackermann. She ranks portraiture well below landscape in its potential for 'poetical feeling' (pp. 144–8).
- ³⁴ *Ibid*, p. 142.
- ³⁵ Papers of Maria, Lady Callcott, Bodleian Library, Oxford, MS.Eng.e.2428, p. 5.
- ³⁶ Maria Callcott, *Description of the Chapel of the Annunziata dell'Arena*, London, 1835, p. 2.
- ³⁷ Mary Philadelphia Merrifield, *A Practical Treatise on Painting in Fresco, Oil, and Distemper, by Cennino Cennini in the Year 1437*, London, 1844, pp. vi–viii.
- ³⁸ Rio's text was translated into English by a Miss Wells in 1854, as *The Poetry of Christian Art*.
- ³⁹ 'Exeter Hall Exhibition of Paintings, Illustrative of Sacred History', *MR*, second series, VI, 1832, pp. 338–45.
- ⁴⁰ Yeldham notes the growing tendency of women artists in the 1850s to portray biblical women, perhaps inspired by Jameson's focus on female saints and the Virgin, *Women Artists*, pp. 125–6.
- ⁴¹ See Judith Johnston, *Anna Jameson: Victorian, Feminist, Woman of Letters*, Aldershot and Brookfield VT, 1997, pp. 208–35.
- ⁴² She is the only woman mentioned in Barnett, 'Contemporary response to British art', pp. 70–3.
- ⁴³ Adams also contributed to Fox's *Hymns and Anthems* (1841), and wrote *The Flock at the Fountain* (1845), a verse catechism for Samuel Courtauld's factory schools at Braintree in Essex. For her obituary, see *Westminster Review*, 50, 1849, pp. 540–2.
- ⁴⁴ Harold W. Stephenson, *The Author of 'Nearer, my God, to Thee': Sarah Flower Adams*, London, 1922, pp. 5–6.
- ⁴⁵ Sarah lived in Fox's household until her marriage in 1834. The South Place congregation included Leigh Hunt, Hazlitt, Henry Crabb Robinson, John Stuart Mill and Harriet Taylor.
- ⁴⁶ Stephenson, *The Author of 'Nearer, my God, to Thee'*, pp. 22–3. Francis E. Mineka, *The Dissidence of Dissent: The Monthly Repository, 1806–1838*, Chapel Hill, 1944, p. 192.
- ⁴⁷ 'A National Gallery', *MR*, VII, 1833, pp. 840–5. 'The Luxembourg', *MR*, VIII, 1834, pp. 54–63.
- ⁴⁸ 'National Gallery', p. 844.
- ⁴⁹ 'National Gallery', pp. 841–4.
- ⁵⁰ 'National Gallery', p. 843.
- ⁵¹ 'Luxembourg', p. 59.
- ⁵² 'National Gallery', p. 845.
- ⁵³ *Ibid*, pp. 844–5. She seems to be referring here to the High Renaissance history paintings preferred by both English and French collectors. Cf. W. M. Thackeray, 'On the French School of Painting' (1839), in *The Paris Sketch Book*, pp. 42–60.
- ⁵⁴ 'National Gallery', p. 845. See also 'Luxembourg', p. 55.
- ⁵⁵ 'National Gallery', p. 840.
- ⁵⁶ 'Luxembourg', p. 60. The *Retour de la Fête* was by Léopold Robert (1794–1835).
- ⁵⁷ 'Luxembourg', p. 62.
- ⁵⁸ Adams was a friend of Shelley and as a poet is associated with the 'Spasmodics'.
- ⁵⁹ [Kingsley] 'Poetry of Sacred and Legendary Art', p. 293.

- ⁶⁰ Helene E. Roberts, "'The sentiment of reality': Thackeray's art criticism', *Studies in the Novel*, 13 (1/2), spring 1981, pp. 21–39, esp. pp. 30–1. Judith L. Fisher, 'The aesthetic of the mediocre: Thackeray and the visual arts', *Victorian Studies*, 26, autumn 1982, pp. 65–82.
- ⁶¹ 'Buy Images!', *MR*, VIII, 1834, pp. 756–62.
- ⁶² [William Brydges Adams] 'On the State of the Fine Arts in England', *MR*, VII, 1833, p. 11.
- ⁶³ 'National Gallery', pp. 842–3. Contrast this with Thackeray's prudish complaints about Etty's nudes, which should be covered with a curtain of fig-leaves, while 'the world should pass on, content to know that there are some glorious colours painted underneath'. Fisher, 'The aesthetic of the mediocre', p. 73.
- ⁶⁴ 'Luxembourg', pp. 55–7. This teaching of moral lessons to the young is of course an especially acceptable role for a female writer.
- ⁶⁵ 'National Gallery', pp. 841–2.
- ⁶⁶ 'National Gallery', p. 841. Cf. Thackeray in Roberts, 'Sentiment of reality', p. 30.
- ⁶⁷ 'On the State of the Fine Arts in England', pp. 6–13.
- ⁶⁸ 'National Gallery', p. 845.
- ⁶⁹ 'Luxembourg', p. 62.
- ⁷⁰ 'Buy Images!', p. 756. Brydges Adams similarly sees engraving as a 'powerful instrument in civilization', which will 'bring forth good fruit', 'On the State of the Fine Arts', pp. 11–13.
- ⁷¹ 'Buy Images!', pp. 756–8.
- ⁷² 'Buy Images!', pp. 760–2. The Utopian tone is very similar to a Salon review by Marie Camille de G., written in Paris in 1834. Gen Doy, *Women and Visual Culture in Nineteenth-Century France 1800–1852*, Leicester, London and New York, 1998, pp. 168–70.
- ⁷³ See, for example, 'Self-dependence', *MR*, IX, 1835, pp. 601–3.
- ⁷⁴ See 'On the Condition of Women in England', *MR*, VII, 1833, pp. 217–31, in which Brydges Adams claims that men treat women as bond-slaves.
- ⁷⁵ 'National Gallery', p. 842.
- ⁷⁶ 'Luxembourg', pp. 60–1.
- ⁷⁷ 'The Actress', *MR*, IX, 1835, p. 473.
- ⁷⁸ Quoted in Helena Wojtczak, *Women of Victorian Sussex*, Hastings, 2003, p. 149.
- ⁷⁹ Her sister Elizabeth Twining (1805–89) published a magnificent album of botanical studies, *Illustrations of the Natural Orders of Plants* (1849).
- ⁸⁰ Louisa Twining, *Recollections of Life and Work*, London, 1893, pp. 19–20, 227, 253.
- ⁸¹ *Recollections*, pp. 79, 107.
- ⁸² *Recollections*, pp. 106, 99, 107.
- ⁸³ Louisa Twining, *Symbols and Emblems of Early and Medieval Christian Art*, London, 1852, p. vii.
- ⁸⁴ Advertising quotations (n.p.) listed in Twining's *Types and Figures of the Bible*, London, 1855.
- ⁸⁵ *Recollections*, p. 108. A second edition was brought out in 1885.
- ⁸⁶ *Symbols and Emblems*, pp. v, viii.
- ⁸⁷ Jameson traces Marian imagery back to the goddess cults of the Middle East, for instance.
- ⁸⁸ *Symbols and Emblems*, p. 34, plate xvi, p. ix.
- ⁸⁹ *Types and Figures*, pp. xi–xiii.
- ⁹⁰ Kathleen E. McCrone, 'Feminism and Philanthropy in Victorian England: the Case of Louisa Twining', Canadian Historical Association, *Historical Papers*, 11 (1), 1976, pp. 123–39.
- ⁹¹ *Types and Figures*, p. ix.
- ⁹² McCrone, 'Feminism and Philanthropy', p. 129.
- ⁹³ *Recollections*, pp. 98–9.
- ⁹⁴ *Recollections*, pp. 227–31, 251–2, 283, 290.
- ⁹⁵ McCrone, 'Feminism and Philanthropy', p. 132.
- ⁹⁶ *Recollections*, p. 288.
- ⁹⁷ 'The Fashionable', *MR*, IX, 1835, pp. 308–9.
- ⁹⁸ *Letters of Samuel Palmer*, ed. Raymond Lister, 2 vols, Oxford, 1974, I, p. 546, Sept. 1858; p. 540, May 1858. Exeter Hall on the Strand was the venue for religious and charitable meetings.
- ⁹⁹ Pamela Gerrish Nunn, 'The 'woman question': Ruskin and the female artist', in Robert Hewison (ed.), *Ruskin's Artists*, Aldershot and Brookfield VT, 2000, pp. 167–83.
- ¹⁰⁰ Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, ed. Barrie, p. 40.

Chapter 5

Mary Philadelphia Merrifield and the alliance with science

We have seen that in this period there was a perceived continuity between what would now be considered the separate areas of art and science, with women's botanical studies, for example, blurring distinctions between the two. As with art, investigation of the natural world was deemed a suitable context in which middle-class women might make useful contributions to society, and in the early nineteenth century they were increasingly gaining recognition for their achievements in this area.¹ Mary Somerville gave a lecture on magnetism to the Royal Society in 1826 and, along with Caroline Herschel, was elected honorary fellow of the Royal Astronomical Society in 1835. It is perhaps not surprising, then, to find certain women combining art-writing with an interest in empirical investigation.²

Apparently attracted by a curiosity concerning materials and techniques, Mary Philadelphia Merrifield (1804–89) indicates the broad sweep of topics on which women could publish on art, ranging from fresco to fashion. This chapter will demonstrate how a 'scientific' approach to such subjects could be used to validate female taste and to counter the notion that women were incapable of rational responses. I will also indicate the importance of translation work in enabling women to enter the field of art-writing.

Translation and treatises

Just how Merrifield came to be so interested in art is still a bit of a mystery, as there is little biographical information concerning her early life. Her location, first in Southwark, then in Brighton, did not exactly set her at the centre of all things artistic. Daughter of Middle Temple barrister Sir Charles Watkins (d. 1808), she in 1827 married conveyancing barrister John Merrifield (c. 1789–1877).³ Merrifield first comes to notice in 1844 with her translation of Cennini's 1437 treatise on painting.⁴ She claimed to have been inspired to produce the work by a letter to the *Art Union* in 1841, which called for English editions of works on Renaissance fresco-painting.⁵ Merrifield's Cennini was part of a wave of interest in fresco technique in the 1830s and '40s, in connection with the redecoration of the Houses of Parliament, partly inspired by the work of Peter Cornelius in Munich, under King Ludwig I of Bavaria.⁶ Publication coincided with the second exhibition of

competition cartoons for Westminster Hall in July 1844, and the work contributed to debates on the techniques recommended to modern artists. It was described by *Blackwood's* as an 'admirable and most useful volume'.⁷

Sherman and Holcomb have shown that women often became art-writers through translation work, and Merrifield certainly based her publication closely on Giuseppe Tambroni's 1821 Italian edition of Cennini.⁸ Her work was far more than a simple translation, however, as she added copious detailed notes to Tambroni's version, assembling a wealth of relevant material from other authors, and making critical comparisons between them. In addition, Merrifield carried out practical experiments to settle questions about the pigments and processes used by Cennini, correcting previous translations in the light of her findings. For example, she describes making 'many experiments on the effects of the alkalis and neutral salts when mixed with colours', to satisfy herself that soda could safely be added to them.⁹ Her aim was not merely to establish linguistic accuracy, but to obtain 'satisfactory evidence' for the colours used by Old Masters in order to assist contemporary artists.

Other women had shown considerable interest in the techniques of early fresco-painters by this time. Graham, for example, had carried a copy of Cennini's treatise with her when visiting Italy 1827–8, and studied unfinished frescoes to establish technical procedures (Chapter 6).¹⁰ Merrifield's interest was primarily a practical, rather than an aesthetic one, however. Unlike Graham, she seems to have had little taste for early Italian painting, considering the works of Cimabue and Giotto to be 'deficient in design and in drawing, and entirely ignorant of the theory of the art'. Yet she recognized that their intimate understanding of materials, and their tried and tested methods, could be of great value to modern artists, because they preserved the durability of the colours; the 'colouring and execution ... excite our surprise and admiration even after a lapse of four centuries', she declared.¹¹ Excusing away the unpolished style of the original text, as well as its Catholic dimension, Merrifield stresses that she wishes to bring out what is of practical relevance to modern artists. There is some evidence that her conclusions were indeed taken up by contemporaries. It has been suggested, for example, that her description of white grounds enhancing the purity of colours was explored by the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood.¹²

As in the case of Graham, it may be that Merrifield's interest in materials and techniques arose from her own art practice. In 1851 she contributed two portraits to the Suffolk Street exhibition, and as with many women writers, she supplied illustrations for the Cennini, as well as preparing the text.¹³ Her practical experience is suggested by her

manual on portrait-painting in watercolours, written for Winsor and Newton, also in 1851.¹⁴ Here she offers advice to those unable to afford regular instruction, based on solutions developed through her own first-hand experimentation. She emphasizes the value of a 'thorough knowledge of the technical part of portrait painting', and recommends copying the unfinished works of great masters, such as Rubens, Van Dyck and Reynolds, in order to understand their techniques. Merrifield stresses that skill can only be acquired through 'much labour', 'patience and perseverance'. Her methodical approach is in sharp contrast to Samuel Palmer's complaints about young ladies hoping to pick up painting with minimal effort, and therefore contests the stereotype of female inattentiveness.¹⁵

By practising art herself, Merrifield would have gained a deeper familiarity with techniques, enabling her to transmit useful hints to professional, as well as amateur, artists. This is characteristic of many women writers on art, for whom the experience of making art enhanced their understanding of what they saw and read, giving them greater confidence to pass on their observations to others. Male art-writers also had such practical experience, of course, often in a more professional capacity. However, the growing respect for 'mechanical' ability, endorsed by Barry and Fuseli, may have worked to the advantage of women art-writers in particular, because there was less value placed on knowledge of theory and the 'je ne sais quoi' of taste, and more on practical experience. Reviews frequently admired the fact that women provided their own illustrations, acknowledging the skill and taste this revealed. In Merrifield's case, the *Quarterly Review* stated: 'This lady is not, we believe, an artist by profession, but her outlines prove her to be one by love and accomplishment'.¹⁶

Despite her apparent lack of personal contacts in the art world, Merrifield combined a scientific understanding of artists' materials with 'hands-on' experience of how they were used. Thanks to these skills, perhaps, responses to the Cennini were highly favourable, praising her achievement.¹⁷ No surprise is registered about her analytical approach, and there is little adverse comment on her amateur status. Indeed, her position as a non-professional is seen as a distinct advantage, as it leaves her sufficient time to investigate the properties of pigments. The *Quarterly Review* wrote: 'her notes show a familiarity with the mysteries of the painter's laboratory, which the rapid coverers of modern canvas in their breathless haste for exhibition seldom condescend to acquire'.¹⁸ In other words, her leisure as a middle-class woman gives her a distinct advantage over artists struggling to make a living. An *Art Union* review was also impressed by her knowledge of technicalities, calling the work a 'valuable addition' to art literature.¹⁹ Reservations were expressed in the *Athenaeum* about the ability of a woman to engage in such 'dogged work',

which required 'masculine deductions' and 'hard reasoning'. Putting aside the 'alms of charitable gallantry' usually due to 'lady-translators', the writer gleefully points out minor errors in Merrifield's 'slatern' translation. His overall judgment is positive, however, and he admits that 'she has raised herself into merited notice' through her 'frequent display of knowledge, good taste, and acumen'.²⁰

Merrifield's scholarly publication led to her being invited by the Royal Commission on the Fine Arts to undertake further investigations on their behalf, and in 1846 she published *The Art of Fresco Painting*.²¹ This involved the translation not only of Italian, but also of French, German, Spanish and medieval Latin texts. In fact, as Merrifield explains, the initial translation work was carried out by her two teenage sons, Charles (1827–84) and Frederick (1831–1924), with herself editing their rough drafts. We hear so often in this period of women's literary work being subsumed under their husbands' or brothers' names, that it is rather refreshing to find a case where young men assisted a woman writer. While acknowledging their contribution, Merrifield emphasizes her overall control. Apologizing for the somewhat literal nature of their translations, she says, 'I have carefully collated and corrected them with the original works'.²² She is not afraid to represent herself as authoritative editor-in-chief.

Part of Merrifield's authority is derived from the patriotic nature of the endeavour. She comments in the introduction that a report by the Royal Commissioners had called for a 'gentleman fully competent to the task', but she says,

The subject coinciding with my own pursuits and inclinations, I was induced to pursue the inquiry, from the persuasion, that the introduction of the art into this country, would be the means of founding a great English school of painting.

Merrifield shared with Flower Adams the notion that art should be didactically improving and could lead to social advancement. Representations of England's 'illustrious dead', she states, would serve as 'instructive examples to the living, and the art [of fresco] ... will ... become subservient to the best interests of the country'.²³ Her work would therefore benefit the public at large, as well as artists. As is so often the case with women, Merrifield's claim that the national interest will be served by her writing excuses away any hint of immodesty in the desire to publish. This patriotic tone was not exclusive to women writers, of course, being very much in tune with the Houses of Parliament project as a whole, but Merrifield's compliance with it reinforces her right to speak.

Merrifield's self-presentation in this text also marks the growing confidence of women in their expertise. She makes no excuses for her sex as a writer, nor does she publish anonymously. Rather than making modest disavowals, she expresses pride in her

achievement, emphasizing her 'diligent examination and perusal of old authors' and the onerous nature of her task:

It will also be considered that the investigation has been pursued through various languages, written at periods distant from each other, and by authors, some with an extensive, others with a limited knowledge of the subject. These circumstances have added to the difficulties of this inquiry

She stresses in particular her return to original sources, rather than relying on the 'very imperfect' translations of previous writers, such as Rudolf Raspe and John Francis Rigaud. Emphasizing the value of her own contribution by correcting errors in the work of others, she not only tackles questions of translation, but answers technical questions by investigating the nature of pigments.²⁴

The scientific detail she provides is astonishing, and this was clearly a major focus of interest for Merrifield. Her painstaking, methodical approach is typified in her experiments on two specimens of haematite supplied by 'Mr. Tremayne, of Heligan in Cornwall':

I caused a specimen of the hard Haematite to be pulverized, and having washed some of the powder, and poured off the lighter particles, I found a portion of iron had sunk to the bottom, the removal of which seemed to render the colour finer. I also calcined another portion of the stone, and found it separated into scales, in the manner described.

As a true empiricist, she takes nothing on trust. Writing in the manner of a scientific treatise, she determines that red haematite may be used for fresco by English painters, as it is 'tried and approved'.²⁵ Merrifield's conclusion is that 'none but natural earthy colours can be used with safety and propriety in fresco painting, that these colours are not brilliant, but ... derive their beauty from the harmony of the arrangement and the judicious opposition of the colours'. Artificial modern pigments are 'too glaring and intrusive', she insists, reminding readers that Titian and Raphael used common earth colours.²⁶ Her researches therefore endorse the academic view of colouring as a relative art, reliant on the artist's skill, and reject the traditional concept of female fascination with gaudy hues.

Merrifield presents herself throughout as an active member of the (predominantly male) scientific community, testing out theories and engaging in contemporary controversies with the likes of Humphrey Davy and Michael Faraday.²⁷ Writing to Sir Robert Peel, she says that she considers Charles Eastlake and Robert Hendrie to be 'labouring in the same field as myself'.²⁸ This strongly challenges her characterization by later writers as a mere translator and compiler. The fact that many men were also self-educated chemists in this period probably contributed to her acceptance within the field.

Financially supported by a government commission, from autumn 1845 Merrifield continued her investigations in northern Italy, seeking out medieval and Renaissance manuscripts containing technical information and recipes. *Blackwood's* reported in 1847 that Merrifield, 'whose works on fresco painting are so valuable, has been collecting materials abroad, and will shortly publish her discoveries'.²⁹ In August 1848 a review of George Cleghorn's *Ancient and Modern Art* noted that 'we are shortly to have before the public the carefully gathered knowledge upon this subject [painting on glass] from the pen and research of Mrs. Merrifield.'³⁰ Clearly, her work generated considerable publicity within the art world. The result of these labours was *Original Treatises on the Arts of Painting* (1849).³¹ Like her previous volume, this was dedicated to Peel, who endorsed the publication (fig. 56). In a letter to Peel, Merrifield confirms that 'although I have paid attention to modern works on the subject of oil-painting, ... the opinions I have expressed on this subject are entirely my own, and that they have not been revised or corrected by any person'. The fact that Peel had requested such confirmation may imply that someone had questioned a woman's ability to produce such complex work unaided.³²

In the *Original Treatises*, Merrifield particularly thanks Eastlake, secretary of the Fine Arts Commission, for his encouragement and acknowledges her debt to his *Materials for a History of Oil-Painting* (1847).³³ Her latest publication, she declares, is based on a long-standing investigation of oil-painting. In her translation of Cennini's treatise, she had consciously abstained from entering into the controversy about Van Eyck's supposed invention of the medium, but declared 'should the result of the experiments which have for some years occupied her leisure hours be ultimately successful, a future opportunity will be taken of discussing the subject'.³⁴ By 1849, she clearly felt sufficiently prepared to enter the fray. Whatever the rights and wrongs of her theories, there can be no doubt that she was considered an important contributor to the debate and was well-respected by her male counterparts.

As with many women in this period, there is a tension between the need for feminine modesty in self-presentation and claims to intellectual authority. The tone of the preface seems to be that of typically feminine modesty, as Merrifield declares 'I have endeavoured to supply by diligence what I have wanted in ability.'³⁵ However, a comparison with her father's preface to *A Treatise on Copyholds* (1797) reveals a similarly apologetic self-presentation, emphasizing his inadequacy to the task:

The Author has taken some pains to make the following Treatise useful; but it must not be expected that he has made it perfect. If his labours have not produced what has been wished, they may, at least, shorten, in some measure, the labours of others, and assist some

one, blessed with better powers than himself ... to give to the Profession a Treatise more complete.³⁶

We should be wary, then, of seeing such declarations simply in gender terms, and be conscious that this modest stance could be adopted by authors of either sex.

To bolster her authority, Merrifield emphasizes her scrupulous care in collecting data, stressing that she has compared the 'most esteemed works on this subject' and that her information has been confirmed by discussions with eminent professors and artists. It is interesting that in reporting these discussions, she is far more present in the text than in her previous works, quoting dialogues that indicate her active questioning of experts. In a conversation with 'Signor A.', for example, an artist and picture-restorer in Milan, she reveals considerable confidence based on a combination of first-hand experience and research:

I asked whether placing the picture in the sun made any difference. He hesitated. I then related the passage from the letters of Rubens, giving the authority; and he admitted this was necessary to prevent the picture becoming yellow.

In a note, she adds: 'I have myself seen pictures so exposed at Milan.'³⁷ Such discussions not only make for a more lively presentation of the facts, but also underline her equality with male experts.

Merrifield used her eyes carefully, too. In Brescia she employed a 'powerful magnifying glass' to examine two small miniatures by Titian, a head of Christ and of the Madonna, painted on each side of a piece of lapis lazuli. The surface 'showed the oil shrivelled as in many of Titian's large pictures', and gave the impression of threads of silk, 'so that I almost fancied it had been painted on silk, and cut out and then fixed to the lapis lazuli'.³⁸ Here indeed is the image of the female connoisseur, using her eye-glass to make comparisons between an artist's works and to form conclusions about technique by studying them at close quarters.

Merrifield's connoisseurship is further underlined by her neutral tone, as she insists on her 'dispassionate and unprejudiced inquiry':

I might have indulged in expressing the feelings of delight with which I contemplated the works of the great Masters of the Italian School; but I feel that this would not have accorded with the technical and practical details of the various subjects treated of in these volumes.³⁹

The implication is that she is not devoid of emotional and aesthetic sense, but that this is not the place for indulging it. The ability to separate emotional from intellectual responses in order to form judgments was of course considered beyond female capacities. Merrifield

stresses here her ability to do so, in a work aimed primarily at the all-male Fine Arts Commission, in order to establish her expertise (fig. 57).

The *Art Journal* described the work as an 'invaluable contribution to Fine Art Literature'.⁴⁰ A review in *Blackwood's* also concluded with a glowing tribute:

In now taking leave of Mrs. Merrifield, we express our hope that, having so ably and so faithfully done the work confided to her by the Commission on the Fine Arts, she will not think her labours at an end; for we are quite sure that her judicious mind and clear style may be most profitably employed in the service of art, to whose practical advancement she has contributed so much.⁴¹

This is positive endorsement, with no suggestion that her sex or amateur status might inhibit her ability to make a valuable contribution. Further recognition of her scholarly achievements came when she was elected honorary member of the Academy of Fine Arts at Bologna, a fact proudly signalled on her title pages thereafter. In 1853 she became a member of the Royal Society of Arts; truly, the female connoisseur was come of age.

The harmony of colours and commerce

Apart from the status accorded her work on early treatises within intellectual circles, Merrifield must have gained prominence in the eyes of a wider public from her essay on 'The Harmony of Colours' for the prestigious *Art Journal* Great Exhibition catalogue of 1851 (figs 58, 59). Here she appeared in exalted company, alongside art critic Ralph Nicholson Wornum and four professors of geology, botany, science and mechanics. These contributors were all described in the preface as 'high and experienced authorities' – a measure of the reputation Merrifield had established through her earlier publications.⁴²

Perhaps encouraged by the fact that the decorative arts were conventionally seen as a female forte, Merrifield here takes the commercial values negatively associated with women, and turns them to her advantage, revealing how a woman of taste could advise male designers in this context. Far from being seduced by bright colour, she criticizes British manufacturers for the poor taste of their exhibition displays, which lag far behind those of other countries. She lists examples of the 'crude and unpleasant combinations' employed by British exhibitors, such as Monteith, whose cotton prints have an effect that is 'so dazzling as to be almost painful'. The carpets are 'harsh and discordant', with abrupt transitions of colour that 'shock the educated eye', while Pugin's 'gorgeous medieval court' displays 'too much unsubdued splendour; scarlet and gold meet the eye in every direction, and overpower it with their brilliancy'.⁴³ This is not the feminine taste we would

expect, of course, based on Pasquin's characterization. Once again, the female critic aligns herself with academic restraint in colour and ornament.

Merrifield points manufacturers towards high art examples, such as Charles Eastlake's *Christ Lamenting over Jerusalem* (1846, Tate Gallery), contrasting the good eye for colour among British painters with its absence among commercial producers. The study of fine art must be combined, however, with an understanding of scientific laws. Applying her usual empirical method, Merrifield sets out to demonstrate how colouring may be improved by the application of Eugène Chevreul's theories on the harmonious contrast of colours.⁴⁴ She analyses the Continental decorative arts exhibits, making notes on the colour arrangements of nearly two hundred exhibitors. She then presents her findings, bringing in considerations of light and shade, symmetry and contrast, repetition and variety – all academic principles typical of art treatises. However, she retains an awareness of the commercial context, explaining that, whereas in painting the eye should be drawn to a central focus, in this case the object is to place 'the *whole* of the goods exhibited in the most favourable point of view'. There is no apology for mixing aesthetic principles with commercial values. Merrifield's application of high art theories to the world of manufacturing reverses the eighteenth-century satirists' view that female taste debases high art by associating it with the realm of commerce. Here, by contrast, we have a woman seeking to raise the status of commerce by an infusion of high art. The increasing importance of the decorative arts and industrial design in the nineteenth century seems to have worked to defuse the traditionally negative association between women and luxury.

For Merrifield, colour is governed by fixed rules. In England colouring is too often considered 'merely as a matter of taste', she says, rather than as a science that can be studied, but 'nine times out of ten the *good eye* will be found to mean the *educated eye*'.⁴⁵ There is therefore no exclusion from the 'Republic of Taste'; it is open to all, with no distinction of class or sex, but only opportunity of education. However, Merrifield seems to attack female taste in her criticism of Berlin-wool embroidery designs at the exhibition, 'those libels on pictures', and declares it is 'lamentable to think that ladies should, with a patience and industry worthy of a better object, spend so much time upon them'. She quotes Chevreul's critical comments on tapestry in support of her criticism:

If half the time that young ladies devote to these useless labours were devoted to the acquirement of a knowledge of the principles which govern the harmony of colours,... the good effects would soon be apparent ... in better and more tasteful work applicable to domestic purposes.⁴⁶

What is interesting is how Merrifield indicates that a study of science should be encouraged among women, as it can enhance the home. Far from seducing a woman away

from her duties, such studies can improve the domestic environment and national economy. Women's knowledge of scientific principles, applied to decorative art, is therefore presented as being of direct benefit to man.

From chemistry to corsets: the art of dress

The notion that art education for women could improve commerce is further explored in Merrifield's writing on fashion. *Dress as a Fine Art* (1854) contrasts with her previous publications in being aimed at a mass market and a predominantly female readership.⁴⁷ Nevertheless, she takes another area traditionally associated with feminine frivolity and subverts the stereotype by associating it with high art and scientific principles.

Merrifield was not the first to make the connection between art and fashion. There had been a number of recent publications on the subject, and she makes explicit reference to Rigby's 1847 essay 'The Art of Dress', which discussed how fashion was depicted in paintings from Holbein to Reynolds. It is possible that this essay directly inspired Merrifield to expand on the theme.⁴⁸ Here we have the opportunity to contrast the responses of two female viewers directly with the caricatures of Pasquin and Pindar, which suggested that women's preference was for the extremes of fashion in portraiture. Their writing fails to reveal a taste for fluttering excess, ornamentation and bright colour, however. Like Rigby, Merrifield prefers the 'chaste' forms of Reynolds to the extravagant artificiality of Gainsborough.⁴⁹ Echoing art treatises, she insists that all ornament in dress should be appropriate and useful, praising Quaker costume in particular for its lack of 'frippery'.⁵⁰ Both writers prefer simple, flowing drapery, though Merrifield is the more radical of the two, recommending loose-fitting Greek costume in place of tight corseting. She contrasts the grace of Eastlake's *Haidée, a Greek Girl* (1827) with Henry William Pickersgill's *Syrian Maid* (exh. 1837), who looks 'stiff and constrained' because the painter has given her stays (figs 60, 61).⁵¹ Merrifield's aesthetic gaze may be disrupted by fashion here, as Pasquin asserted, but her judgment is firmly anchored in academic principles.

For both Rigby and Merrifield, fashions should be subtly adapted to the colouring and form of the individual, following the rules of traditional art theory, rather than the dictates of changing commercial modes. A woman's natural qualities should be enhanced through subtle colour combinations, rather than by using artificial tricks, such as cosmetics: 'No deception is to be practised, no artifice employed, beyond that which is

exercised by the painter, who ... selects colours which harmonize with each other'. As well as the language of aesthetics, Merrifield applies the theories of science to fashion. Developing the arguments of her Great Exhibition article, she discusses Chevreul's colour theories in relation to dress, employing scientific rules to reinforce aesthetic taste.⁵² Here we still have the notion of woman as a work of art, to be displayed for public consumption, but with women being encouraged to take control of the viewing process, rather than acting as commercial fashion dolls. By associating themselves with skilfully composed high art examples, rather than the 'tawdry' portraits sneered at by critics, they would attract only the admiring gaze of true connoisseurs.

A patriotic impulse is again foregrounded in Merrifield's writing, when she claims that a thorough understanding of colour and form will refine the nation's taste and, by extension, its commerce. Merrifield calls for the knowledge of the artist to be applied to fashion design: 'Is not dress an Art-manufacture as well as a cup and saucer, or a tea-board?' she asks. Her comments are backed up by examples drawn from painting and sculpture, including everything from Old Master paintings and contemporary art to satirical prints. In discussing hoop petticoats, for example, she compares the flowing draperies of Van Dyck with Hogarth's print *Taste in High Life* (1742) and fashion illustrations from *Le Moniteur de la Mode*, while gigot sleeves are so wide in the shoulders that ladies may be mistaken for 'the Farnese Hercules in petticoats'.⁵³ The range of examples assumes a high level of knowledge among her readers, and in case they are unfamiliar with the works mentioned, Merrifield gives detailed references to engravings published in the *Art Journal*.⁵⁴

Where periodical-writers consistently blamed women for the artificialities of fashion, Merrifield accuses male artists of perverting female taste. In particular, she attacks fashion illustrators, such as Horace Vernet, for distorting the natural proportions of the body and offering women 'libels on the beauty of form':

An eye accustomed to the study of nature can scarcely bear to contemplate, much less to imitate, the monsters of a depraved taste which disgrace the different publications that aspire to make known the newest fashions.

She asks male portrait-painters not to perpetuate such distortions, 'ministering to vanity and false taste' by showing waists and feet as unnaturally small.⁵⁵

To counter these unnatural influences, Merrifield declares that every young woman should be taught the principles of form as applied to the human body, by contemplating the best pictures and sculpture. In particular, she recommends the *Greek Slave*, by Hiram Powers (figs 62, 63): 'One of these casts, ... should be found on the toilette of every young

lady, who is desirous of obtaining a knowledge of the proportions and beauties of the figure.⁵⁶ This is strongly reminiscent of Flower Adams' belief in the value of plaster casts for universal art education, representing a practical application of her theory in the context of women's lives. Contesting anxieties about female viewing, Merrifield rejects the notion that women should be protected from the sight of the nude. Some people, she declares, are 'so contracted as to think that ... even the contemplation of undraped statuary' is 'contrary to the delicacy and purity of the female mind', but she says all the 'thinking part of the community' will agree that such studies should not be restricted to men. Women will not make worse wives or mothers for 'understanding the economy of the human frame', she insists.⁵⁷

Like Flower Adams, Merrifield believes that universal access to art will benefit society as a whole:

We look forward to a day when Art-education will be extended to all ranks; when a knowledge of the beautiful will be added to that of the useful; when good taste ... will dictate our fashions in dress as in other things We hope that the study of form will be more extended, that it will be universal, that it will, in fact, enter into the general scheme of education.⁵⁸

As in the Great Exhibition essay, art study and female duty are seen as perfectly compatible, if not mutually supporting. This is not a revolutionary, proto-feminist call, but one made from within the prevailing models of acceptable femininity. However, as with Flower Adams, art education has the potential to produce radical improvements in the lives of women. Art is not seen as self-indulgent dabbling for middle-class ladies, but can have a positive impact on the lives of lower-class women: 'Now, only suppose that the dress-maker had the painter's knowledge of form and harmony of lines and colours, what a revolution would take place in dress?'⁵⁹ Merrifield is at her most radical in suggesting that women should take on a professional role, lecturing at female schools of design. In such ways, she implies, the study of art by women may lead to profound social change.

Neither Rigby nor Merrifield deny women's interest in fashion, but they place it on a more intellectual footing by associating dress with aesthetic principles. Merrifield even suggests that the study of dress may lead to an interest in science:

With regard to the question of vanity and frivolity, we think that a person who will study the harmony of colours as applied to dress ... will ... have imbibed such a love for study, that the mind, instead of being debased, may be led on, step by step, to investigate the beautiful phenomena of nature, and from the study of dress, may rise to the study of natural philosophy.⁶⁰

In this way, Merrifield claims, fashion may lead to science through the intermediary of art, enlarging the mind of the female observer in the process.

Conclusion

In 1857 Merrifield was granted a civil list pension in recognition of her services to art. At this point, however, she ceased to write on the subject, instead preparing guides to Brighton and its natural history.⁶¹ For the next twenty years she transferred her focus to marine algae, even succeeding in having a species of seaweed named after her.⁶² She wrote articles for scientific journals, and assisted in arranging natural history exhibits at the British Museum. She kept up her translation skills too, learning Danish and Swedish in order to read literature in the field.

Merrifield's seamless move from art to science shows how closely they were related in the minds of middle-class women at this time. As Jameson put it, 'the one is the soul of the other. The man of profound science is a true critic in art.'⁶³ We find the same range of interests in the case of Llewelyn, who studied astronomy and carried out photographic experiments, alongside her botanical and art studies (fig. 64).⁶⁴ Such investigations were seen as appropriate ways of expanding knowledge, offering women the opportunity to be of practical use to their community. There is no evidence of any directly religious inspiration in Merrifield's case, but her writing is certainly underpinned by notions of service to the common good.⁶⁵

Contemporary reviews of Merrifield's work indicate considerable respect for her achievements, and it is evident that she became well-established in scholarly circles, both as an art-writer and within the scientific community, despite her lack of official status. In both cases she used scholarly publications and her skill in modern languages to develop a reputation from scratch. She does not appear to have had the advantageous artistic connections of many other women art-writers, so it was essentially the quality of her work that established Merrifield in the eyes of contemporaries. For this, class location was vital. As a middle-class woman, she benefited from relatively generous leisure-time, which enabled her to pursue research to a high level and so contribute knowledgeably to debates.⁶⁶ Merrifield demonstrates how women could establish their authority purely through publication in this period, despite their amateur status.

Merrifield clearly felt being a woman posed no barrier to inclusion in the 'Republic of Taste'. She consciously employed scientific principles to validate her view that art and taste were accessible to all, regardless of sex or class. Subsequently undervalued, perhaps because of her lack of professional role, Merrifield deserves to be far more centrally placed

in accounts of this period. Far from being a mere translator, she was an important contributor to the debate on painting materials, as well as moulding popular taste. Her key contribution to the development of technical art history in the early nineteenth century is just beginning to gain recognition.⁶⁷

¹ Ludmilla Jordanova, *Defining Features: Scientific and Medical Portraits 1660–2000*, London, 2000, pp. 105–15.

² Graham (Chapter 6), for example, combined an interest in art with natural history and geology. See letter to C. Koenig (9 June 1826) in which she mentions donating ‘eight species of snake and two birds’ to the British Museum, as well as referring to her ‘little collection of minerals’ (BL Add. 32441, ff. 11–12). Graham also published an account of an earthquake in Chile, in the *Transactions* of the Geological Society.

³ Charles Watkins, son of Revd William Watkins of Llanwetherine, Co. Monmouth, published numerous legal texts in the 1790s (John Hutchinson, *Catalogue of Notable Middle Templars*, London, 1902, p. 254). It may be that her father’s achievements encouraged Merrifield to try her hand as an author.

⁴ Mary Philadelphia Merrifield, *A Practical Treatise on Painting in Fresco, Oil, and Distemper, by Cennino Cennini in the Year 1437*, London, 1844.

⁵ There was considerable discussion of this topic in the *Art Union*, Oct. and Nov. 1841, coinciding with the London visit of Peter Cornelius.

⁶ Emma L. Winter, ‘German Fresco Painting and the New Houses of Parliament at Westminster, 1834–1851’, *Historical Journal*, 47 (2), 2004, pp. 291–329, esp. p. 316. Merrifield sent Sir Robert Peel a copy of her Cennini in Oct. 1844, suggesting it might be useful for current discussions (BL Peel papers, Add. 40553, f. 175).

⁷ Review of Charles Eastlake’s *Materials for a History of Oil Painting*, *Blackwood’s Magazine*, 62, 383, Sept. 1847, p. 309.

⁸ Giuseppe Tambroni, *Di Cennino Cennini trattato della pittura* (1821). Sherman and Holcomb, *Women as Interpreters of the Visual Arts*, pp. 13–14.

⁹ *Practical Treatise*, p. xv.

¹⁰ Callcott, *Essays Towards the History of Painting*, p. 262. Christopher Lloyd, ‘Lady Callcott’s Honeymoon, 1827–8’, in Carol Richardson and Graham Smith (eds), *Britannia, Italia, Germania*, Edinburgh, 2001, pp. 54–5.

¹¹ *Practical Treatise*, pp. vi, xi, xvii.

¹² *Practical Treatise*, pp. viii, ix. Elizabeth Prettejohn, *The Art of the Pre-Raphaelites*, London and Princeton, 2000, pp. 140–2, 148–9.

¹³ Algernon Graves, *A Dictionary of Artists* (1884), third edn, Bath, 1901. The lithographic plates of the *Practical Treatise*, ‘drawn on stone by the Translator’, were praised by reviewers.

¹⁴ Mary Philadelphia Merrifield, *Practical Directions for Portrait Painting in Water-colours*, London, 1851.

¹⁵ *Practical Directions*, pp. 60–1, 59–60, 33. Raymond Lister, *Samuel Palmer: A Biography*, London, 1974, p. 206.

¹⁶ *QR*, 75, 150, Dec. 1844–March 1845, p. 79.

¹⁷ *Blackwood’s*, 57, 356, June 1845, pp. 718.

¹⁸ *QR*, 75, Dec. 1844–March 1845, pp. 77–9.

¹⁹ *Art Union*, 6, 74, 1 Nov. 1844, p. 342.

²⁰ *Athenaeum*, 907, 15 March 1844, pp. 273–5.

²¹ Mary Philadelphia Merrifield, *The Art of Fresco Painting, As practised by the old Italian and Spanish masters*, London, 1846; repr. Dover Publications, 2004.

²² *Art of Fresco*, p. vii.

²³ *Art of Fresco*, pp. iii, vi.

²⁴ *Art of Fresco*, pp. vii, lvi, xii, xv, xvii–xviii.

²⁵ *Art of Fresco*, pp. xxv–xxix.

²⁶ *Art of Fresco*, pp. liv–lv.

²⁷ This was also true of Mary Gartside who had published *An Essay on Light and Shade, on Colours, and on Composition in General*, London, 1805. Though her manual is aimed at young ladies, Gartside adopts a scientific approach to rules of colouring and perspective and discusses recent theories (pp. 1–5).

²⁸ BL Peel papers, Add. 40597, f. 192, 9 Oct. 1846. Robert Hendrie published *An Essay upon Various Arts* (1847), translated from a treatise by Theophilus.

²⁹ *Blackwood's*, 62, 385, Nov. 1847, p. 573.

³⁰ *Blackwood's*, 64, 394, Aug. 1848, p. 157.

³¹ Mary Philadelphia Merrifield, *Original Treatises ... on the Arts of Painting in Oil, Miniature, Mosaic and on Glass*, 2 vols, London, 1849; repr. Dover Publications, 1999, as *Medieval and Renaissance Treatises on the Arts of Painting*.

³² BL Peel papers, Add. 40600, ff. 434–5.

³³ *Original Treatises*, pp. vii–ix. David Robertson suggests Eastlake was equally indebted to Merrifield's work on early treatises, *Sir Charles Eastlake and the Victorian Art World*, Princeton NJ, 1978, pp. 70–1.

³⁴ *Practical Treatise*, p. xxi. Jilleen Nadolny, 'A problem of methodology: Merrifield, Eastlake and the use of oil-based media by medieval English painters', *Theory and History of Conservation-Restoration*, 2005, II, pp. 1028–33.

³⁵ *Original Treatises*, p. v.

³⁶ Charles Watkins, *A Treatise on Copyholds*, ed. R. S. Vidal, J. and W. T. Clarke, third revised edn, 1826, London, p. ix. Preface reprinted from first edition, 1797.

³⁷ *Original Treatises*, pp. cxx–cxxi. See also p. cxxx.

³⁸ *Original Treatises*, p. cccii.

³⁹ *Original Treatises*, pp. cccx–cccxi.

⁴⁰ *Art Journal*, 11, Jan. 1849, pp. 31–2.

⁴¹ *Blackwood's*, 65, 402, April 1849, p. 452.

⁴² 'The Harmony of Colours as exemplified in the Exhibition', *Crystal Palace Exhibition Illustrated Catalogue*, London, 1851, pp. I–VIII. Preface, p. v.

⁴³ 'Harmony of Colours', p. VIII.

⁴⁴ Michel Eugène Chevreul, *De la loi du contraste simultané des couleurs*, Paris, 1839 (transl. Charles Martel as *The Principles of Harmony and Contrast of Colours*, London, 1854).

⁴⁵ 'Harmony of Colours', p. I.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. VI–VII.

⁴⁷ Mary Philadelphia Merrifield, *Dress as a Fine Art*, London, 1854. Published as part of a 'Railway Reading Series', it reprinted articles written for the *Art Journal* and *Sharpe's London Journal*.

⁴⁸ First published *QR*, 79, March 1847, pp. 372–99, repr. in [Elizabeth Rigby] *Music, and the Art of Dress*, London, 1852, pp. 95–110. Merrifield assumes the essay is written by 'Mr. Murray', as Rigby poses in the text as a male writer.

⁴⁹ *Dress as a Fine Art*, pp. 78–80. [Rigby] *Music, and the Art of Dress*, pp. 99–102, 104–6.

⁵⁰ *Dress as a Fine Art*, pp. 79–81.

⁵¹ Merrifield even recommended Bloomer costume. *Dress as a Fine Art*, pp. 81–4.

⁵² *Dress as a Fine Art*, pp. 2, 132–5.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, pp. 96–7, 51–2, 62–4.

⁵⁴ As in the case of Landon's poetry, Merrifield's art-writing therefore promoted the commercial interests of the *Art Journal*, in which these essays were first published.

⁵⁵ *Dress as a Fine Art*, pp. 102–4, 66, 105. Rigby, too, rejects the 'unbecoming absurdities which fill the fashion books and encumber our walls', in *Music, and the Art of Dress*, pp. 79, 111.

⁵⁶ *Dress as a Fine Art*, pp. 23–4. This statue had been displayed at the Crystal Palace in 1851.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 22–3.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 95–6. This belief in the democratization of art led to her *Handbook of Light and Shade* (1855), for George Rowney, which refers to the number of people wanting to learn drawing, but unable to afford private tuition (p. 5).

⁵⁹ *Dress as a Fine Art*, pp. 96–8.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 173.

⁶¹ Mary Philadelphia Merrifield, *A Sketch of the Natural History of Brighton and Its Vicinity*, London and Brighton, 1860.

⁶² *Rytiphlaea merrifieldiae* J. Agardh, Western Australia. The DNB records her as an algologist. Nevertheless, the 1881 census records her occupation as 'Author of Works on Art'.

⁶³ [Anna Jameson] 'Sculpture in England', *Monthly Chronicle*, 3, 1839, p. 529.

⁶⁴ Thereza married Nevil Storey Maskelyne, grandson of the Astronomer Royal. Rigby, too, was fascinated by photography, and foresaw how useful it could be to art historians, believing that science could prove an 'invaluable ally to the connoisseur'. 'Photography', *QR*, 101, April 1857, pp. 442–68. 'Giovanni Morelli', *QR*, 173, July 1891, p. 248.

⁶⁵ Though Merrifield's writing is not overtly religious, her Anglican loyalties are clear from her review of Jameson's *Legends of the Madonna*, *Edinburgh Review*, 97, 197, Jan. 1853, pp. 230–9.

⁶⁶ Merrifield's comfortable financial situation is revealed by her addresses in Brighton: the Grand Parade and Devonshire Place. Her husband is listed under 'Gentry' in Pigot & Co.'s *Directory for Sussex*, 1840.

⁶⁷ David Bomford, 'Conceptions of Technical Art History', keynote address to 'Art of the Matter: Doing Technical Art History' conference, 26–7 Oct. 2007, Smith College, MA.

Chapter 6

Maria Graham and promotion of the Primitives

The next three chapters will consider the rise of the female connoisseur as a publishing phenomenon. Maria Graham, Anna Jameson and Elizabeth Rigby stand out in the mid-nineteenth century for their important contributions to art history and criticism. I will explore how these individuals established themselves as authoritative connoisseurs, given the persistence of negative stereotypes of female art-viewing and women's official exclusion from the art world. Without a professional role – as artists, as members of bodies such as the Royal Academy, museums and galleries, or as art critics – they were nevertheless key participants in art culture, their published writings being acknowledged as serious contributions to the evolving discipline of art history.

In examining what these women wrote, I will consider how they negotiated prevailing prejudices and how they were received. In addition, I will demonstrate how they exploited the particular advantages they enjoyed, including their opportunities for acquiring art-historical knowledge and their social networks. This chapter focuses on Maria Dundas Graham (1785–1842), later Lady Callcott, whose work had a major impact on taste in the early Victorian period.

'Finding out another sense': an education in looking

Although Graham (figs 65, 66) is today remembered primarily as a travel-writer, thanks to her books on India and South America, the significance of her writing on art has also been acknowledged.¹ Haskell described her as 'a remarkable woman who deserves a prominent place in any account of nineteenth-century taste', and characterized her response to art as 'exceptional in its range and perception'. He pointed in particular to her influence on the young Charles Eastlake, first director of the National Gallery, whom she met in Italy in 1818, and credited her with inspiring Eastlake's connoisseurship in the field of early Italian art.² Christopher Lloyd, too, has expressed great respect for Graham's achievements, praising her formidable intellect, and describing the journal kept during her 1827–8 honeymoon tour of Germany and Italy, as 'one of the most impressive records of its type and a landmark in the study of the history of taste'.³ Apart from her sympathetic response

to early Italian Renaissance artists, he stresses the originality of her comments on early Netherlandish and German painters. Graham, says Lloyd, 'was at the cutting edge'.⁴

As Maria Dundas, daughter of naval officer George Dundas and his Virginian refugee wife, she had shown an interest in art from a young age. At school in Drayton, near Oxford, from 1793, she remembered having the subjects of prints explained to her. Left very much to her own devices as far as reading was concerned, she found at nearby Milton library 'French works on the fine arts, which I devoured with the greatest eagerness'. When William Delamotte, pupil of Benjamin West, became drawing master at the school, he encouraged her interest, lending her works by Reynolds and Burke. She later wrote, 'It was almost like finding out another sense, and certainly, even to the present day, my happiness has been much increased by what I then learnt'.⁵ This enthusiasm for art was no doubt developed by visits to her uncle Sir David Dundas in Richmond, where she met Samuel Rogers and Thomas Lawrence.⁶ Mary Berry's father and Maria's father were first cousins, and through the Miss Berrys Graham became familiar with Strawberry Hill, 'till I knew its contents by heart'; significantly, she mentions in particular admiring the 'ancient portraits by Holbein'.⁷ Visits to Edinburgh, to stay with another uncle, lawyer James Dundas, also brought her into contact with fine prints and Italian drawings. Graham engaged in making art, too. A second drawing master, William Crotch, musician friend and pupil of J. B. Malchair, was credited with instilling in her 'the advantages of practical skill in the cultivation of a taste for art'.⁸ Recuperating from illness in 1806–7, Graham records 'copying prints, and making pen and ink drawings from my Scotch sketches', and the illustrations she produced for her publications reveal considerable skill (fig. 67).⁹

Graham's art education was further broadened by her stay in India 1808–11, when her father was appointed Navy Board Commissioner at Bombay. Here she experienced the 'marvellous sculptures' of Elephanta, Salsette, Carli and Mahabalipuram (fig. 68), which are described in her *Journal of a Residence in India* (1812) and *Letters on India* (1814).¹⁰ Occasionally, Graham seems to endorse stereotypes of female viewing in these texts. Making a conventional distinction between male and female taste, she apologizes for describing Indian forts, because the 'useful and exact lines of a fortress have in general few charms for a lady's eyes, however she may delight in the more showy structure of palaces and temples'.¹¹ Through her serious assessment of Indian art and architecture, however, she countered these stereotypes, preferring the 'grandeur and simplicity' of the Elephanta cave temple to the 'excessive ornament' of Ellora.¹²

Already Graham demonstrates a willingness to set works of art in the context of religious practice and historical circumstance, seeking to understand foreign belief systems

in order to explain the art. She contrasts the Hindu carvings of Elephanta with those of the Jain cave temple of Carli, explaining their differences as the expression of separate religious sects, for example. Strongly influenced by the Scottish Enlightenment, she reveals considerable tolerance towards other cultures, declaring that, although Hindu polytheism will disgust many in Europe, as 'barbarous and superstitious', it is useful to examine other religions for what they reveal of the 'common nature' of humanity.¹³ Graham recognizes the genuine devotion of Hindu worshippers, and criticizes Dutch Protestants for equating Buddha with Satan.¹⁴ She later expresses anti-slavery sentiments, and (unusually for the time) praises the negroes and 'mulattoes' of Brazil as the 'best artificers and artists', displaying a 'quickness of understanding which gives no countenance to the pretended inferiority of negro intellect'.¹⁵

There is also a surprising willingness to appreciate the aesthetic qualities of Indian art. Graham praises the 'delicacy of handling' of Indian miniature painting, for example, and the 'considerable spirit' of their sculpture:

though their forms wanted that exquisite grace which even now enraptures us, when we behold the wonders of the Grecian chissel [sic], I have seen some which are not without elegance, particularly a dancing figure at the entrance to the cave of Carli, which possesses considerable ease and gracefulness¹⁶

She demonstrates in particular an ability to make links between different cultures, relating Indian art to the ancient world in order to explain its 'oddness' to English readers. She comments on similarities between Hindu mythology and the deities of Greece, Rome and Egypt, for example, and between the ancient Hindu tombs, or *Pandoo koolis*, and 'Druidical vestiges' in Europe.¹⁷ She shows sharp-eyed attention to detail, noting a resemblance between the 'flame-like ornament' on the crown of a reclining Buddha at Bellegam in Ceylon (Sri Lanka), and Egyptian carvings illustrated by Vivant Denon.¹⁸

A review of Graham's Indian writings in the *Monthly Review* was warmly appreciative, acknowledging her 'quick intelligence and cultivated taste'. In particular the reviewer praised her ability to approach the subject with the 'respectful awe of the antiquary' rather than the 'sneer of criticism'. Her work is even positively compared with Mme de Staël's *De l'Allemagne* (1810):

she is a botanist, an antiquary, and a critic in literature and art If Madame de Staël be the more keen, witty, and lively, Mrs. Graham is the more original, judicious, and penetrating commentator¹⁹

The *Theatrical Inquisitor* also described her as 'a perfect phenomenon in the history of woman', writing with an 'air of established authority'. So 'perspicuous, fluent, and correct'

was her style, indeed, that the reviewer suspected that her 'hasty and meagre journal' had been revised by the publishers. Graham's confident style apparently did not match the 'vivacious ... *curiosa felicitas* of expression' associated with female writers.²⁰ Already her work was challenging expectations of women's writing through its breadth of knowledge and seriousness of approach.

In 1818 Graham spent a year in Rome, where she befriended Charles Eastlake, who was lodging at the same address. She later wrote to Murray: 'there are few people I love half so well in the world ... he is a brother to me'.²¹ Eastlake introduced Graham to the local community of English artists, including Turner and portrait-painter John Jackson, and her portrait, executed by Lawrence and given to Eastlake, symbolizes the close friendship between the three at this time (fig. 65). Graham's *Three Months Passed in the Mountains East of Rome* (1820), illustrated by Eastlake, records a trip undertaken by Eastlake and the Grahams. Though primarily a tale of encounters with *banditti*, references in the text hint at Graham's interest in art. The brigands are compared with 'Salvator Rosa's banditti', for example, while the bagpipe-playing shepherds at a Christmas *presepio* call to mind the Adoration of the Shepherds by 'the greatest painters'. She also reveals an awareness of Winckelmann's work.²²

Graham's attitude to early painting is still somewhat conventional at this stage; she describes early thirteenth-century paintings in the basilica of San Lorenzo fuori le Mura (Rome) as merely 'curious'. Nevertheless, there is the same willingness to investigate the social context for art that she revealed in her writing on India. There is the usual distaste for Catholicism that we find with earlier travel-writers, but Graham attempts to explain the character of Italian art through local religious practice. Not only does she show how religion may influence art, but also how art may in turn reflect back on religion, as when she suggests that portrayals of the divine spirit in human form are directly responsible for the neglect of God's word, in favour of the 'poetical machinery' of the saints; in other words, visual over-familiarity breeds contempt.²³

Alongside this growing experience of art, witnessed first-hand, Graham was developing as a formidable intellectual. At school, her literary efforts had been largely discouraged, as 'pursuits incompatible with the homely duties to be followed by the daughter of so poor a man as my father', but she had nevertheless benefited from a privileged education. Always an avid reader, she had been taught French, Italian and Latin, and developed interests in botany and geology, as we have seen. She believed firmly in equality of opportunity, and envied men their classical education. In Edinburgh, aged eighteen, she had discussed scholarly subjects with men and women alike, noting that it

was other young women who 'twitted' her with 'pedantry, affectation and philosophy'.²⁴ Her commonplace book of 1806 suggests that Graham nursed considerable intellectual ambitions and a desire for fame, which she endeavoured to reconcile with feminine virtue.²⁵ In spite of adverse pressures, she passionately defended learning in women:

There is no class of life in which literary knowledge and taste can be a disadvantage to a woman. They render her independent of what are termed the pleasures of the world; they can cheer the dullest home. A memory stored by them is a sure resource in sickness, and a comfort in poverty.²⁶

She was to put this theory into practice, employing her 'knowledge and taste' to earn a living in times of financial hardship, and to provide her with distraction during bereavement and illness. Contemporaries recognized her strengths, describing her as 'an artist both in feeling and in practice', an excellent linguist, and possessed of an 'accurate and tenacious' memory.²⁷ These qualities are amply demonstrated by her art publications.

Seizing history: Graham's *Life of Nicholas Poussin*

The first fruits of Graham's studies and travel experience, in terms of art-writing, were her *Memoirs of the Life of Nicholas Poussin* (1820).²⁸ Based partly on Luigi Lanzi, this was the first biography of the painter in English, and was a relatively innovative undertaking for the time.²⁹ Graham presents herself with typically feminine self-deprecation in this text, claiming to write purely in order to assist others, to serve a 'humble but useful office' with her 'imperfect sketch'. She describes herself simply as a 'lover of art, who has not the slightest pretension to connoisseurship, but who has ventured to say what appears, to an unprejudiced person, to be the truth'.³⁰ Typically feminine, too, is her emphasis on morality in her assessment of Poussin. She focuses on the devout, noble qualities of the man, offering him as an exemplum to demonstrate how 'noble perseverance' and industry may overcome adverse circumstances.³¹ As we have seen (Chapter 4), this moral and religious framework helped to make the work of female writers more acceptable.

Also typical for women writers is the emphasis on patriotism as a motive for writing. Graham's *Poussin* is very different in tone from Lady Morgan's *Life and Times of Salvator Rosa* (1824), being a serious study of the artist's works, rather than a poetic evocation of his life.³² Nevertheless, they share an intensely patriotic approach. Like Morgan, Graham points to the flourishing of art under free countries like England, praising the role of public patronage, rather than the oppressive 'absolute controul [sic]' of 'arbitrary authority', which deprives artists of their liberty. Graham praises the English

school as currently 'the best in Europe', though their works are not appreciated by narrow-minded collectors, who prefer 'French and German trash'. Such comments are typical of complaints by English artists, dating back to Hogarth, and no doubt reflect her links with the artistic community in Rome.³³

While denying her qualifications as a specialist connoisseur, Graham frequently draws attention to these artist contacts, as well as her experience of Italian travel, as a way of underlining her authority. For example, she describes her encounter with the landscape around Rome, 'where every hill is classical', exciting 'in the soul a kind of dreaming rapture, ... which those who have not felt it can scarcely understand'. It is such on-the-spot experience that enables her to judge the quality of painted landscapes by Domenichino and Poussin, she insists. Only her own countrymen, such as Richard Wilson and Turner, can rival these artists in depicting the poetry and 'picturesque beauty of Rome'.³⁴

As well as her experience of Italy and links with artists, Graham emphasizes the extent of her learning, which ranges from classical sources to more recent criticism. Apart from numerous references to ancient writers and artists, and to Italian, French and German texts, emphasizing her wide-ranging linguistic abilities, she refers throughout to key English writers, from Evelyn and Richardson to Walpole, and especially to Reynolds and Fuseli.³⁵ She even refers to a recent number of the *London Magazine* for some 'excellent remarks' on the French Academy in Rome, reinforcing the idea that she is thoroughly up-to-date with her knowledge of the art world. Above all she focuses on academic art theory, reserving greatest respect for Reynolds, both as a painter and writer. She often quotes Reynolds verbatim, declaring that 'Wherever Reynolds gives an opinion, his words are too precious not to be quoted.'³⁶ This underlines her loyalty to the canon, countering stereotypical constructions of female taste as anti-academic.

Graham's friendship with Eastlake and his circle had no doubt increased her respect for the intellectual abilities of artists, and she praises the work of recent artist-writers Fuseli, Opie, Northcote and Shee for their learning and good sense.³⁷ Reynolds is hailed as the epitome of the polite writer on art, for being able to think in broad, philosophical terms. His *Discourses* are 'as comprehensive as the mind of man, and will be relished by all; for they embrace and generalize every subject upon which art may exercise itself'.³⁸ While acknowledging the limitations of her own technical expertise, Graham seems to take this as the ideal model for her own work. A review in the *Ladies' Monthly Museum* (1821) certainly appreciated Graham's broad approach, praising not only the factual account of Poussin's life, but also the 'acute, lively, and just remarks made ... on the progress of the fine arts, and the degrees of encouragement afforded them in different countries'.³⁹

Despite her praise for male writers, however, Graham is not afraid to handle her sources critically, even though she claims to do so 'with great diffidence'. She expresses scorn for Walpole's 'flimsy criticisms' on *Moses Striking the Rock*, questions Fuseli's judgment on *Moses Exposed*, and even counters Reynolds' view that Poussin's figure groups are too dispersed. This is an advance in confidence over Miller, who generally dared only to criticize French critics. In spite of the modesty of her preface, Graham expresses forthright opinions that frequently differ from those of other critics. She disagrees with the generally accepted view of *The Deluge (Winter)*, the 'most praised of all Poussin's works' (fig. 69). In 'this superlative praise', she says, 'one critic has followed another, till it is become a kind of heresy to dispute its justice'. Nevertheless, she dares to commit this heresy, stating that although the conception is grand, 'the effect of the whole picture is unpleasant', because of the difficulty of the subject: 'Some subjects cannot be painted. Not even Michael Angelo could express, – "And God said, let there be light".' Armed with her considerable background knowledge, Graham therefore presents herself as a confident connoisseur, criticizing individual works and making broad comparisons between the work of Poussin and other artists, such as Claude Lorraine, Raphael and Michelangelo. She offers scholarly detail, too, providing a catalogue of Poussin's principal paintings, with information on provenance, subject-matter and stylistic sources.⁴⁰

In all this, there is little to suggest an essentially feminine approach to art, and Graham makes no overt reference to her sex. She reveals some concern for the limits of decorum, expressing distaste, for example, for Poussin's *Murder of the Innocents*, a subject she considers 'almost too horrible to be treated'.⁴¹ In doing so, however, she simply stresses her role as a viewer of taste, who is able to distinguish between acceptable and unwarranted violence. Nudity in history painting provokes little adverse comment, though she does describe the *Triumph of Flora* as one of Poussin's least agreeable pictures, because there is 'insufficient propriety' in one of the figures. Such judgments are not unique to women writers of this period, however, nor are they presented by Graham as the product of a particularly feminine sensibility. Graham strongly contests the traditional association of female viewers with imitative art. In connection with the tale of Zeuxis and the painted grapes, she notes:

It is scarcely necessary to point out the fallacy of this test of painting, as applied to the higher branches of art. At that rate, the Newfoundland dog who attempted to leap into the sea in the Panorama, would furnish an argument for setting Mr. Barker above Raffaele, and his beautiful deceptive landscapes above the Stanze of the Vatican or the cartoons.⁴²

Far from marvelling at mimetic skill, then, like the 'wondering misses', with their taste for Cosmoramas, she underlines her support for the ideal in high art.

Graham's favouring of the Venetian colourists over the more sober Roman school could be seen to indicate a characteristically 'feminine' taste. She criticizes Poussin for his 'defective colouring' and neglect of chiaroscuro, advising English artists that the national taste is for a 'more splendid style'; Rubens has more admirers in England than Poussin, she notes. Her views more probably reflect Eastlake's influence, however, and the growing fascination with Titian in England at this time. In any case, Graham's comments on colour remain firmly within an academic framework, as she insists that this aspect of Poussin's work is of only secondary importance in the portrayal of history. Indeed, by her very choice of Poussin, Graham combats conventional views of female taste. Above all, she stresses his achievements as a history painter, a genre deemed unappealing to women. For Graham, Poussin is the ultimate story-teller, and telling the story is of vital importance to her in an image. This theme recurs again and again in her writings, reflecting Alberti's focus on the *istoria*. In 'pure history', she says, 'the persons are there to tell their story, and to do nothing else'; Poussin has 'succeeded beyond any other painter in doing this'.⁴³

Graham emphasizes that Poussin's merits are those of the mind (correctness, learning and expression), rather than the more superficial qualities of colour and ornament. His rational character amply compensates, in her view, for the lack of more sensual aspects. The eye may not always be satisfied, she says, but Poussin never fails to appeal through his dignity and pathos. Most of Poussin's pictures required of the artist not only 'taste and understanding, but learning, ... particularly a thorough acquaintance with history, poetry, and antiquity'. By implication, they require these qualities in the viewer also. It is interesting that a woman should stress the value of such intellectual qualities and be drawn to Poussin 'in spite' of them, given the association of female taste with very different values. In characterizing Poussin's particular merits as being of a higher order, Graham emphasizes that she is one of the select few who can appreciate them. His defects of colouring are such that 'everyone may detect, and about which the least knowing in art will talk the most', while his merits are 'not so readily acknowledged', because they are more rarely attained.⁴⁴ As the 'least knowing' may be of either sex, so may true connoisseurs of a more refined and discriminating taste, she seems implicitly to suggest.

The 'deep, quiet feeling of Giotto'

Following the death of her first husband during a sea voyage in 1822, Graham spent several years in Chile and Brazil, publishing travel books in order to support herself

financially. She returned to England in May 1826, and worked as reader and translator for John Murray. It is likely that a mutual interest in art drew her and the painter Augustus Wall Callcott together, and they married in February 1827.⁴⁵ Graham's next publication on art, *Description of the Chapel of the Annunziata dell'Arena*, was the product of the Callcotts' 1827–8 honeymoon tour of the Continent.⁴⁶ It was an openly collaborative venture – the text by 'Mrs. Callcott', with line illustrations by her husband – and, though not published until 1835, it was based on notes 'made on the spot' in Padua, in November 1827. The importance of the Callcotts' honeymoon tour has been stressed by both Haskell and Lloyd for the links they forged with European connoisseurs, collectors and gallery directors, such as the Boisserée brothers and Carlo Lasinio. Lloyd emphasizes the novelty of Graham's perceptive response to early Italian Renaissance art in particular: 'Nobody wrote about fifteenth-century frescoes in this way during the 1820s'.⁴⁷ The historical importance of early artists had been acknowledged, writes Lloyd, but their aesthetic qualities had not been fully appreciated.

Artists had in fact shown considerable interest in early Italian art for some time. As Haskell points out, Reynolds, Flaxman, Romney and Barry had all expressed admiration for the achievements of individual artists, including Cimabue, Giotto and Masaccio.⁴⁸ Graham herself was certainly aware of Flaxman's views; in the Arena Chapel book, she praises the 'very peculiar expression and grace' of the early painters, 'qualities which Flaxman had long ago perceived and acknowledged in the works of Giotto and his school in Italy'.⁴⁹ Given her respect for Reynolds, she would certainly have been familiar with his positive comments on Masaccio in the *Discourses*.⁵⁰ More recently, the collector William Young Ottley, who had been interested in early Italian art since the 1790s, had published his *Italian Schools of Design* (1808–23).⁵¹ Although many collectors at this time saw early works as mere curiosities, Ottley stressed their aesthetic as well as their historical value.⁵² The fact that Graham later described Ottley as her 'lamented friend' implies that they could have discussed such ideas.⁵³ Ottley also emphasized the importance of the spectator in appreciating these works correctly; the 'common observer' sees and condemns the defects of the early masters and looks no further, he says, while the 'better instructed' person will appreciate their 'earnest desire' to attain correctness of imitation.⁵⁴ In writing on these early masters, then, Graham was evidently presenting herself as rather more sophisticated than the 'common observer'.

Among artists, there was a flurry of interest in early Renaissance masters, and in particular the Arena Chapel frescoes, in 1825–6, just before the Callcotts' marriage. Thomas Phillips, William Hilton and Dawson Turner were 'enchanted' by the Arena

Chapel frescoes in autumn 1825, and Dawson Turner's purchase of ten paintings from Lasinio, including works by Cimabue, Orcagna, Gozzoli and (purportedly) Giotto, caused something of a sensation on his return to England.⁵⁵ Both Dawson Turner and Phillips were personally known to the Callcotts and exchanged letters with them.⁵⁶ The Callcotts' work may also have been prompted by David Wilkie's call, in November 1826, for the Academy to commission drawings of the frescoes, in view of their deteriorating condition.⁵⁷

Appreciation of early Italian art therefore seems to have been current among artists by this date, if not among the general population, influencing Graham's response to the Arena Chapel, perhaps.⁵⁸ Nevertheless, the originality of the *Description of the Chapel of the Annunziata*, even by 1835, is not in doubt.⁵⁹ Not everyone was enthusiastic about early art in this period. Hazlitt, for example, had described the Giotto frescoes in 1826 as 'the attempts of a deformed person at grace', while Richard Duppa had suggested that 'to class and systematize the debility of the middle ages is an attempt to give manly proportions to an homunculus'.⁶⁰ Graham's comments, first recorded in 1827, were highly unusual for the time. While criticizing Giotto's portrayal of demons and Hell, as evidence of medieval superstition, she presented herself as a proper Protestant viewer by reproducing the scriptural texts on which the images were based and praising the works for telling their story 'purely and intelligibly'.⁶¹ Admiring the frescoes for their 'tender and modest grace', she stressed their sincere expression of religious feeling, extolling Giotto's 'truth', 'dignity' and 'deep, quiet feeling' (figs 70, 71). Graham also pointed to less well-known works, including frescoes by Mantegna and Guariento in the Ermitani dell'Arena, as well as sculptures by Donatello. In the basilica of St Anthony, surrounded by 'prodigious riches' of early art, she was 'particularly struck' by the frescoes of Altichiero (fig. 72): 'Nothing can be finer than the groups – nothing more true than the expression.' She notes especially a weeping woman 'full of nature, and remarkable for the grandeur and gracefulness of her drapery'.⁶² Graham's celebration of the devout spirit, purity and dignified simplicity of these works would certainly have done much to spread a taste for early Italian art beyond the artistic circles in which she moved, allowing them to be admired for their aesthetic qualities, rather than being simply a 'curious' stage in the development of art.

Even more unusual is Graham's response to early German and Netherlandish art, and the passages of her journal which deal with the subject are exceptionally perceptive.⁶³ Again, her interest may reflect discussions among artists. Through John Linnell, a close friend living nearby in Kensington Gravel Pits, the Callcotts would have been familiar with the collection of Karl Aders, which contained many early German and Netherlandish

works.⁶⁴ Aders could have recommended Johanna Schopenhauer's book on early Flemish art, which Graham mentions reading while on the tour of Germany.⁶⁵ As Lloyd and Brown have shown, Graham's journal reveals great sensitivity to the early German works being arranged at this time in Munich.⁶⁶ While examining the collection at Schleissheim, she is 'surprised as well as charmed with the expressions and grace and colour' of the Van Eycks, while Memling is described as 'a delightful painter'. Of William of Cologne and his followers, she notes that 'there is greater feeling for beauty ... than in the Upper German school'. The Virgins and saints of the Cologne school have a

purity and holiness about them. They are mannered, but they have not the stiff hardness of the Byzantines – the forms are less meager, their colour more agreeable and though as yet far from perfect imitations of nature, they approach it.⁶⁷

Graham was conscious of the originality of such thinking. Of the Brabantine Gothic works in Ludwig I's collection, she wrote to Murray in 1827, 'when they are placed, as intended, in a fine building and in proper lights, I half suspect a revolution in Art'.⁶⁸ This extensive first-hand experience of Northern masterpieces (with connoisseurs the Boisserée brothers, Johann Baptist Bertram and Georg von Dillis on hand to fill in the background) undoubtedly developed Graham's critical abilities, leading her to make aesthetic judgments with increased confidence.

Modest ambition: *Essays Towards the History of Painting*

Graham's experience of witnessing art abroad, across a range of cultures, and her contacts with artists and connoisseurs in England, Germany and Italy, together with her considerable research, find expression in *Essays Towards the History of Painting* (1836), an ambitious study that brings together many of the threads of her earlier writing. As *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine* put it, Graham 'brought a world of *reading and learning* in Art to the illustration of her subject'.⁶⁹

Mitchell has suggested that these essays may have been written in collaboration with her husband, and Lloyd also implies a joint project, planned on honeymoon, with ultimate publication in mind.⁷⁰ Callcott's interest in early artists must certainly have influenced his wife's thinking, and his artist contacts no doubt facilitated the crucial meetings with connoisseurs in Germany and Italy.⁷¹ However, Graham would surely have been the prime mover behind such a project. As a much-published writer, she was eminently capable of planning books on her own, and her interest in art pre-dates her

marriage to Callcott by a long way, as we have seen. It was she who was the writer, he the artist, and the Arena Chapel book and *Essays Towards* name her on the title page, not him.⁷² Clues in the text also point to Graham's independent authorship. The dedication of the work suggests that, far from being a long-term project, the *Essays* were undertaken at the suggestion of her physician and brother-in-law Dr Warren, to alleviate the 'wearisomeness of an increasing and incurable disorder' – that is, tuberculosis. She also stresses that the work would have benefited from being written by an artist, rather than a mere lover of art, like herself, suggesting that Callcott was not directly involved.⁷³

Graham's faith in artists as writers on art was undoubtedly influenced by her status as wife to Callcott, although similar thoughts had been expressed in her work on Poussin. This appears to undermine her own claims to authority, but at the same time she defends the role of the amateur, stating that, 'If mere lovers of art will ... devote their thoughts and pens to her enchanting service, ... they may do an acceptable office, even to painters themselves, by collecting what is, or has been known of her progress'. She rejects more specialist works, which are 'written too dully to interest, or so much in the spirit of controversy as to render them disagreeable', concluding that such history 'can never become popular'. In typically self-deprecating fashion, she states that she does not wish to contest the ground with those more qualified than herself:

There remains ... open, an unpretending path, yet untrodden, by which those who love art may be led sufficiently near her temple to enjoy her beauties, ... without encroaching on the province of her professed servants, or engaging in combat with her false or mistaken friends.... Tis this path that I would pursue, and take along with me those of my sex and country who love the good and the beautiful, and who likewise love to look up through them, ... to the Author of all beauty.⁷⁴

While justifying the value of her opinions, then, she simultaneously maintains the boundaries of modest femininity by underlining both her limited pretensions and religious inspiration. She confirms the importance of the female connoisseur in communicating knowledge of art to a broader audience, and especially, though not exclusively, to women.

Connections between cultures

In contrast to the self-effacing tone of the introduction, the *Essays* themselves are highly ambitious in their range of reference. Confident and challenging, they offer fresh insights that result directly from Graham's experience of travel. The work begins with an extraordinary account of the history of world art, ranging from Chinese and Japanese to Indian and Egyptian, and throughout Graham makes broad connections between cultures, pointing to trade links as possible explanations for artistic influence.⁷⁵

As in the case of her earlier work on Indian art and on Poussin, she often seeks to explain foreign and ancient art traditions in terms of the religious and social context. In discussing the disappointing quality (as she sees it) of Chinese art, for example, she speculates that the Buddhist religion may explain the difficulty, as the 'insipid Goores do not, like the gods of the Hindoo or Greek mythologies, present subjects for fancy to play with'. She suggests the blame may also lie with their being a commercial people, cultivating painting merely in order to decorate porcelain and lacquerware. While recognizing their manual dexterity, she is baffled by their failure to develop a sense of ideal beauty.⁷⁶ It is interesting that she is relatively intolerant of the Chinese, of whom she knew nothing first-hand, and more sympathetic in interpreting Indian art, thanks to her extensive travels on the sub-continent.⁷⁷

Graham's experience of different cultures is put to good use in explaining the art of the Western classical tradition as well. Describing the Roman custom of rouging statues of Jupiter with vermilion, for example, she notes 'I have seen the poor gods of the Hindoos of low caste thus rouged', and suggests there is probably 'some mystical sacredness attached to it'. She also relates Pantaenus' use of plaster mixed with milk, at the Temple of Minerva in Elis, to the marble-like stucco, or *chunam*-work, of India, and the use of *jaggree*, a mixture including coarse sugar, water and milk, in Madras.⁷⁸

The surprising connections Graham makes, across cultures and historical periods, are highly individual. In discussing recent theories of the colouring of Greek sculpture, for example, she suggests that the unbroken colours of the Parthenon would have produced a 'dazzling effect at a distance, much like that of an Eastern bazaar' or of Dürer's altarpieces. Graham's visual comparisons help to bring images of the past to life in the imagination of the reader. The garland-maker of Pausias reminds her of Titian's *Flora* in the Uffizi, for instance, while the *parerga* borders around ancient Greek pictures are compared with Burgundian illuminated missals.⁷⁹ Such creative comparisons characterize her writing, in conscious contrast, perhaps, to those works she described in the introduction as 'written too dully to interest'.

Graham's eye-witness information is often backed up by 'experts', and she makes much of her personal contacts to boost her authority. She describes showing her drawings of Mahabalipuram to 'Mr Flaxman', who was 'struck with the freedom and expression of several of the figures', and mentions discussions with antiquarians Giovanni Belzoni and 'my enthusiastic friend [August] Kestner'. In the context of antique pigments, she claims to speak with greater confidence on the subject because of a conversation with Sir Humphrey Davy, while her guide to the Vatican is Canova.⁸⁰ This again underlines the

importance of social networks for women writers, and reveals how such contacts provided them with valuable insights and information. Most of the women who wrote on art were also highly successful 'networkers', mixing regularly with important figures in the art world. As keen travellers, they would have 'collected' a broad spectrum of friends, who could keep them up-to-date with developments in fields to which they were allowed only marginal access. Dinner parties with the Murrays, for example, might supply material otherwise only gained from attendance at all-male Academy dinners or societies. Women exploited these contacts to the full, in order to locate themselves at the centre of an art world from which they were officially excluded.

Fascination with technique

One innovative aspect of the *Essays* was Graham's exploration of historical materials and techniques, anticipating Merrifield's investigations of the 1840s (Chapter 5).⁸¹ It is clear from Graham's journals that she looked closely at pictures for evidence of how they were created, and that she used her knowledge of modern painting techniques (no doubt reinforced by her husband) to support her interpretation of historical texts on the subject. In describing the use of the *cestum*, or metal point, for a first drawing (as described in Cennini), she gives a detailed description of an unfinished picture by Giovanni Bellini, in Florence, noting the indented hatching covered with a brown transparent wash. In this way she combined written sources with the evidence of her own eyes, supported by conversations with others. She thanks John Gardner Wilkinson, for example, for being a helpful informant, comparing his descriptions of paintings in the Catacombs with the writings of Cennini, and with 'what I saw in the Campo Santo at Pisa'.⁸²

Lloyd points to Graham's interest in early fresco technique on her visits to Padua and Pisa in 1826–7, and says she travelled with a copy of Cennini's treatise.⁸³ In the Ermitani dell'Arena, she complained that because the frescoes in the choir had been restored, no information could be gleaned from them, and she studied the fresco techniques of the Nazarenes for clues they might lend to Renaissance practice.⁸⁴ Graham also commented on the oil-painting methods employed by early German artists in the collection at Schleissheim.⁸⁵ She clearly read widely on the subject, referring to the researches of Baron Bartholdy and George Field, and to Rudolf Raspe's 'ingenious essay' on oil-painting. Graham is never afraid to criticize other authorities, however, questioning the accuracy of David Durand's translations of Pliny, and pointing out glaring contradictions in Vasari, 'whose carelessness is so notorious that nobody now thinks of depending on anything he says, beyond what it is certain he could have seen'. In particular, she contests

the tradition that the ancients used only four pigments, an absurd 'article of faith', inherited from Pliny's writing on Apelles, blindly handed down by critics in Italy, France and England, but patently untrue.⁸⁶

There is again evidence of her imaginative linking of historical periods and contemporary society, as when she compares the plaster-covered wooden panels used for Egyptian mummy cases with old-fashioned dolls made of wood and plaster, 'which children used to call *alabaster*', and saints in Roman Catholic churches. To support the contested theory that linen was used as a support for painting in classical times, in addition to quoting Pliny and Horace, she points to the painted cloths hung up to advertise itinerant circuses, inviting spectators to see 'Pidcock's elephants and tigers'.⁸⁷ Graham does not just use intellectual authorities, therefore, but appeals to the general reader's experience. She strongly defends this anti-elitist approach by saying that a writer should not be afraid to point out similarities between antiquity and modern times. Attempting to disperse the 'kind of enchanted mist' that classical study spreads over every subject, she points out that ancient and modern materials are bound to be similar: 'This homely way of considering such matters is not, I know, agreeable to the moderately learned, who think much of small acquirements; but to real scholars and philosophers, truth is at all times ... acceptable.'⁸⁸ While attacking intellectual snobbery, she therefore underscores that she is herself a 'real scholar and philosopher'. This no-nonsense style of writing, which defends the role of the female amateur, anticipates Merrifield's similarly lively approach in the 1840s, continuing the eighteenth-century tradition of the female viewer as practical and clear-sighted.

Politely challenging the canon

In some ways, Graham could be thoroughly traditional, endorsing the academic line. The final summing up of the *Essays* reiterates the conventional concept of the progress of painting, for example: 'Apelles surpassed Pamphilus, Giotto excelled Cimabue, Raffaello and Michael Angelo left their masters Perugino and Ghirlandaio far behind.' However, many of the theories she puts forward consciously break with tradition. In Essay II, 'Of art in ancient Italy', for example, she knowingly departs from convention by beginning with the Etruscans rather than the Greeks, followed by the Romans. She is aware that this order is unusual, but chronologically, she insists, it is more correct. She credits the 'pains-taking critics of Germany', as well as Giuseppe Micali, with teaching historians to 'trample on ancient prejudice' and to see Italy independently of Rome. In order to support her new arrangement, she stresses the extent of her learning, emphasizing that she has carefully compared various classical authorities (Pliny, Quintilian, Tacitus, Pausanias and Lucian)

before reaching her conclusions.⁸⁹ Her knowledge of languages, ancient and modern, therefore allows her to act as a bridge between recent Continental scholarship and English readers.

Nor did Graham simply report recent theories second-hand. Despite her critical comments in the introduction on works written in a 'spirit of controversy', she was quite happy to engage 'in combat' herself. For example, Graham contests academic tradition by attacking the Unities, upheld by French theorists and English art-writers such as Shaftesbury. In defending the portrayal of multiple incidents within a single painting, she acknowledges the heresy of her position: 'Here I know that in the very outset I shall shock all the sticklers for the unities'. She points to the Sistine Chapel ceiling in support of her argument, as 'the most glorious justification of the breach of the cold rules of the critics', which shows that 'in some cases to abide by the unities would destroy the spirit and sublimity of the work'. Before Michelangelo, she explains, painters often disregarded the Unities, referring to Hans Memling's 'Three Kings' altarpiece (*The Advent and Triumph of Christ*) as an example of how numerous scenes from the life of Christ could be depicted coherently within a single landscape (fig. 73).⁹⁰ She uses this work to explain how Polygnotus' *Descent of Ulysses*, described by Pausanias, could have functioned compositionally, disagreeing with Fuseli's reservations about the work. For Graham, as we have seen, the narrative is of central importance, even if this means repeating figures within the same image, in the medieval manner. She is aware that this opposes French academic tradition, but as an English writer, she feels able to allow herself greater freedom – like Shakespeare, who 'gloriously breaks the laws of the drama'.⁹¹ Once again, patriotism and notions of Englishness bolster female authority here.

Graham's boldest challenge to academic theory comes in her discussion of the hierarchy of genres. She argues that the 'ordinary classification' of pictures is wholly inadequate, whether applied to ancient or modern artists, and proposes a more sophisticated system, which will allow for the 'most incongruous variety' conventionally subsumed under each genre.⁹² The landscape class is especially broad, she complains: 'Surely it is strange to put the Enchanted Castle of Claude, and the Deluge of Poussin, together with views on Hounslow Heath, and scenes in the Waterloo tea gardens!' In typically forthright manner, she tackles the category of history painting, in which didactic, epic, historical and dramatic subjects are 'clumsily thrown together' under a single heading; the classification is 'as absurd and inconvenient, as it would be in poetry to place under the same head, Homer's Iliad and the ballad of Colin and Lucy, because both tell a story'. The best writers on art, she says, such as Fuseli and Reynolds, have subdivided

history into epic, historical and dramatic works, but they do not go far enough. She suggests new terms and categories, redefining Reynolds' term 'Fancy pictures', for example.⁹³

Graham also argues against the inferior position usually assigned to certain genres. In the case of animal-painting, for example, she claims that 'the inferiority will scarcely be allowed by those who know the works of Rubens and Snyders', for Snyders 'raised his animals to the dignity of history'. In support of this view, she says the ancients did not consider paintings of animals as 'mean', nor did they despise images of fruit and flowers.⁹⁴ Calling on ancient precedent, she thus upholds the importance of the lesser genres – often practised by women artists, of course – in the face of academic tradition.

It is in her choice of examples for each genre that Graham reveals her unusual catholicity of taste, based primarily on her experience of travel. Creatively, she draws together examples from wholly different traditions, whether from the written descriptions of the ancients, Italian painting from the Trecento onwards, or from German, Dutch and Flemish art.⁹⁵ The breadth of her references, to works in galleries across Europe, is extraordinary. Throughout, the emphasis is on Graham's personal judgment, as a writer of taste and experience. She speaks in the first person as a confident connoisseur, selecting works she has seen first-hand. Of all the many paintings mentioned, she says 'with the exception of antique works, there are not six of which I have not myself seen the originals'. Graham is fully aware that her choices may be controversial. For the subsection of histories related through a series of pictures, she suggests examples by Cimabue and Giotto. As some readers may think these 'too antiquated to form authorities for the practice', however, she recommends them to look instead at works by Raphael, Luini and Domenichino. In her discussion of the Unities, after mentioning Memling, she offers a work by Andrea del Sarto as an example for 'such as admire only Italian art of the best time'.⁹⁶ There is an awareness that not every reader will share her somewhat 'advanced' taste for early art.

In spite of her accumulated knowledge and experience as an art-viewer, however, Graham ultimately backs away from imposing a new critical framework for the ordering of genres:

I have not the presumption to propose an absolute rule. That must be for some one who, with the authority of a critic and an artist, can command attention and reverence enough to enforce a new arrangement.⁹⁷

The best person to construct new theories, she suggests, would be a male artist or connoisseur, rather than a mere female amateur. Despite all her challenging confidence as

a critic, Graham ultimately disclaims authority, because of the need to maintain a proper feminine stance. Even her title is modestly cautious; these are *Essays Towards the History of Painting*, rather than *The History of Painting*.

A substantial assessment of the *Essays* in the *British and Foreign Review* (1836) indicates the high esteem in which Graham was held, suggesting that her diffidence was unfounded. The writer expects much from 'the pen of an authoress of so refined a taste, and so keen a perception of the ends as well as the resources of art'. His only disappointment is that she has not indulged in more 'speculative criticisms' and explored the 'more philosophical portions of her subject'. There is no sense, then, in which the reviewer thinks women should keep to a pedestrian approach when discussing art, and he is far from resenting her intervention in the 'Republic of Taste'.⁹⁸ The fact that the work is reviewed in tandem with Passavant's *Tour of a German Artist in England* (1836), translated by Rigby (Chapter 8), emphasizes the extent to which women were participating in the field of art-writing by this date.

Graham could well have gone on to tackle more 'speculative' questions in her *Continuation of Essays Towards the History of Painting* (1838), but was prevented from completing this ambitious study by illness. In a letter to bibliophile Thomas Grenville, she states it was 'not faint heart but feeble body' that frustrated her plans.⁹⁹ Much of Graham's potentially innovative work on early Italian painters therefore remains in note form only.¹⁰⁰ The continuation volume includes only one essay, on the fine arts of the second to thirteenth centuries.¹⁰¹ It traces the development of early Christian art, including ivory diptychs and book-covers, altarpieces and illuminated manuscripts, noting how pagan deities were absorbed into Christian imagery.¹⁰² Graham points to much-neglected works in the Christian antiquities gallery of the Vatican, such as a miniature portrait of the second century, found in the Catacombs, with 'a look of truth and individuality about it'. As ever, she stresses that though this may be 'rude art', it has 'the power of telling a story'.¹⁰³ In tracing the migration of religious imagery from ancient cultures to early Christian art, Graham's planned study foreshadows the work of Jameson and Twining, and once again stresses the interest women writers took in religious art.

Conclusion

As early as 1901, a writer pointed out the irony of Graham's being remembered, 'even by the elect', as the author of *Little Arthur's History of Britain* (1835), when in reality she had

produced substantial travel books and a life of Poussin.¹⁰⁴ Graham has still not received her due in terms of art-historical recognition. Her work deserves to be far more widely known, in order to challenge the perception that women did not participate as art-writers in the early part of the nineteenth century.

Graham insisted that her account of art history was an imperfect one, and that she had simply collected what she could from other authors; it was more acceptable, after all, for women to act as compilers, rather than to develop their own theories, as we have seen.¹⁰⁵ Yet she clearly did far more than this. She was at the forefront of promoting the Italian and Northern primitives, at a time when such artists rarely received public approbation. If Graham reflected currents of thinking within the artistic community, she was certainly well in advance of more widespread public taste. Her interest in materials was important for later researches by Charles Eastlake and Merrifield, while her appreciation of the 'graver, purer, yet more impassioned faith' and simplified 'dignity of expression' of medieval Christian art anticipates the writings of Rio and Ruskin.¹⁰⁶ Her broad knowledge of world art and interest in symbolic connections between cultures foreshadows not only Jameson's study of the continuity between pagan and Christian iconography, but even the activities of Warburg.

The Callcott 'salon' in Kensington Gravel Pits, centred in the 1830s around Graham's sick-bed, was described by the Redgraves as a focus of artistic and literary life in London, and must have helped to spread such ideas within the 'intelligentsia'.¹⁰⁷ Graham's publications also acted as a link between changing tastes within the art world and a broader readership. Thanks in part to her skill in European languages, she acted as a conduit between German theorists, Italian collectors and English audiences, spreading new ideas on connoisseurship.¹⁰⁸ Independently, Graham also contributed to an understanding of the art of foreign cultures, especially of India and South America. She took an exceptional interest in contemporary German art, too, revealing sympathy with what the Nazarenes were trying to achieve, even if she reserved a sceptical distance from their works.¹⁰⁹

When questioning academic tradition, however, Graham still framed her work within a model of appropriate femininity, disavowing the right to impose new theories. What unites her with other women writers is her consistent self-construction in her prefaces as a modest amateur. She has no intention of upsetting the patriarchal order by stepping outside allotted female roles, but seeks merely to be useful to others. It is this adherence to decorum that gives Graham the right to be taken seriously. As a strategy of compliance, it is firmly in line with the injunctions of conduct literature, which constantly reminded women that, in the battle of the sexes, their greatest influence came from

submitting to male authority. If the proper role of women was not to contest authority, then it was only in denying their desire to depart from proper femininity that they were able to question women's exclusion from art appreciation. Through the scholarly and challenging nature of the main body of her works, however, Graham was able to demonstrate that the categories of 'woman' and 'connoisseur' were not mutually exclusive. In particular, she firmly scotched the notion that women were unable to comprehend history painting, and demonstrated that they could act as sympathetic interpreters of religious art, indicating that women were in fact card-carrying members of the 'Republic of Taste'.

¹ I refer to her throughout as Graham to avoid confusion with her second husband, Augustus Wall Callcott. Most of her books were published under her first married name, and one reviewer indicated that she would be better known to readers as 'Maria Graham', than as 'Lady Callcott', *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine*, 3, 31, July 1836, p. 475.

² Haskell, *Rediscoveries in Art*, pp. 47–8.

³ Christopher Lloyd, 'Lady Callcott's Honeymoon, 1827–8', in Carol Richardson and Graham Smith (eds), *Britannia, Italia, Germania*, Edinburgh, 2001, p. 48. *The Journal of Maria, Lady Callcott, 1827–8*, ed. Christopher Lloyd and David Blayney Brown, Oxford, 1981.

⁴ Lloyd, 'Lady Callcott's Honeymoon', p. 52.

⁵ Gotch, *Maria, Lady Callcott*, pp. 23–5, 43–4.

⁶ This relationship with Lawrence was maintained in later years, as we see from letters in the RA: LAW/3/163, 165, 211; LAW/4/293; LAW/5/80, 227.

⁷ Gotch, *Maria, Lady Callcott*, pp. 58, 63–4.

⁸ *Journal*, ed. Lloyd and Brown, pp. 1–2.

⁹ Gotch, *Maria, Lady Callcott*, p. 74, 87. See, for example, plates in her *Journal of a Voyage to Brazil* (1824) and *A Scripture Herbal* (1842), as well as lithographs of Italian subjects and drawings in the BM. She also experimented with oils. *Journal*, ed. Lloyd and Brown, p. 2.

¹⁰ Gotch, *Maria, Lady Callcott*, p. 142. It was on the voyage to India that she met naval lieutenant Thomas Graham, marrying him shortly after arriving in Bombay.

¹¹ Maria Graham, *Letters on India*, London and Edinburgh, 1814, p. 66.

¹² *Letters on India*, p. 60.

¹³ Maria Graham, *Journal of a Residence in India*, London and Edinburgh, 1812, pp. 53–4. She refers here and in her commonplace book of 1806 to Dugald Stewart, *Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind* (1792–1827).

¹⁴ *Journal of a Residence*, pp. 90–1.

¹⁵ Maria Graham, *Journal of a Voyage to Brazil*, London, 1824, pp. 107, 196–7.

¹⁶ *Letters on India*, pp. 54–5.

¹⁷ *Journal of a Residence*, pp. 53, 167–9. See also the comparison between Indian and Gothic ornament in *Letters on India*, pp. 56, 60.

¹⁸ *Journal of a Residence*, pp. 88–9.

¹⁹ *Monthly Review*, 77, July 1815, pp. 258–71.

²⁰ *Theatrical Inquisitor*, 2 April 1813, pp. 159–60.

²¹ Gotch, *Maria, Lady Callcott*, p. 153. Graham introduced Eastlake to Murray, 24 Feb. 1821. See also letter to Lawrence, 23 June 1820 (RA LAW/3/163).

²² Maria Graham, *Three Months Passed in the Mountains East of Rome, during the year 1819*, London, 1820, pp. 155, 158n., 125, 130n. *Presepie* were waxwork Nativity scenes.

²³ *Three Months*, pp. 226, 240–1.

²⁴ Gotch, *Maria, Lady Callcott*, pp. 83, 33, 88, 299. Maria Edgeworth's reaction to Graham (8 Dec. 1830) seems to support this; there was 'something too bold and odd about her ... nothing feminine or ladylike and all men dislike that intensely'. *Letters from England*, p. 444.

- ²⁵ For example, she quotes Corneille's *Le Cid* on 'Maudite Ambition', continuing (in French), 'And who feels this more than I? ... Ambition is the vice of noble and generous souls. Such souls wish to raise themselves above others. They pursue avidly all that may distinguish them' [my translation], commonplace book, Bodleian Library, MS.Eng.e.2428, p. 6. She also quotes La Bruyère and Tacitus in defence of ambition (opp. p. 69, p. 31).
- ²⁶ Gotch, *Maria, Lady Callcott*, p. 33.
- ²⁷ *Athenaeum*, 787, Nov. 1842, p. 1015. The obituary of A. W. Callcott describes her as the author of 'several books of great merit', *GM*, Feb. 1845, p. 209.
- ²⁸ Maria Graham, *Memoirs of the Life of Nicholas Poussin*, London, 1820.
- ²⁹ Murray had sent a copy of Richard Duppa's *Life of Raffaello Sanzio da Urbino* (1816) to Graham, possibly for her to review, which could have prompted her to attempt a biography herself. A letter from Eastlake to Lawrence (RA LAW/4/49, 15 Aug. 1822) suggests Graham should next translate Stefano Ticozzi's *Life of Titian* (1817). In the early eighteenth century a life of Van Dyck had been written by Sophia Fermor, Lady Lempster, according to George Vertue, though the manuscript appears to be lost.
- ³⁰ *Memoirs of... Poussin*, p. 153. Cf. *Journal of a Residence*, p. iv.
- ³¹ *Memoirs of... Poussin*, pp. vi–vii, 4–5, 113, 117.
- ³² Morgan's account of Rosa, which was praised by Byron, stresses his role as political rebel and poet as much as his achievements as a painter. Rosa was more closely identified with female taste than Poussin.
- ³³ *Memoirs of... Poussin*, pp. ix–xvi.
- ³⁴ *Memoirs of... Poussin*, pp. 35, 107–8.
- ³⁵ She refers to Phidias and Praxiteles, Apelles and Zeuxis, Democritus and Anaxagoras; to Vasari, Lanzi and Pietro Santi Bartoli; to Claude Nivelon and Claude Perrault; to Winckelmann and Mengs. This again shows how linguistic skills could give women a route into writing on art.
- ³⁶ *Memoirs of... Poussin*, pp. 102n., 19–21, 129–31, 139–40, 211.
- ³⁷ For Fuseli, *Memoirs of... Poussin*, pp. 29, 46, 130, 206, 210; Opie and Shee, pp. 130, 190; Northcote, pp. 28, 130. Graham also promoted artists as critics in *Essays Towards the History of Painting* (1836), provoking a reviewer in the *British and Foreign Review* to defend the role of the more 'contemplative' and 'philosophic connoisseur', July 1836, pp. 151–2.
- ³⁸ *Memoirs of... Poussin*, pp. 127–31.
- ³⁹ *Ladies' Monthly Museum*, 13, April 1821, p. 218.
- ⁴⁰ *Memoirs of... Poussin*, pp. 181, 120n., 48, 123–6, 105–6, 111–12, 139, 143–5. Graham had asked for Lawrence's help with gaining access to Poussins in private collections and the RA library. RA LAW/3/165.
- ⁴¹ *Memoirs of... Poussin*, pp. 202–4, 195–6. The *Martyrdom of St Erasmus* is also a subject 'so very disgusting, that one can hardly bear to look upon it'.
- ⁴² *Memoirs of... Poussin*, pp. 221, 157, in a note to two 'Dialogues of the Dead', by François Fénelon, which are appended to the work. The dog was traditionally said to have been fooled by Robert Barker's illusionistic panorama of *The Fleet at Spithead* (1793) into attempting to rescue men from a capsizing ship.
- ⁴³ *Memoirs of... Poussin*, pp. 151, 153, 143–7, 149.
- ⁴⁴ *Memoirs of... Poussin*, pp. 148–9.
- ⁴⁵ They had met long before this, however, as she invited Lawrence and Callcott to dinner on 2 Nov. 1820 (RA LAW/3/211).
- ⁴⁶ Maria Callcott, *Description of the Chapel of the Annunziata dell'Arena; or, Giotto's Chapel, in Padua*, London, 1835.
- ⁴⁷ Lloyd, 'Lady Callcott's Honeymoon', p. 54.
- ⁴⁸ Haskell, *Rediscoveries*, pp. 49–50.
- ⁴⁹ *Description*, p. 2. We have already seen how Flaxman's taste could have influenced Starke's praise for early artists in Pisa (p. 92).
- ⁵⁰ Reynolds, *Discourses*, XII, pp. 218–21.
- ⁵¹ In 1826 Ottley brought out his *Series of Plates Engraved After the Paintings and Sculptures of the Most Eminent Masters of the Early Florentine School*, and his own collection included works by Trecento and Quattrocento masters. See also Haskell, *Rediscoveries*, p. 47n. As early as 1808 an article in *La Belle Assemblée* contests Vasari's claim that Cimabue was the restorer of painting in

Italy, detailing the continuity of an artistic tradition in Italy throughout the Middle Ages (*LBA*, 1808, supplement to vol. IV, pp. 37–42).

⁵² Donata Levi, 'Carlo Lasinio, curator, collector and dealer', *Burlington Magazine*, 135, 1079, Feb. 1993, p. 138. Other collectors of early works included William Fox-Strangways, secretary to the Legation in Florence, who showed the Callcotts round the Uffizi.

⁵³ Maria Callcott, *Continuation of Essays Towards the History of Painting*, London, 1838, p. 29.

⁵⁴ Levi, 'Carlo Lasinio', pp. 138–9.

⁵⁵ Levi, 'Carlo Lasinio', p. 133. See also Marcia Pointon, 'The Italian Tour of William Hilton RA in 1825', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 35, 1972, pp. 344–5. Like Graham, Hilton appreciated the aesthetic aspects of Giotto's Arena Chapel frescoes (Pointon, p. 346). They were both reminded of Stothard's linear illustration style, suggesting they perhaps discussed the frescoes together? Cf. *Description*, p. 2.

⁵⁶ *Journal*, ed. Lloyd and Brown, p. 6. Levi, 'Carlo Lasinio', pp. 140–1.

⁵⁷ Haskell, *Rediscoveries*, pp. 48–50.

⁵⁸ By the time the *Description* was published in 1835, Phillips' *Lectures on the History and Principles of Painting* (1833) had recommended close study of neglected early Italian painters to RA students. See also Levi, 'Carlo Lasinio', pp. 139–40.

⁵⁹ It caused great excitement in the circle of Dawson Turner. Levi, 'Carlo Lasinio' p. 136.

⁶⁰ Hazlitt quoted in Pointon, 'Italian Tour', p. 347. Duppa quoted in Haskell, *Rediscoveries*, p. 50.

⁶¹ *Description*, pp. 2, 9, 13. See also her comments on Jakob Götzenberger's work, which reminds her of an age when 'painting had for its object to tell the story and convey the sentiment required, rather than to display the minor excellencies of the art', *Journal*, ed. Lloyd and Brown, p. 9.

⁶² *Description*, pp. 3, 5, 6, 15, 19. Graham corrects Seroux d'Agincourt's attribution of this work to Giusto of Padua.

⁶³ Lloyd, 'Lady Callcott's Honeymoon', p. 51.

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, p. 52. Haskell, *Rediscoveries*, p. 42. An autograph album compiled by Karl Aders' wife Elizabeth (Houghton Library, Harvard College, Cambridge MA, 1811–74, MS Eng 1094) includes contributions from John Flaxman, Hannah (Linnell) Palmer, Götzenberger, and Adele and Johanna Schopenhauer, suggesting close links between those interested in early art in England and Germany.

⁶⁵ Johanna Schopenhauer, *Johann van Eyck und seine Nachfolger*, Frankfurt-am-Main, 1822. *Journal*, ed. Lloyd and Brown, Notebook 2, p. 73, 21 Sept. 1827: 'I have M^{me} Schopenhauer – I wish she had given more authorities.' *Essays Towards*, p. 181n.

⁶⁶ *Journal*, ed. Lloyd and Brown, pp. 10–11.

⁶⁷ *Ibid*, Notebook 2, 21–22 Sept. 1827, pp. 71, 75–6.

⁶⁸ Gotch, *Maria, Lady Callcott*, p. 260.

⁶⁹ *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine*, 3, 31, July 1836, p. 475.

⁷⁰ Rosemary Mitchell, 'Maria Callcott', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 2004. Lloyd, 'Lady Callcott's Honeymoon', p. 52. See also Gotch, *Maria, Lady Callcott*, p. 257. Lloyd assumes from the level of detail that the journal must have been compiled with a particular project in view, but it is possible Graham was simply taking notes for her own satisfaction. Berry's journals, for example, contain a mass of detail on the artworks she saw. Callcott took his own notes separately (Courtauld Collection), and Graham frequently refers to these in her journal ('See A's notes').

⁷¹ Lloyd, 'Lady Callcott's Honeymoon', pp. 52–3. This was the first time Callcott had been abroad, so Graham's contacts were no doubt important too.

⁷² Graham did not publish anonymously, though she stressed her respectability by using her married title, 'Mrs. Graham' or 'Mrs. Callcott'.

⁷³ *Essays Towards*, pp. 1–4, 264.

⁷⁴ *Essays Towards*, pp. 3–6.

⁷⁵ For example, she says the cemeteries at Chiusi, Tarquinii and Vulscii reveal the influence of Egypt, Greece, and possibly even of Hindu art on Etruscan painting, thanks to maritime trade, *Essays Towards*, pp. 51–2.

⁷⁶ *Essays Towards*, pp. 14–18.

⁷⁷ She shows little understanding of Muslim art, which she says forms a florid contrast with the severe masses of ancient Egypt. This again rejects the association of the ornamental with female taste. *Essays Towards*, p. 37.

⁷⁸ *Essays Towards*, pp. 239–40, 220–1.

⁷⁹ *Essays Towards*, pp. 105–9, 158, 153–4n.

⁸⁰ *Essays Towards*, pp. 19–20, 23–4, 251, 80. She had met Davy in Rome in 1819, see Lloyd, 'Lady Callcott's Honeymoon', p. 50.

⁸¹ *Essays Towards*, pp. 217–66.

⁸² *Essays Towards*, pp. 224, 264.

⁸³ Lloyd, 'Lady Callcott's Honeymoon', p. 54, *Journal*, ed. Lloyd and Brown, pp. 13–14. *Essays Towards*, pp. 222–4, 241.

⁸⁴ The Callcotts had links with Nazarene artists Götzenberger and Karl Christian Vogel, and through them met Peter Cornelius and Johann Friedrich Overbeck, all of whom were looking back to early fresco works for inspiration.

⁸⁵ *Journal*, ed. Lloyd and Brown, p. 9; Notebook 2, 22 Sept. 1827, p. 73. Lloyd, 'Lady Callcott's Honeymoon', p. 52. *Description*, p. 15.

⁸⁶ *Essays Towards*, pp. 256, 246, 261, 225, 227–8, 230–6.

⁸⁷ *Essays Towards*, pp. 221, 225–9. Graham's knowledge of Mexican painted linen books, and of the cotton *cudduttum* strips of southern India, is also introduced to support this theory. See *Letters on India*, p. 68.

⁸⁸ *Essays Towards*, pp. 217–19.

⁸⁹ *Essays Towards*, pp. 269, 44–7, 48–70.

⁹⁰ *Essays Towards*, pp. 5–6, 190, 192, 117–18, 193–8.

⁹¹ *Essays Towards*, p. 113.

⁹² *Essays Towards*, pp. 169–74.

⁹³ *Essays Towards*, pp. 171n., 174, 189–90.

⁹⁴ *Essays Towards*, p. 173.

⁹⁵ See, for example, works depicting a single action, *Essays Towards*, p. 202.

⁹⁶ *Essays Towards*, pp. 174–5, 216, 199, 118.

⁹⁷ *Essays Towards*, p. 190. This clearly indicates that the ideas expressed in the *Essays* are essentially hers, rather than those of her husband, who, as an established Academician, would command 'attention and reverence enough' to enforce the theories.

⁹⁸ *British and Foreign Review*, July 1836, pp. 150–67.

⁹⁹ Letter to Rt Hon. Thomas Grenville, 27 May 1838, bound into BL copy of the *Continuation*.

¹⁰⁰ A bundle of papers entitled 'Characters of Early Italian Painters' contains drafts for biographies of Buffalmacco, Cimabue, Andrea Tafi, Gaddo Gaddi, Margaritone, Giotto (and disciples Stefano of Florence and Ugolino of Siena), Pietro and Ambrogio Lorenzetti. There are also notes on painters who worked on the Sistine Chapel (RA Callcott Papers, CA/11/1–19). My thanks to Nat Silver, University College London, for this information. These notes would probably have been used for the planned ninth essay on Italian art to the end of the fourteenth century.

¹⁰¹ This volume includes a projected plan for completion, *Continuation*, pp. 38–9. Graham intended covering the development of fresco, distemper, mosaic and the minor arts, including marquetry and needlework, from the thirteenth century; the early art of Italy, France, Germany and England, including the progress of art from Italy to the West; the development of pigments, painting vehicles and supports; an account of which ancient artworks were accessible to early Christian painters; and a sketch of art in the first half of the fifteenth century, showing the development of taste alongside the progress of civilization in Europe.

¹⁰² For example, she shows the link between depictions of St Christopher by Memling and Titian, and Lucian's description of blind Orion with the boy Cedalion on his shoulders. *Continuation*, pp. 23–5.

¹⁰³ *Continuation*, pp. 11–17.

¹⁰⁴ *Academy*, 60, 27 April 1901, p. 358. Graham's popular children's history was reprinted throughout the century.

¹⁰⁵ *Essays Towards*, pp. 166–7.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid*, p. 82.

¹⁰⁷ Richard and Samuel Redgrave, *A Century of British Painters*, ed. Ruthven Todd, London, 1947, pp. 374–6.

¹⁰⁸ *Journal*, ed. Lloyd and Brown, p. 8.

¹⁰⁹ William Vaughan, *German Romanticism and English Art*, New Haven and London, 1979, pp. 20–3.

Anna Jameson: rise of the 'gentle interpreter'

Although Graham was accepted within intellectual circles as a respected connoisseur, her publications would not have attracted the broad readership of Anna Jameson and Elizabeth Rigby (Lady Eastlake), whose public standing as critics in this period was more widely acknowledged. The next two chapters investigate how these women developed their reputations as writers on art. I will consider how they negotiated existing prejudices regarding women writers, and how they were received by reviewers, in order to assess whether their work influenced perceptions of women's ability to appreciate art. I will focus in particular on how their publishing strategies differed according to status – the middle-class Jameson employing a modest, feminine persona, while the more privileged Rigby used anonymity, or even a male voice, to speak with greater freedom.

Anna Jameson (1794–1860) has received more critical attention than any other woman considered in this study, attracting literary scholars concerned with the periodical press and travel-writing, as well as art historians. She has been variously described as 'the first professional English art historian' and a 'feminist woman of letters', and two substantial biographies chart her career as a whole.¹ Her influence on perceptions of women as critics and art-viewers has not been considered, however, and will form the focus of this chapter. Jameson had few advantages in starting as a writer, and worked hard to establish herself. Concentrating particularly on her art criticism, I will demonstrate how a Victorian middle-class woman succeeded in gaining entry to the 'Republic of Taste'.

Constructing a career: contacts and strategies

A passage from *Visits and Sketches at Home and Abroad* (1834) hints at Jameson's reasons for entering the world of publishing. Answering the accusation that female authorship is motivated by 'mere vanity and fashion', her mouthpiece Alda defends women writers. Many, she says,

write for money, and by this employment of their talents earn their own independence, add to the comforts of a parent, or supply the extravagance of a husband. Some, who are unhappy in their domestic relations ... fling into the wide world the irrepressible activity of an overflowing mind and heart Some write from the mere energy of intellect and will; some few from the pure wish to do good²

Jameson herself doubtless combined all of these motives, but the primary spur was an economic one. Her lowly Irish origins, coupled with her father's financial difficulties and her own later marital problems, meant that she spent most of her life supporting herself and her wider family through writing.³ However, if poverty explains her motivation, it does not explain how she managed to establish herself, from such unpromising beginnings, as a specialist writer on art.

Born Anna Brownell Murphy (fig. 74), she had several factors in her favour. Firstly, her father was an artist; Denis Murphy was appointed Painter in Enamel to Princess Charlotte in 1810, and through him Jameson must have absorbed considerable knowledge of art. She was certainly taught sketching and watercolours, though unlike Merrifield, Jameson makes few references to her own art practice, concentrating on the expressive and stylistic qualities of images, rather than questions of technique.⁴ She stresses the personal skills that she brings to art-viewing rather than any technical qualifications. This must nevertheless have given her an early confidence in looking at pictures, while her father's profession brought her useful contacts within the art world.

In her *Companion to the Most Celebrated Private Galleries of Art* (1844), Jameson emphasizes the unusual advantages she enjoyed as a young girl in gaining regular access to some of the best art collections in England, and the impact this made on her at an impressionable age. It was no doubt thanks to her father's Court connections that she was able to explore the Grosvenor and Bridgewater galleries, for example.⁵ This experience also accustomed her to moving in higher social circles than those into which she had been born – a useful skill for any middle-class would-be connoisseur of painting. Jameson's early positions as governess within wealthy households extended these important aristocratic connections.⁶

Throughout her life, Jameson made shrewd use of such personal contacts to compensate for her social status. She exploited them to obtain access to collections at home and abroad, and to obtain first-hand knowledge of art by touring studios and galleries with artists and art experts. As in the case of many women writers, she often referred to these friendships in her publications in order to bolster her authority.⁷ Jameson's letters to Sir Robert Peel of the Fine Arts Commission reveal how she could deploy a deeply respectful approach to obtain influence. Like Merrifield, she saw Peel as key to success in the art world, so she sent him a specially bound copy of her *Private Galleries* handbook, in the hope that Lady Peel would do her the honour of placing it 'on her table'.⁸ Through a combination of deference and tactful insistence, she astutely exploited such influential contacts.

A crucial advantage of Jameson's aristocratic connections was that they gave her the opportunity to travel. It was with the Rowles family of Bradbourne Park, Kent, that she made her first Grand Tour of France and Italy in 1821. A second tour of 1829 was undertaken with her father and his patron-friend Sir Gerard Noel, as companion to the latter's daughter. This took her to the Low Countries and Germany, while on a further visit of 1833 an introduction from Robert Noel, cousin of Lady Byron, led to her meeting with Otilie von Goethe and the writers Ludwig Tieck and A. W. Schlegel.⁹ This entrée into the intellectual life of Germany resulted in her *Visits and Sketches* (1834), which discussed contemporary German art. Jameson admitted to her family that the friendship with Otilie was initially pursued to make sure she was introduced into 'the best society at Frankfort and Bonn which is of great consequence to me'.¹⁰ It led to discussions with artists, such as Moritz Retzsch and J. H. Dannecker, and enabled her to tour the newly decorated Munich Pinakothek and Palace of Ludwig I with the architect Leo von Klenze (fig. 75).¹¹ Jameson remained an inveterate traveller throughout her life, broadening her contacts in European society and America. As in the case of many women art-writers, Jameson's linguistic skills enhanced her ability to exploit these networks. Though substantially self-educated, she had had the advantage of a French-speaking governess, and learned Italian, Spanish and German.¹² This was a major factor in helping her to understand European culture, enabling her to communicate fresh ideas to English audiences.

It was the opportunity to travel ('à la *milor Anglais*', as she put it) that resulted in Jameson's first important work, which from the start of her career indicates a fascination with art.¹³ This sentimental novelette, *Diary of an Ennuyée* (1826), was a strange amalgam of guidebook and fiction.¹⁴ Heavily autobiographical, though strongly influenced by Germaine de Staël's *Corinne* (1807), it is the tale of a heroine who pines away for love while visiting Italy. The emotional content sits uneasily with the energetic cataloguing of artworks, and it is clear that the narrative was primarily an excuse for the presentation of Jameson's thoughts on art. This title might never have seen the light of day, however, without the benefit of Jameson's literary contacts in England, largely in the form of her future husband.¹⁵ A boyhood friend of Hartley Coleridge, Robert Jameson was well acquainted with Lamb and Wordsworth, and therefore had the connections to assist publication of the *Diary*. Though first published anonymously, it was quickly known to be by a 'Miss Murphy', which made her of great interest within the influential circle of writer and reformer Basil Montagu. This association with literary society continued throughout Jameson's life, and she became a close friend of Lady Byron and the Brownings, Sarah Austin, Harriet Grote and Elizabeth Gaskell. She was also intimate in theatrical circles,

befriending Sarah Siddons and Fanny Kemble.¹⁶ Participation in these networks was of vital importance in establishing Jameson as a writer – and, by association, as something of a celebrity.¹⁷

Jameson also developed a relationship with various periodicals and publishers, socializing with John Murray, for example, and building up her reputation by migrating from lesser journals to more weighty periodicals. Initially, she wrote anonymous articles, first for the *New Monthly Magazine*, and then for the *Monthly Chronicle*. According to Johnston, the editor Dionysius Lardner invited her to contribute to the *Chronicle* in 1838 because of her growing reputation as a writer on Germany.¹⁸ Jameson's 'Essays on the Lives of Remarkable Painters' (1843–5) for the *Penny Magazine* proved enormously popular, helping to consolidate her reputation. From 1843 she also wrote for the *Athenaeum*, and from 1849 for the *Art Journal*. Her periodical career culminated in a review for what she had described in the *Diary* as one of the two giants of the literary world, the *Edinburgh Review*.¹⁹ This was in addition to her many books, produced for Saunders and Otley, Bentley, Colburn and Murray.

One measure of Jameson's status within the publishing world is the fact that she acted as agent for Retzsch in the publication of his *Fancies* (1834).²⁰ She negotiated with Saunders and Otley on his behalf, translated the text, and wrote an introduction that interpreted his work for English audiences. She similarly helped her friend Robert Noel to publish his translation of Waagen's life of Rubens in 1840. The text is introduced and annotated by Jameson, implying that it required her authority to boost its status.²¹ She therefore had enough influence with publishers to pull strings on behalf of other writers, and was considered sufficiently competent to edit works by men.

Success for a woman within the publishing world was heavily dependent on careful self-presentation, and Jameson proved highly skilled at this. Having achieved notoriety through her novel, she set about establishing a career through the acceptably feminine routes of biography and travel-writing, before tackling more challenging genres.²² Like Graham, she maintained a self-deprecatory stance, denying any desire to enter the serious ground of contentious criticism. This remains true of all her books, which make no overt claims to authority. Even in the *Sacred and Legendary Art* preface (1848) she describes herself as 'unlearned', and seeks to 'share' her enjoyment of art, rather than 'instructing' others.²³ Initially, she tended to write about women and for women, as Holcomb has stressed. In this way, contemporaries noted, Jameson managed to avoid the attacks endured by other women writers, such as Lady Morgan. Nevertheless, she came to be widely read by both sexes.²⁴

Jameson's success was not simply the result of feminine modesty, however. She understood her readership well, and wrote for particular audiences with a journalist's skill.²⁵ Diarist Henry Crabb Robinson remarked, with a hint of disparagement perhaps, that she 'makes books for the great publishers, and having taste and a knowledge of the market is able to ... be well paid for editing works of taste'.²⁶ She was highly astute in her manipulation of the market. The *Diary*, for example, had been cannily presented as a genuine journal, discovered after the death of the heroine, thereby sensationalizing its appearance. To avoid accusations of 'book-making', Jameson later claimed that the tale was never written for publication, even though she clearly intended her travel journal to form some 'little literary attempt' from the outset.²⁷ Jameson was also very conscious of her readers' expectations of travel literature. Aware of the similarities between her novel and *Corinne*, Jameson emphasized her independence from this 'fashionable vade mecum for sentimental travellers in Italy'. Her heroine throws the book down unread, declaring, 'I want no helps to admiration, nor need I kindle my enthusiasm at the torch of another's mind.'²⁸ Nor, Jameson insisted, was she going to 'sweep up the leavings of the "fearless" Lady Morgan'. Aware of the growing criticism of women jumping on the travel-writing bandwagon, Jameson's heroine insists that she will look on everything in Italy 'not with the impertinent inquisition of a book-maker, ... but with the eye of the painter, and the feeling of the poet'.²⁹

Having gained popular success through a work that might be dismissed by discerning critics, Jameson then subtly dissociated herself from it, by emphasizing in *Visits and Sketches* (1834) that she no longer wished to 'play the *Ennuyeuse*'. While reminding readers of her success, she claimed a more exalted role for her new work, insisting that it would pursue nobler aims. She would forge links between nations, speeding the 'interchange of art and literature from pole to pole'. This she saw as the proper role of women, thanks to their instinctive human sympathies.³⁰ Jameson also made dismissive comments about the annuals, in line with the contempt shown these publications by contemporary male critics, such as Thackeray, even though she had written for them herself.³¹ By distancing herself from these 'vulgar' forms of literature, she sought to underline her higher aspirations as a writer.

One aspect of Jameson's awareness of the market is the way in which she attached her name to her writing. After embarrassing confusion over the *Diary*, Jameson rarely published anonymously again, though, like Graham and Merrifield, she preserved her respectability by employing the title 'Mrs'. The fact that she publically acknowledged what she wrote was respected as evidence of her 'true nobility of character', because it indicated

that she had the courage to stand up for her opinions.³² Using her name no doubt helped to establish Jameson in the public mind, and she was soon lionized throughout Europe and America. As early as 1829 she was flattered by her reception in Germany, where her works were better known than those of de Staël, and by the 1850s her arrival in Rome was reported in the *Daily News* as an 'event'.³³ The anonymity of the dilettante amateur was something Jameson could not afford in her quest for financial success.

Jameson on art

Jameson demonstrated her polite femininity by writing on a wide range of topics, from history and travel to poets and plays. As we have seen, she first wrote on art in contexts considered more acceptable for women, such as fiction, biography and travel-writing, rather than declaring herself openly as an art critic. Increasingly, however, from 1834, she began to specialize in writing on art. This section will concentrate on the more innovative aspects of her work.³⁴

'Germanism'

Jameson's first important contribution to art literature was *Visits and Sketches* (1834), which encouraged interest in contemporary German art, especially the monumental frescoes by Cornelius and the Nazarenes (fig. 76). By holding up their achievements for emulation, she established a dialogue between England and Germany in the 1830s and '40s, and was in the vanguard of calls for public decoration in Britain, associated with the Houses of Parliament redecoration project.³⁵ There was a growing 'craze' for Germany at this time, and Jameson was able to base her authority in this context on her first-hand viewing of artworks in progress there, as well as her discussions with German artists and writers. Jameson's close friendships within German society, combined with her language abilities, gave her a depth of insight rarely achieved. Her critical approach to German art avoided straightforward enthusiasm, appreciating the artists' aims, while not wholeheartedly recommending their style.³⁶ The Boisserée collection also led Jameson to reevaluate her ideas on the German Primitives, and to promote greater interest in them, as Graham was also doing at this time.³⁷

Jameson reveals great respect for the new German connoisseurship – for the historical arrangement of German galleries, and for their more sophisticated style of art criticism, rooted in documentary evidence. In her introduction to Waagen's *Rubens*, she

declared that the English were not yet accustomed to the 'many-sided and elevated spirit in criticism with which the Germans have long been familiar', and she was scathing about most art-writing in England, which she saw as 'shallow conventional verbiage'. The German approach, in her view, went far 'higher and deeper', and Waagen was the epitome of the enlightened art critic.³⁸ Jameson was a pioneer in the promotion of German connoisseurship, acting as one of the first interpreters of German thought for English audiences. Contemporaries saw this aspect of her work as highly significant, the *Athenaeum* obituary, for example, commenting on her 'Germanism'.³⁹

The moulding of popular taste

Perhaps even more influential, however, were Jameson's guides to the public and private galleries of London (1842 and 1844).⁴⁰ These were not straightforward catalogues, but expressed Jameson's opinions on individual works, including personal musings on a wide range of artists. Franz Kugler's *Handbook of the History of Painting* (1846) recommended the handbooks and praised Jameson's 'good taste'.⁴¹ In these guides, she spanned the divide between popular and scholarly art criticism. There is a strong educational emphasis in her writing, which is aimed at the middle-class viewer keen to self-educate, rather than the *cognoscenti*. The numbers in which the volumes sold show the extent of Jameson's influence, and Ernstrom and Hermann have underlined their continuing importance for the history of taste.⁴²

Like Merrifield, Jameson contributed to the mass-circulation 'Railway Travellers' series and wrote articles for the 'Uninitiated' in the *Art Journal*.⁴³ Her essays for the *Penny Magazine*, on the 'Lives of Remarkable Painters' (1843–5), aimed at an even broader class spectrum. They discussed Italian painting from the thirteenth to sixteenth centuries, bringing forward 'into proper relief the earlier great masters between Cimabue and Da Vinci', as an *Athenaeum* reviewer put it.⁴⁴ The essays were highly regarded at the time, influencing artists and writers alike, including Holman Hunt and Rossetti, Browning and Eliot.⁴⁵ The collected edition had been reprinted a dozen times by the 1890s, was translated into French, and also proved enormously popular in America.⁴⁶ Jameson's scholarly references, drawn from English, French, German and Italian writers, are combined with lively anecdotes more accessible to general readers, such as her description of Siddons viewing the Apollo Belvedere, or her comparison of the Florence Baptistery Gates with the Houses of Parliament competition.⁴⁷ Through solid research, Jameson succeeded in courting popularity without jeopardizing her reputation as a woman of letters and connoisseur.⁴⁸ For art critic Alice Meynell, writing in 1879, Jameson united a 'pure and

fastidious artistic taste with a popular simplicity and directness which have caused her books to penetrate into every reading household in England', regardless of class.⁴⁹

An *Athenaeum* reviewer pointed to the restrictions that this project necessarily imposed on Jameson's powers. He saw the work as a primer for 'that many-headed ignoramus, the Million', rather than as solid food for 'the adult aesthetical stomach', hinting that he considered Jameson capable of much more. The reviewer praised what she had achieved in terms of educating public taste, however, and credited her with improving art criticism in Britain. He respected the fact that she had not lowered herself to popular comprehension, but offered 'soul-elevating, mind-enlarging, taste-purifying principles'.⁵⁰ This fulsome praise may, of course, have been influenced by the fact that Jameson's 'Sacred and Legendary Art' essays were being serialized in the *Athenaeum* at the time, but, nevertheless, the fact that a woman writer could be lauded for conveying sound aesthetic principles in as weighty a journal as the *Athenaeum* is a measure of how far female viewers had been accepted within the 'Republic of Taste' by this date.

The 'dignified grandeur' of early Italian art

Jameson's 'Remarkable Painters' essays were especially important for disseminating a sympathetic appreciation of early Italian art, which had been stimulated by Graham, among others (Chapter 6). An obituary of Charles Eastlake in 1865 even saw Jameson, rather than Ruskin, as the prime mover behind the 'rediscovery' of the Primitives.⁵¹ In her essay on Giotto, Jameson refers to Graham's 'interesting account' of the Arena Chapel, and it is striking that, unlike male reviewers, she sees it as Graham's own publication, illustrated with graceful outline drawings, rather than as a work by Augustus Callcott.⁵² Though perhaps less appreciative of their aesthetic qualities than Graham, Jameson encouraged greater understanding of the historical context of these works. She defends the inclusion of donor portraits in religious scenes, such as Ghirlandaio's Tornabuoni frescoes of Santa Maria Novella, for instance. Though her readers may feel these to be 'shocking to the taste', she explains that the portraits encouraged close identification in the scenes, and argues that 'only the coldest and most pedantic critic could wish them absent'.⁵³ In this way she sought to alter current perceptions of early art, which was often seen as 'absurd, not a little profane, irreligious, and even disgusting'.⁵⁴

Jameson promoted the work of lesser-known artists previously dismissed as mere curiosities. Like Graham, she debunks the Vasarian myth of art's disappearance and rebirth with Cimabue, emphasizing the importance of medieval mosaics and miniatures, for example. Though she describes the stiff, expressionless figures of Byzantine influence as

'not attractive', she does show a warm appreciation of the work of Nicola Pisano and Orcagna. She praises Masaccio for his 'truth of expression' and 'simple dignity', and Fra Angelico is valued for his 'gentle, devout, enthusiastic spirit', which she sees as being addressed not to the taste of connoisseurs, but to the faith of worshippers. In the purity of his female saints, she says, he has never been excelled, not even by Raphael.⁵⁵ Writing before the second volume of *Modern Painters* (1846), and probably reaching a broader audience, Jameson had enormous influence in encouraging viewers to recognize the earnest religious spirit of early Renaissance masters.⁵⁶

Religious art: 'a fountain of the richest poetry'

For contemporary critics, Jameson's most important achievement was her *Sacred and Legendary Art* series (1848–64), an extensive study of Christian iconography which is still valued today (fig. 77).⁵⁷ The work encouraged an appreciation of early religious art, not just for its historical interest, but for its intense devotional feeling. Jameson argued that Protestant viewers should confront their instinctive prejudices against Catholic art, valuing its productions for their imaginative qualities. Rather than tackling doctrinal controversies head-on, she approached the subject from a more acceptably literary and artistic point of view, tracing the migration of symbols from pagan times down through early Christian art, and demonstrating the interaction of religious imagery with legendary texts.⁵⁸

Jameson was keen to reclaim religious art for the Protestant domain, emphasizing that it was possible to admire Catholic art and yet remain a good Christian. Boys had not taken to worshipping Jupiter because of reading the classics, she pointed out. The English, afraid of the pre-Reformation excesses of Catholic art, tended to treat these works simply as decorative objects, neglecting their spiritual dimension:

we have hung them in our drawing-rooms and our dressing-rooms, over our pianos and our sideboards, and now what do they say to us? That Magdalene, weeping amid her hair, who once spoke comfort to the soul of the fallen sinner, – that Sebastian, arrow-pierced, whose upward, ardent glance, spoke of courage and hope to the tyrant-ridden serf ... can they speak to *us* of nothing save flowing lines, and correct drawing, and gorgeous colour? ... This ... is to seal up a fountain of the richest poetry, and to shut out a thousand ennobling and inspiring thoughts.

Such images may 'cease to be religion, but cannot cease to be poetry', Jameson declared.⁵⁹

Jameson was not unique in appreciating early Christian art, though she was the first to study the iconography of the Madonna and female saints (fig. 78).⁶⁰ She was part of a growing fascination, especially associated today with Ruskin and the Pre-Raphaelite painters, but she popularized this interest, having a considerable influence on middle-class taste in England and America. In choosing to tackle the 'ticklish' subject of Catholic art,

she demonstrates the increasing confidence of women art-writers. Not content simply to repeat accepted ideas, Jameson was striking out into novel, uncharted territory. There is no doubt that in making these original contributions to art literature, in the fields of contemporary German and early Italian art, and in Christian iconography, Jameson had a crucial influence on perceptions of the female connoisseur.

Self-presentation as a connoisseur

As we have seen, Jameson presented herself openly as a woman in her writing on art. This means she is a particularly useful figure for assessing perceptions of the female viewer in this period. Her sensitivity to questions of self-presentation within the publishing market suggests an ability to engage self-consciously with stereotypical notions of spectatorship. So how did she negotiate potential prejudice against her sex as an art critic, and how did this interact with her self-characterization in terms of class?

Connoisseurship and class

In *Companion to the ... Private Galleries* (1844) Jameson speaks with great confidence on connoisseurship, implicitly defending her own qualifications as a middle-class woman. For her, taste depended partly on innate faculties: 'An eye for colour is like an ear for music; where deficient, it cannot be imparted'. True understanding could take a whole lifetime to acquire, she says, but was available to the 'uninitiated' providing there was 'quickness of perception, and a strong natural sensibility to beauty, combined with opportunities of study and observation'.⁶¹ This implied that connoisseurship could be acquired by middle-class viewers like herself, and the fact that Jameson offered herself as a guide to others is an indication of the authority she considered herself to possess.

Jameson strongly supported middle-class access to art, and promoted the education of the masses through her publications, as we have seen, believing that 'the *capacity* to discriminate as well as to feel is given to many, and I would raise such from love up to knowledge'. However, she also resisted the democratizing process, in order to reinforce her status as a critic. She disagreed with the principles of Allan Cunningham, for example, who suggested that 'a work of art is excellent in proportion as it is intelligible to people in general'. Jameson absolutely rejected this view, declaring that there may be a 'cant of ignorance', as much as a 'cant of criticism'. She criticized 'attempts to popularize – that is, vulgarize – high art':

I cannot help thinking that if we diffuse, by means of national galleries, cheap prints, art-unions, and so forth, the mere liking for pictures, as such, without diffusing at the same time that refined and elevated standard of taste which is the result of cultivation and discernment, and education, we are like to be deluged with mediocrity; every man, woman, and child will turn critic, and art and artists together will be essentially *vulgarized*.⁶²

There is an apparent contradiction in Jameson's resistance to the opening up of the 'Republic of Taste', but her desire to preserve a threshold for elite understanding seems calculated to pre-empt criticism of a middle-class female writer for lowering standards. By stressing that strong individual preferences should always be directed by rational rules and fixed criteria, Jameson preserved the notion of a viewing elite, and so reinforced her own status as a connoisseur.⁶³

Jameson sharply criticized the actions of vulgar viewers in order to define her own superior way of looking. Referring to public open days at the Grosvenor Gallery and Bridgewater House, she says:

We can all remember the loiterers and loungers, the vulgar starers, the gaping idlers, we used to meet there – people, who, instead of moving amid these wonders and beauties, "all silent and divine," with reverence and gratitude, strutted about as if they had the right to be there; talking, flirting, peeping, and prying; ... touching the ornaments – and even the pictures!⁶⁴

Jameson's negative reaction to this ignorant intrusion leads her to sympathize with aristocratic collectors, on whose support she relied.⁶⁵ Equally, however, Jameson criticizes the aristocratic *cognoscenti* for despising the Spanish school, which the public sympathizes with more readily.⁶⁶ Playing down her own origins, she offers herself as a *juste milieu* between the effete aristocrat and the vulgar masses. As in the case of Hazlitt and Thackeray, the cultivated middle-class spectator is presented as the ideal.

Jameson saw the class divide as a deep one. In *Memoirs and Essays* (1846), she says 'to one ... who has dwelt on equal terms with high and low, – dreadful is the feeling which in these days, ... separates class from class, setting between them a fathomless gulf of ignorance.'⁶⁷ Presenting herself as someone who spanned the classes, she acted as interpreter between these groups, using her unique social position to overcome barriers within spectatorship.

'The namby-pamby taste of our fine ladies': combatting prejudice

Just as she distanced herself from vulgar members of the middle and lower classes, Jameson also distanced herself from conventional notions of female spectatorship. While characterizing herself as a woman of taste, Jameson occasionally reinforces the notion of

women as vulgar, inadequate art-viewers by criticizing the influence of their taste on contemporary art, as exemplified in the popularity of domestic genre and the annuals:

What have we now for the grandeur and the grace of the heroic and ideal in art? A bridesmaid weeping in white satin, "Gems of beauty," and "Flowers of loveliness," or such trash, cherished by the namby-pamby taste of our fine ladies, on whose tables you find these wretched, wiry things, with their mean contours and conventional prettinesses I do not hesitate to say, that the false, the frivolous taste of women, has had a permanently injurious effect on art and artists⁶⁸

She called for young women to be properly educated in the fine arts, bemoaning the fact that their superficial knowledge on the subject led them into a 'perverted and frivolous taste for mere prettiness'. Although she dismissed other women's taste for 'second-rate sentimental trash', Jameson nevertheless combatted traditional stereotypes by defining herself as a superior type of viewer.⁶⁹

Diary of an Ennuyée (1826) marks Jameson's first presentation of herself as a female connoisseur. As the work was closely based on Jameson's journals, kept on her first Grand Tour as governess, it is heavily autobiographical.⁷⁰ While we must allow for Jameson's characterization of the fictional persona, the heroine's art-viewing in this novel reveals a great deal about Jameson's views on women's ability to acquire connoisseurial skills. Throughout, the heroine insists modestly on her ignorance in art, while revealing her cultured background through references to picture collections and art texts.⁷¹ Like Piozzi, Jameson emphasizes the superior enjoyment obtained by the polite, educated viewer through the interaction of literature and art.⁷² The relative ignorance of the novice female 'connoisseur' is also balanced by her potential for feeling and imagination. When the heroine writes of Florence 'All that I see, I *feel*', this emotional sensitivity to the power of art marks her out as qualified to join the viewing elite. Technical knowledge is less important than the possession of a correctly attuned heart and soul, Jameson suggests.⁷³

Jameson's novel charts the maturing of the young heroine's taste, and in this process, travel is a vital factor, as it was for Jameson herself. The face-to-face encounter with Italy has a transformative effect on the heroine's aesthetic judgment. Having known only the 'soft aerial perspective' and 'cool neutral grey tint' of England, for example, it is essential for her to experience the 'glorious all-embracing light' of Italy before she can fully appreciate Italian landscape painting. The 'Ennuyée' says, 'I feel my taste become more and more fastidious every day' through viewing an 'endless variety of excellence'.⁷⁴ Connoisseurship therefore depends not on the sex of the viewer, according to Jameson, but on lived experience. Through her heroine, Jameson questioned conventional assumptions

about the female spectator by revealing her potential to move beyond a 'mere liking' for pictures and attain a sophisticated level of appreciation.

In *Visits and Sketches*, Jameson laid aside the fictional mask and wrote on art as 'herself'. Initially, like her heroine, she modestly professes ignorance, relying on the authority of others to support her views, while at the same time distancing herself from the wholly untaught art-viewer. She walks the familiar line between condemning the 'mere cant and verbiage' of the *virtuosi* and boldly claiming aesthetic judgment for herself, which could invite condemnation for Bluestocking arrogance.⁷⁵ Increasingly, however, in writing her handbooks and essays, Jameson emphasized her skills as a connoisseur, stressing her first-hand knowledge of works abroad and her thorough research. Her confident stance challenged perceptions of women's ignorance in matters of art.

In order to establish herself as a critic, it was essential for Jameson to distance herself from traditional perceptions of women's taste, as represented by Pasquin's 'pretty misses'. Jameson emphasized that she had no sympathy with the ornamental prettiness, as she saw it, of many of the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Italian masters generally associated with women. She criticized the 'cloying sweetness' of Carlo Dolci and the 'wearying insipidity' of Francesco Albani, for example.⁷⁶ Parmigianino was also criticized for being 'too frequently on the brink of what one hates most in art and in everything – affectation'.⁷⁷ In rejecting the artificiality of these painters, Jameson was in the forefront of changes in taste in the early nineteenth century, alongside Ruskin.

Jameson's increasingly sophisticated appreciation of Dutch and Flemish art also reflects changing attitudes in this period.⁷⁸ At first, through the 'Ennuyée', she expresses a conventional rejection of mimetic accuracy in favour of more idealized art:

for mine own part, I would give up all that Mieris, Netscher, Teniers and Gerard Douw ever produced, for one of Claude's Eden-like creations, or one of Guido's lovely heads – or merely for the pleasure of looking at Titian's Flora once a day, I would give a whole gallery of Dutchmen, if I had them.⁷⁹

Jameson demonstrates increasing catholicity, however, countering the idea that women were at the mercy of arbitrary predilections. She comments on her early dislike of Rubens, for example, admitting that 'Those were "our salad days, when we were green in judgment"' and concludes that 'one must end by standing before him in ecstasy and wonder'.⁸⁰ In her *Companion to the ... Private Galleries*, Jameson expresses growing enthusiasm for Dutch painters – partly, perhaps, in order to flatter Sir Francis Egerton and Peel, whose collections included many fine examples. Adriaan van der Werf's laboriously smooth finish is still rejected for its 'cold insipid elegance', but Jameson shows she has learned to appreciate Dutch pictures with a more connoisseurial eye. In Teniers, for

example, the 'vulgarity of conception is redeemed by the elegance of the execution, and the *mind* everywhere displayed in the treatment as well as in the invention'. She emphasizes that these works please the 'cultivated taste and thoughtful mind', leaving 'nothing for the most fastidious critic to censure or to desire'.⁸¹ This associates her closely with the sophisticated taste of aristocratic connoisseurs, rather than any vulgar preference for the 'natural'.

Women's supposed taste for mimetic accuracy is also denied in Jameson's discussion of Canaletto's views of Venice. His prosaic realities are rejected in favour of a more idealized approach; they are 'like prose translations of poetry, – petrifications, materialities', because he reproduces Venice like a daguerrotype.⁸² As in many other cases, this comparison of Canaletto and Turner engages in dialogue with Ruskin's more famous comments in *Modern Painters* (1846).⁸³ Turner captures the city's qualities of light and colour far better than Canaletto, she agrees, but for the real spirit of Venice she proposes 'you must go to Titian'. As Holcomb points out, Jameson also objected to dishonesty in art well before Ruskin, rejecting 'tricks' and illusions often associated with vulgar taste.⁸⁴ She complained that the abrupt contrasts of light and shade in Caravaggio and Guercino were 'tricky and vulgar in comparison to the Venetian style', for example, and objected to the use of a red window to cast pinkish light over the carved flesh of Dannecker's *Ariadne* sculpture.⁸⁵

Jameson departed from conventional expectations of female viewing in her choice of genres, too. In writing the *Hand-Book to the Courts of Modern Sculpture* (1854), she tackled a medium often considered more cerebral, and therefore more 'difficult', for women. Rather than being drawn to the theatrical qualities of Bernini or the sensuality of Canova, she declared a preference for the classical spirit of Flaxman and Thorwaldsen.⁸⁶ As the 'Ennuyée', Jameson had praised the 'grave yet graceful simplicity' of Greek sculpture, echoing most male writers of this period; it is 'the union of *power* with *repose* – of perfect *grace* with perfect *simplicity*' that appeals to her.⁸⁷ This expresses the academic line, rejecting Pasquin's characterization of women's taste for affected exaggeration.

Jameson's interest in biography meant that she frequently focused on portraits, responding to their human qualities, as women were often perceived to do. Such images are not assessed as mere likenesses, however, but are judged for their formal qualities or success in capturing moral character. In the case of Thomas Lawrence's portrait of *Lady Peel* (1827, Frick Collection), for example, Jameson is more interested in the 'vigorous' draughtsmanship than the sitter.⁸⁸ Her approach to portraiture is rarely associated with the anecdotal chit-chat we find in stereotypical portrayals of the female viewer, but is couched

in academic terms, reinforced by references to Richardson and Reynolds.⁸⁹ She prefers the expression of mind to the portrayal of fabrics, criticizing modern German portraitists, for example, for concentrating on accessories: 'the vulgar eye alone is caught by such misplaced skill'.⁹⁰ Jameson certainly did not encourage a taste for the private and personal, by promoting portraiture as a genre. She was as insistent as male writers in calling for public art, including monumental history painting, thereby challenging contemporary stereotypes of female taste.

Exploiting feminine advantages

More than any other woman art-writer, Jameson stressed her sex in her writing, drawing on the more positive stereotypes of female spectatorship to defend her value as a connoisseur. Jameson adhered to the notion that there were essential feminine qualities, which were different from those of men, though in no sense inferior. She speaks of 'our feminine superfluity of sensibility and imagination', for example, in discussing women painters.⁹¹ From a modern perspective, her conservative stance on femininity seems to sit oddly with Johnston's characterization of her as a proto-feminist.⁹² In this period, however, they were not mutually exclusive. Such attitudes were linked by religion, which defined appropriate feminine characteristics as God-given, while promoting an active role for women within society (Chapter 4). In her essay on Siddons (1831), Jameson stressed that there was 'no profession which may not be made compatible with the respect due to us as women, the cultivation of every feminine virtue, and the practice of every private duty'.⁹³ She saw no contradiction between female virtue and engagement in the public realm, suggesting that it was far more acceptable to be an active intellectual woman than the notion of Victorian separate spheres would have us believe.

It was only once her reputation was secure that Jameson felt able to speak out on controversial issues, however. In *Visits and Sketches* (1834) she was careful to insist, 'I am no vulgar, vehement arguer about the "rights of women"'.⁹⁴ It was only later in life that she became deeply involved in radical reform, lecturing on the 'woman question' in 1855.⁹⁵ In 'Woman's Mission and Woman's Position' (1846), she argued against the notion of the home as woman's 'natural' place, describing such ideas as 'lying common-places at best', in view of the fact that two-thirds of women were obliged to earn their bread.⁹⁶ Her financial difficulties with her estranged husband no doubt coloured her thinking on this subject. Jameson influenced a generation of younger women, giving great encouragement to members of the Langham Place Group in the 1850s and '60s.⁹⁷

Despite her desire for greater equality of social and political rights, Jameson was always very careful to present her opinions within the context of acceptable femininity.⁹⁸ In a letter to an American friend Catherine Sedgwick, Jameson noted, 'The cause of women would suffer if handled coarsely and in bad taste by one of their own sex; so much depends, not on what is said, but how it is said.'⁹⁹ This indicates Jameson's continuing sensitivity to issues of self-presentation. Given the insecurity of her financial situation, Jameson had to be especially cautious in order to protect her reputation. Her prefaces are self-deprecating, and her pronouncements on art tend to be less contentious than those of the more socially secure Rigby, for example (Chapter 8).¹⁰⁰ As Jameson used her own name, she was under greater pressure to define herself as a proper, modest woman, so she demonstrates relatively conservative views on morality.¹⁰¹ Her response to Raphael's *Fornarina* (fig. 79), for example, is coloured by her knowledge that it represents his working-class mistress; the sitter is 'a mere *femme du peuple*, a coarse virago'.¹⁰² This moral stance extended to her assessment of artists, too; she expressed the belief that Andrea del Sarto 'would have been a far greater artist had he been a better man'.¹⁰³ The value of her aesthetic judgments is enhanced by the fact that she is a lady of decorum.

Jameson's response to nudity is also cautiously ladylike. Rubens can never be a favourite of women, she claims, because of the shocking coarseness of his figures.¹⁰⁴ She considers the Duc d'Orléans' destruction of Correggio's obscene *Leda* as no great loss to the world. Interestingly, though, this has little to do with protecting the female viewer specifically:

We must remember that the bulk of those who visit a public gallery are not critics in art; in what is vicious and sensual as well as beautiful, they will see the vice as well as the beauty, perhaps only the vice.¹⁰⁵

Where male critics had sought to protect the female gaze, here we have a woman seeking to protect the 'uninitiated' of both sexes. In her sculpture handbook, Jameson demonstrates an increasingly subtle response to the nude, criticizing figures which betray a consciousness of being looked at, rather than objecting to nudity per se. This again emphasizes her skilled connoisseurship, in that, as a morally upright woman, she can teach others how to judge nude sculpture correctly.¹⁰⁶ Jameson's representation of the male viewer is interesting in this context. In *Diary of an Ennuyée* she described the collector Samuel Rogers at the Tribuna in Florence, gazing at the Venus de' Medici and hoping, like Pygmalion, to animate her into life. The Goddess entreats him not to come 'ogling her every day', Jameson remarks wryly.¹⁰⁷ By hinting at the male tendency to respond sexually to the nude, like Miller, she questions men's pretended distance of aesthetic judgment. The

female viewer, she seems to suggest, with her moral superiority, may therefore prove the more reliable critic.

As a woman, Jameson felt she had particular abilities to bring to art, offering insights that a male viewer might miss. This was particularly true of the area in which she chose to specialize: religious art. Jameson hints that women may be better able to appreciate the poetic qualities of religious images than many male art professionals, for example. Such works contain 'more than mere connoisseurship can interpret'; they have 'a deeper significance than has been dreamed of by picture dealers and picture collectors, or even picture critics.'¹⁰⁸ She implies that it takes a woman like herself, of intuitive understanding and secure faith, to interpret them. In this way, she exploited conventional associations between women, religion and sensibility to present a positive model of the female connoisseur.

Jameson frequently drew attention to herself as a writer, evoking private thoughts and memories aroused by artworks. This highly personal tone was potentially dangerous, in that she risked being absorbed into the stereotype of female viewing as excessively emotional, and therefore non-rational. The fact that her work was rarely criticized for this, however, and proved popular with men, as well as women, is a measure of how closely her approach was attuned to current trends in art-writing more generally. It may be that newly acceptable ways of writing on art, through personal emotion and imaginative association, gave women an opportunity to exploit what were traditionally perceived as feminine 'skills'. Emotion was combined, however, in Jameson, with an equal emphasis on good sense and judgment, and on sound academic principles. Only by combining these could she avoid condemnation of her work as mere enthusiasm. It was possible, Jameson demonstrated, to be a woman – a truly feminine woman, in her own terms – and yet speak with 'masculine' authority on art.

Throughout her career, Jameson characterized herself as an approachable female companion, describing herself as a

child that has sprang on a little way before its playmates, and caught a glimpse through an opening portal of some varied Eden within, ... and, after one rapturous survey, runs back and catches its companions by the hand, and hurries them forwards to share ... the yet unexplored region of delight.

'I am on the outside,' she said, 'not the inside, of the door I open.' In other words, she placed herself alongside her reader, rather than stressing her superior connoisseurship. This image was picked up and repeated by many reviewers, and so clearly appealed to them.¹⁰⁹ This is in sharp contrast to Ruskin, for example, who tended to locate himself well above

and beyond his readers. As a *Blackwood's* reviewer noted in 1855, comparing Ruskin's 'sublime pretences' with the more 'graceful volumes' of Jameson:

The more eminent writer tells us with a shrewish arrogance that he has studied the subject all his life, and of course knows a great deal more about it, and is in a much better position to judge than we. The lady, on the contrary, without any brag of her experience, quietly sets about the benevolent business of making us as well acquainted as herself with her own particular field of art.¹¹⁰

Jameson's highly accessible persona, which was undoubtedly seen as more appropriate for a woman, contributed directly to her popularity. She perceived her role as being to act as a 'gentle interpreter' – between countries, between classes, between the sexes, between professional artists and the public.¹¹¹ The 'graceful womanliness' of Jameson's writing was therefore integral to her success.¹¹²

Responses to Jameson: 'as much feeling for art as the cat'?

By considering contemporary reactions to Jameson's work, we can assess perceptions of the female connoisseur in this period. Perhaps because her writing was so personal, critical responses often seem to be determined as much by attitudes to her as an individual, as to the writing itself, revealing the importance for women of maintaining a respectable persona in life, as much as in their texts. Where there is criticism, it often hints at prejudice regarding Jameson's self-made status, for example.¹¹³ As in the case of Miller and Morgan, there also seems to have been an element of prejudice about the fact that she was Irish. Carlyle, for example, comments on her Celtic red hair when making disparaging remarks about her, while Harriet Martineau puts what she sees as Jameson's excessive emotionalism down to her 'Irish vehemence'.¹¹⁴

Some writers suspected Jameson of dishonesty in her excessive displays of feeling in response to art. Her shedding of tears was too much for Crabb Robinson, for example, and Martineau complained that Jameson put too much of herself into her writing.¹¹⁵ Others, including publisher Samuel Carter Hall, detected more commentary on the 'woman question' than they could stomach.¹¹⁶ Jameson was rarely seen as a strident militant, however, and was often complimented for her measured stance on these issues. If she had been more openly radical, she would probably not have been so widely read, of course. Jameson's virtuous comportment as a woman was therefore a major factor in her success as a writer.

The danger in writing openly as a woman was that Jameson would not be seen as a profound or original thinker. Some reviewers hinted at this, suggesting she was a mere compiler of facts.¹¹⁷ The young Ruskin, for example, sneered that she 'had as much feeling for art as the cat', remarking that she was

absolutely without knowledge or instinct of painting (and had no sharpness of insight even for anything else); but she was candid and industrious, with a pleasant disposition to make the best of all she saw, and to say, compliantly, that a picture was good, if anybody had ever said so before.¹¹⁸

His arrogant attitude, heavily coloured by his opinion of women in general, seems to have stuck, being repeated by Haskell and Hilton, for example.¹¹⁹ Most contemporary commentators, however, considered Jameson to be producing far more than imitative hack-work, praising her erudition and originality. From early on she was recognized as an important writer who moulded public taste. An *Athenaeum* review of *Visits and Sketches* (1834) noted that Jameson's work revealed the 'strength and reach of the female talent of the present day', showing 'little or no deficiency of the strength upon the presumed exclusive possession of which, man has been so long used to crest himself'.¹²⁰ She was admired for her strong opinions and ability to put them over forcefully, yet elegantly.

Charles Eastlake emphasized the perceived combination of intellect and femininity in Jameson's persona. On first meeting her in 1840, he wrote: 'She is a very pleasing person, and with all her cleverness, is as much a woman as she ought to be.'¹²¹ W. J. Fox in 1834 also praised her 'remarkably progressive mind':

She is the most graceful ornament of the womanly literature of our country. And her gracefulness is ever that of truth. There are no compositions at once so feminine and so philosophical In her playfulness, or her sentiment, there is often a depth of reflectiveness that makes the reader reflective too.

From this it is clear that it was possible to be both 'feminine' and 'philosophical' in the eyes of Victorian readers. Fox's comments emphasize the extent to which a woman's writing was bound up with perceptions of her as an individual: 'Her power is self derived, and self nurtured. It is fed from the fountains of her own beautiful nature.'¹²² He reveals that this could be an advantage, rather than a hindrance, enhancing Jameson's reputation still further.

Jameson was an important influence on a generation of readers across a broad class spectrum, including artists and aristocratic collectors, such as Egerton.¹²³ The sculptor John Gibson warmly acknowledged the help Jameson had given him, writing to her in 1853:

I shall always value yr. opinions, for you have given to the world proofs of yr feeling and judgment in art; feeling is a gift from nature, Judgment is confined to a few – to those only

who have contemplated deeply – examined the greatest works – conversed with the greatest artists – read the best works and with a nature gifted. You and I know what is necessary to be a Judge on art.¹²⁴

He clearly saw her as a member of the artistic elect, despite her sex and the fact that she was not an artist.

Jameson's lack of professional expertise was occasionally signalled as a problem. In 1842 the *Gentleman's Magazine* praised her *Hand-Book to the Public Galleries* as a useful guide, but wished that a similar work could be carried out 'by some person professionally acquainted with the subject' rather than a mere amateur. Even Jameson wrote privately: 'It is the sort of thing which should have fallen into the hands of Dr. Waagen, or some such bigwig, instead of poor little me.'¹²⁵ Such doubts are unusual, however, suggesting that Jameson's lack of official status was not considered a barrier to her intervention in art criticism. In an age far more used to amateur scholarship, when there was as yet no such thing as a professional art historian, the self-taught woman may well have been admitted to the fold more easily than would be the case in our own century, where institutional roles have come to dominate.

Contemporaries stressed that female empathy was an important factor in the success of Jameson's writing. For Meynell, Jameson's volumes were enhanced by 'feminine' understanding:

All she wrote ... was written out of the fulness of the heart, and her contemplation of the great works of the great schools was more intelligent than that of men in many ways more learned than she, insomuch as she could trace the artist's intention ... entering the while, by this peculiar warmth of heart, into the very feeling which dictated the work.¹²⁶

Responses to Jameson's treatment of religious art were broadly sympathetic. Hannah Lawrance, writing anonymously in 1849, noted especially Jameson's work on the Magdalen and female saints, or what she describes as medieval 'woman-worship', and considered Christian iconography 'well suited to her' as a woman. An *Athenaeum* review of *The History of Our Lord* (1864) declared that: 'The delicacy of female criticism on such subjects throws a graceful character over the work, which no male writer could have imparted to it.'¹²⁷

Kingsley's 1849 review of Jameson's *Poetry of Sacred and Legendary Art* emphasized that the writer's sex lent her a major advantage in handling the whole question of Christian art.¹²⁸ He complimented Jameson on her handling of this difficult subject, seeing her work as 'especially Protestant', in contrast to Lord Lindsay's 'bigotry, which erred on the side of Popery'. Importantly, it was not just Jameson's literary talents and

acquaintance with Continental art that made her such a supreme critic, but her sex, religion and nationality:

of all critics an English matron ought to be the best – open as she should be, by her womanhood, to all tender and admiring sympathies, accustomed by her Protestant education to unsullied purity of thought, and inheriting from her race, not only freedom of mind and reverence for antiquity, but the far higher birthright of English honesty.

It seemed to Kingsley that in the context of religious art, ‘female tact and deep devotional feeling cut the Gordian knot which has puzzled more cunning heads’. Jameson, in his view, struck the right balance between the dry scholarship of German writers and over-enthusiastic bursts of feeling. He placed great value on what he perceived as her feminine sensitivity and emotional instincts that ‘quicken the eye’:

Mrs. Jameson has certainly a powerful inductive faculty; she comprehends at once the idea and central law of a work of art, and sketches it in a few vivid and masterly touches ... “in thoughts which breathe, and words which burn.”¹²⁹

This is a long way from the conventional notion of the female viewer as one who focuses on details, rather than the whole, and who lacks the power to reason. The word ‘masterly’ is highly significant here. Far from perceiving her sex as a difficulty to be overcome, Kingsley saw Jameson’s considerable talents as deriving directly from her being an ‘English matron’.

Contemporary responses were overwhelmingly positive, revealing great respect for Jameson’s achievements, and indicating that ‘feminine’ qualities were positively valued in the context of art-writing. Thanks in part to her astute management of the boundaries of appropriate engagement, Jameson’s successful career demonstrates considerable acceptance within the predominantly male bastion of art criticism. Indeed, the fact that we find so little opposition may indicate that by mid-century, her work, alongside that of Graham, Merrifield and others, had succeeded in persuading publishers and reviewers that connoisseurship was utterly appropriate for a woman.

Conclusion

Very quickly, Jameson came to be associated with a rather dated approach to art, being seen as something of a Victorian sentimentalist.¹³⁰ Though her reputation has been revived more recently, on the whole art history has failed to reflect the esteem in which she was held in her own lifetime. Ruskin’s acid comments have no doubt played a major part in

prejudicing posterity against her. Though she may not have Ruskin's range or visionary zeal, Jameson should be considered as a major nineteenth-century writer on art in the early Victorian period. Berenson certainly ranked her alongside Ruskin as a pioneer and creator of art history.¹³¹ Her contributions to this field from the 1830s onwards – particularly her promotion of early Italian painters and tracing of symbols in Christian art – were highly influential, and Jameson may well have been more widely read by popular audiences, certainly in the 1840s. The bias towards Ruskin in art-historical studies has tended to obscure her importance, concealing the fact that she was discussing many of the same ideas, and, indeed, occasionally discussing them rather more coherently.¹³²

Jameson succeeded in validating an openly female voice in art-writing by exploiting positive stereotypes of female taste as emotionally sensitive and devout. She also showed that a middle-class woman could possess aesthetic taste by creating a quasi-professional status for herself as a critic.¹³³ In this way she proved an important role model for contemporary women writers such as Twining, Merrifield and Rigby, as well as for women art critics of the 1870s and '80s.¹³⁴ Through astute networking, thorough research and careful self-presentation, she established herself as a respected connoisseur, contesting conventional assumptions that class and sex were important factors in taste. She demonstrates that, despite the negative stereotypes of publications such as *Punch*, the 'Republic of Taste' was increasingly open to the female viewer. 'As an art-critic,' wrote an obituarist, 'Mrs Jameson was almost unrivalled.'¹³⁵

¹ Clara Thomas, *'Love and Work Enough': The Life of Anna Jameson*, London and Toronto, 1967. Judith Johnston, *Anna Jameson: Victorian, Feminist, Woman of Letters*, Aldershot and Brookfield VT, 1997. See also Adele M. Holcomb, 'Anna Jameson: The First Professional English Art Historian', *Art History*, 6 (2), June 1983, pp. 171–87, and 'Anna Jameson (1794–1860): Sacred Art and Social Vision', in Sherman and Holcomb (eds), *Women as Interpreters of the Visual Arts*, pp. 93–121.

² *Visits and Sketches at Home and Abroad*, 4 vols, London, 1834, I, pp. 149–50.

³ Johnston, *Anna Jameson*, pp. 2–3.

⁴ Thomas, *'Love and Work'*, pp. 11–12, 119. Jameson provided line illustrations for her later works. Gerardine Macpherson, *Memoirs of the Life of Anna Jameson*, London, 1878, pp. 297–8.

⁵ *Companion to the Most Celebrated Private Galleries of Art in London*, London, 1844, pt 2, pp. 79, 227.

⁶ Thomas, *'Love and Work'*, pp. 11–20.

⁷ See, for example, 'Washington Allston', in *Memoirs and Essays, Illustrative of Art, Literature and Social Morals*, London, 1846, pp. 161–2.

⁸ BL Peel Papers, Add. 40532, ff. 168–9 (13 Aug. 1843); 40541, ff. 338–9 (22 March 1844), 342–3 (23 April 1844).

⁹ *Visits and Sketches*, I, p. 46; II, pp. 94–9. German women art-writers may have been role models for Jameson, especially Johanna Schopenhauer (1766–1838). *Visits and Sketches*, I, pp. 51, 150–4. Sherman and Holcomb (eds), *Women as Interpreters of the Visual Arts*, p. 9.

- ¹⁰ Judith Johnston, 'Anna Brownell Jameson and the *Monthly Chronicle*', in Barbara Garlick and Margaret Harris (eds), *Victorian Journalism*, St Lucia, 1998, pp. 23–4. *Letters of Anna Jameson to Otilie von Goethe*, ed. G. H. Needler, London and New York, 1939. *Visits and Sketches*, I, pp. 138–9.
- ¹¹ She also toured the Städel Museum in Frankfurt with Passavant. *Visits and Sketches*, I, pp. 95, 275; II, pp. 31–2, 124–35.
- ¹² Thomas, 'Love and Work', pp. 4–7. Jameson lived in Germany for almost two years from 1834.
- ¹³ *Visits and Sketches*, I, p. 16. Thomas, 'Love and Work', p. 14.
- ¹⁴ *Diary of an Ennuyée*, London, 1826. Jameson was not the only woman writer to combine these genres. The *Diary* was reviewed with Charlotte Anne Eaton's *Continental Adventures* (1826), which was criticized as an 'incongruous mixture' of guidebook and romance, *Westminster Review*, 6, 12, 1826, pp. 339–40. Eaton also wrote the successful *Rome in the Nineteenth Century* (1820), which discussed the city's art and antiquities (*Monthly Review*, 2, Aug. 1826, pp. 398–404).
- ¹⁵ The marriage proved disastrous. They lived independently from 1833 and effectively separated in 1838.
- ¹⁶ Thomas, 'Love and Work', pp. 36, 38–45, 90–1, 152–60, 169–75, 203.
- ¹⁷ The commission for *Hand-Book to the Public Galleries* (1842) was obtained through Austin, for example. Johnston, 'Anna Brownell Jameson', p. 34.
- ¹⁸ Johnston, 'Anna Brownell Jameson', pp. 19–37, 20, 25. For Jameson's works, see Johnston, *Anna Jameson*, pp. 236–9, and Thomas, 'Love and Work', pp. 225–7.
- ¹⁹ Review of Tom Taylor's *Life of Haydon*, *Edinburgh Review*, 98, 1853, pp. 518–66. *Diary*, p. 217. The other 'giant' was the *Quarterly Review*.
- ²⁰ Moritz Retzsch, *Fancies*, ed. Anna Jameson, London, 1834. *Visits and Sketches*, I, p. 26; II, p. 135.
- ²¹ Gustav Waagen, *Peter Paul Rubens, His Life and Genius*, ed. Anna Jameson, transl. Robert R. Noel, London, 1840.
- ²² Johnston, *Anna Jameson*, pp. 19–21, 100–6.
- ²³ Anna Jameson, *The Poetry of Sacred and Legendary Art*, 2 vols, London, 1848, I, p. xi.
- ²⁴ Holcomb, 'Sacred Art and Social Vision', p. 99.
- ²⁵ Laurie Kane Lew, 'Cultural Anxiety in Anna Jameson's Art Criticism', *Studies in English Literature*, 36 (4), 1996, p. 839.
- ²⁶ *Henry Crabb Robinson on Books and their Writers*, ed. Edith J. Morley, 3 vols, London, 1938, I, p. 442.
- ²⁷ *Visits and Sketches*, I, p. x. *Anna Jameson: Letters and Friendships, 1812–60*, ed. Mrs [Beatrice] Steuart Erskine, London, 1915, pp. 65–70.
- ²⁸ *Diary*, p. 98. Jameson greatly admired de Staël, *Anna Jameson*, ed. Erskine, pp. 37, 49, 102. Clarissa Campbell Orr, 'The Corinne complex: gender, genius and national character', in Campbell Orr (ed.), *Women in the Victorian Art World*, pp. 89–106.
- ²⁹ *Diary*, pp. 245–6. Jameson's heroine sees Morgan as a clever woman, but with 'peculiar and rather unfeminine habits of thinking', *Diary*, p. 127.
- ³⁰ *Visits and Sketches*, I, pp. 2, 16, 7–8.
- ³¹ 'Hallowan the Pedlar', *The Bijou*, London, 1828, pp. 205–39, and 'Much Coin, Much Care', *The Christmas Box*, London, 1828, pp. 194–222. Carlyle described Jameson as one of the 'swarm that came out with the annuals', see Thomas, 'Love and Work', p. 48. Vanessa Warne, 'Thackeray Among the Annuals: Morality, Cultural Authority and the Literary Annual Genre', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 39 (2), summer 2006, pp. 158–78.
- ³² 'Writings of Mrs. Jameson', *GM*, 43, 1855, p. 132.
- ³³ Macpherson, *Memoirs*, p. 238.
- ³⁴ See also Holcomb, 'First Professional English Art Historian', pp. 171–87. Johnston, *Anna Jameson*, pp. 154–207. Thomas, 'Love and Work', pp. 82–9, 176–82.
- ³⁵ *Visits and Sketches*, I, pp. 226–7, 287–8, 300; II, pp. 39–49. Winter, 'German Fresco Painting', pp. 301–4.
- ³⁶ *Visits and Sketches*, II, pp. 137–9. In 'House of Titian' (1845) Jameson criticizes the 'factitious, second-hand exhibitions of modern religious art' produced by the Munich school (*Memoirs and Essays*, pp. 27–8), but her 'Albert Dürer' article (1839) is very pro-Germany, criticizing English art as 'retrograde' by comparison (Johnston, 'Anna Brownell Jameson', p. 33).
- ³⁷ *Visits and Sketches*, I, pp. 259–64.

- ³⁸ Waagen, *Peter Paul Rubens*, pp. v–vii.
- ³⁹ *Athenaeum*, 1691, 24 March 1860, pp. 408–9. John Steegman, *Victorian Taste*, London, 1970, pp. 185–7. Haskell, *Rediscoveries in Art*, p. 106.
- ⁴⁰ *Hand-Book to the Public Galleries of Art in and near London*, London, 1842. *Companion to the Most Celebrated Private Galleries of Art in London*, London, 1844.
- ⁴¹ Franz Kugler, *Handbook of the History of Painting. Part II*, ed. Edmund Head, transl. ‘By a lady’ [Margaret Hutton], London, 1846, pp. li–lii. Lady Jervis also produced a guide to English private collections: *Painting and Celebrated Painters, Ancient and Modern*, 2 vols, London 1854.
- ⁴² Holcomb, ‘Sacred Art and Social Vision’, pp. 94–5. Frank Hermann, *The English as Collectors: A Documentary Sourcebook*, London and Delaware, 1999, pp. 45, 65, 68, 329.
- ⁴³ ‘Some Thoughts on Art. Addressed to the Uninitiated’, *Art Journal*, 2, March 1849, pp. 69–71; April 1849, pp. 103–5.
- ⁴⁴ Review of collected edition, *Memoirs of the Early Italian Painters*, 2 vols, London, 1845, in *Athenaeum*, 18, 929, 16 Aug. 1845, p. 817.
- ⁴⁵ Holcomb, ‘Sacred Art and Social Vision’, p. 113. Johnston, *Anna Jameson*, p. 175. David J. DeLaura, ‘The Context of Browning’s Painter Poems: Aesthetics, Polemics, Historics’, *PMLA*, 95, (3), May 1980, pp. 367–88. Joseph Wiesenfarth, ‘Middlemarch: The Language of Art’, *PMLA*, 97, (3), May 1982, pp. 363–77.
- ⁴⁶ Thomas, ‘Love and Work’, pp. 212–14, 218. Holcomb, ‘Sacred Art and Social Vision’, p. 105.
- ⁴⁷ *Memoirs of the Early Italian Painters*, II, p. 58; I, p. 85.
- ⁴⁸ See, for example, *GM*, 43, 1855, p. 132, where the reviewer praises her ‘diligence and research’.
- ⁴⁹ Alice Oldcastle [Meynell], ‘Mrs. Jameson: a biographical sketch’, *Magazine of Art*, 1879, pp. 123–5.
- ⁵⁰ *Athenaeum*, 18, 929, 16 Aug. 1845, pp. 817–18.
- ⁵¹ *Athenaeum*, 30 Dec. 1865, p. 926, quoted in Robyn Cooper, ‘The growth of interest in Early Italian Painting in Britain: George Darley and the *Athenaeum*, 1834–1846’, *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 43, 1980, p. 201. See also Cordelia Warr, ‘Anna Jameson (1794–1860): “Primitive” Art and Iconography’, in Jane Chance (ed.), *Women Medievalists and the Academy*, London and Madison, 2005, pp. 25–36.
- ⁵² *Memoirs of the Early Italian Painters*, I, p. 39. Cf. *Athenaeum*, 927, 2 Aug. 1845, p. 770.
- ⁵³ *Memoirs of the Early Italian Painters*, I, p. 144.
- ⁵⁴ *GM*, 31, June 1849, p. 619.
- ⁵⁵ *Memoirs of the Early Italian Painters*, I, pp. 12–15, 72, 105, 119–20.
- ⁵⁶ Haskell, *Rediscoveries in Art*, p. 106.
- ⁵⁷ First serialized in the *Athenaeum*, 11 Jan. 1845 to 21 Feb. 1846, published as *The Poetry of Sacred and Legendary Art* (1848); *Legends of the Monastic Orders* (1850), *Legends of the Madonna* (1852); *The History of our Lord* (1864). Warr, ‘Anna Jameson’, p. 25.
- ⁵⁸ Holcomb, ‘Sacred Art and Social Vision’, pp. 107–13.
- ⁵⁹ Quoted in [Charles Kingsley] ‘The Poetry of Sacred and Legendary Art’, *Fraser’s Magazine*, 39, March 1849, p. 287.
- ⁶⁰ Adele M. Ernstrom, ‘“Why should we be always looking back?”: ‘Christian art’ in nineteenth-century historiography in Britain’, *Art History*, 22 (3), Sept. 1999, pp. 421–35. Merrifield reviewed Jameson’s *Legends of the Madonna*, *Edinburgh Review*, 97, 197, Jan. 1853, pp. 230–9.
- ⁶¹ *Companion*, pt 1, pp. 388, xxxviii.
- ⁶² *Companion*, pt 1, pp. xxxix, 386–7. See also ‘Some Thoughts on Art’, *Art Journal*, 2, 1 March 1849, p. 69.
- ⁶³ *Companion*, pt 1, pp. xxxvi–xxxviii.
- ⁶⁴ *Companion*, pt 1, p. xxxiv.
- ⁶⁵ Jameson praises private collectors who share their paintings with the public, *Companion*, pt 2, pp. 79, 287–8.
- ⁶⁶ *Companion*, pt 2, p. 172.
- ⁶⁷ *Memoirs and Essays*, p. 260.
- ⁶⁸ *Companion*, pt 1, p. xxxix. The *Gems of Beauty* and *Flowers of Loveliness* were annuals, originally produced by the Countess of Blessington. See also Jameson’s criticism of Chalon for appealing to ‘Lady Georgianas, and their dowager mammas’ with his ‘conventional elegance and artificial grace’, [Jameson] ‘The Exhibition of the Royal Academy’, *Monthly Chronicle*, 1, 1838, p. 355.

- ⁶⁹ 'Some Thoughts on Art', *Art Journal*, 2, 1 March 1849, pp. 69–71.
- ⁷⁰ *Anna Jameson*, ed. Erskine, pp. 38, 65.
- ⁷¹ *Diary*, pp. 123, 164–5, 83–4, 134, 154, 215, 279. *Anna Jameson*, ed. Erskine, p. 50.
- ⁷² *Diary*, pp. 86, 99–100, 177, 223, 135. See also 'Althorpe', *New Monthly Magazine*, 25, 97, Jan. 1829, pp. 84, 89.
- ⁷³ *Diary*, pp. 48–9, 81, 176.
- ⁷⁴ *Diary*, pp. 223, 64, 126.
- ⁷⁵ *Visits and Sketches*, I, pp. 14, 222–3, 264. *Companion*, pt 1, p. xxxvii.
- ⁷⁶ *Diary*, p. 86. *Companion*, pt 2, pp. 95, 85.
- ⁷⁷ *Companion*, pt 2, p. 194. See also *Memoirs of the Early Italian Painters*, II, pp. 211–12.
- ⁷⁸ Haskell, *Rediscoveries*, pp. 14–17, 41–2.
- ⁷⁹ *Diary*, p. 95. Like Ruskin, she makes an exception for Van Dyck, Rubens and Rembrandt. *Companion*, pt 2, p. 242. See also *Visits and Sketches*, p. 25.
- ⁸⁰ *Companion*, pt 1, pp. xxxviii–xxxix, pt 2, p. 38. *Visits and Sketches*, pp. 245–53. Holcomb, 'Sacred Art and Social Vision', p. 100.
- ⁸¹ *Companion*, pt 2, pp. 92–3, 341–7, 59, 151, 343–5.
- ⁸² 'The House of Titian', *Memoirs and Essays*, pp. 16–18.
- ⁸³ Judith Johnston, 'Invading the House of Titian: The Colonisation of Italian Art. Anna Jameson, John Ruskin and the *Penny Magazine*', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 27 (2), summer 1994, pp. 137–41.
- ⁸⁴ Holcomb, 'Sacred Art and Social Vision', p. 100. *Diary*, pp. 170, 174.
- ⁸⁵ 'The House of Titian', *Memoirs and Essays*, p. 15. *Visits and Sketches*, I, p. 95.
- ⁸⁶ Anna Jameson, *Hand-Book to the Courts of Modern Sculpture*, London, 1854, pp. 10–12. The guide was recommended by Rigby in 'The Crystal Palace', *QR*, 96, March 1855, p. 338.
- ⁸⁷ *Diary*, p. 214. Jameson is more restricted in her appreciation than Graham, however, commenting that Etruscan reliefs are only one step away from 'tasteless' Egyptian art. *Diary*, pp. 230–1.
- ⁸⁸ *Companion*, pt 2, p. 349.
- ⁸⁹ *Companion*, pt 2, pp. 279–80.
- ⁹⁰ *Visits and Sketches*, II, pp. 24, 56.
- ⁹¹ Adele M. Holcomb, 'Anna Jameson on Women Artists', *Woman's Art Journal*, 8 (2), autumn/winter 1987–8, pp. 15–24. *Visits and Sketches*, II, pp. 116–24.
- ⁹² Johnston, *Anna Jameson*, pp. 208–35.
- ⁹³ Macpherson, *Memoirs*, p. 63.
- ⁹⁴ *Visits and Sketches*, p. 148.
- ⁹⁵ Johnston, *Anna Jameson*, pp. 219–20.
- ⁹⁶ *Memoirs and Essays*, pp. 216–18, 230–3, 244–5, 247.
- ⁹⁷ See, for example, Susan Waller, 'The Artist, the Writer, and the Queen: Hosmer, Jameson, and "Zenobia"', *Woman's Art Journal*, 4 (1), spring/summer 1983, pp. 21–8. Holcomb, 'Sacred Art and Social Vision', p. 116.
- ⁹⁸ For manifesto of principles, see *Anna Jameson*, ed. Erskine, pp. 332–4.
- ⁹⁹ Macpherson, *Memoirs*, p. 214.
- ¹⁰⁰ For example, *Hand-Book to the Public Galleries*, pp. v–x.
- ¹⁰¹ *Diary*, pp. 66, 92, 124.
- ¹⁰² *Diary*, p. 96.
- ¹⁰³ *Memoirs of the Early Italian Painters*, II, p. 70.
- ¹⁰⁴ *Visits and Sketches*, p. 253.
- ¹⁰⁵ *Companion*, pt 1, p. xxix.
- ¹⁰⁶ *Hand-Book to the Courts of Modern Sculpture*, pp. 49–50, 56, 6–7, 13.
- ¹⁰⁷ *Diary*, p. 85.
- ¹⁰⁸ [Kingsley] 'The Poetry of Sacred and Legendary Art', p. 287.
- ¹⁰⁹ *GM*, 31, June 1849, pp. 613–14.
- ¹¹⁰ *Blackwood's Magazine*, 78, 482, Dec. 1855, pp. 708–9. Johnston, 'Anna Brownell Jameson', p. 29. See Johnston, *Anna Jameson*, on Ruskin's 'hectoring' tone, p. 171.
- ¹¹¹ 'Retzsch's Fancies', *Monthly Repository*, 8, 1834, p. 678.
- ¹¹² Macpherson, *Memoirs*, p. xii.
- ¹¹³ Thomas, 'Love and Work' pp. 43–4, 36–7. Holcomb, 'Sacred Art and Social Vision', p. 117.

- ¹¹⁴ Johnston, *Anna Jameson*, p. 11. Harriet Martineau, *Biographical Sketches*, fourth edn, London, 1888, p. 433. Jameson felt strongly about her Irish roots (BL Peel Papers, Add. 40601, ff. 110–14).
- ¹¹⁵ Henry Crabb Robinson, ed. Morley, II, p. 702. Martineau, *Biographical Sketches*, pp. 433, 435.
- ¹¹⁶ Hall, *Retrospect of a Long Life*, II, p. 172. Martineau also criticized Jameson's 'incessant recurrence to considerations of sex, whatever the topic', *Biographical Sketches*, p. 434.
- ¹¹⁷ *GM*, 18, Sept. 1842, p. 227.
- ¹¹⁸ Quoted in Thomas, 'Love and Work' p. 214. Ruskin's views on women were, of course, notoriously dismissive. See Pamela Gerrish Nunn, 'The "woman question": Ruskin and the female artist', in Robert Hewison (ed.), *Ruskin's Artists: Studies in the Victorian Visual Economy*, Aldershot and Brookfield VT, 2000, pp. 167–83.
- ¹¹⁹ Haskell, *Rediscoveries in Art*, p. 106. Tim Hilton, *John Ruskin: The Early Years, 1819–1859*, New Haven and London, 1985, pp. 95–6.
- ¹²⁰ *Athenaeum*, 28 June 1834, p. 489.
- ¹²¹ Charles Lock Eastlake, *Contributions to the Literature of the Fine Arts* (1848), second series, 1870, 'Memoir' by Elizabeth Eastlake, p. 164.
- ¹²² 'Retzsch's Fancies', *Monthly Repository*, 8, 1834, p. 678.
- ¹²³ Thomas, 'Love and Work', p. 189.
- ¹²⁴ *Anna Jameson*, ed. Erskine, p. 288. *Diary*, p. 232.
- ¹²⁵ *GM*, 18, Sept. 1842, p. 227. Thomas, 'Love and Work', p. 164.
- ¹²⁶ Oldcastle [Meynell], 'Mrs Jameson', p. 123.
- ¹²⁷ *British Quarterly Review*, 10, 19, Aug. 1849, pp. 208–24. *Athenaeum*, no. 1907, 14 May 1864, p. 668.
- ¹²⁸ [Kingsley] 'The Poetry of Sacred and Legendary Art', pp. 283–98. See also *GM*, 31, June 1849, p. 619.
- ¹²⁹ [Kingsley] 'The Poetry of Sacred and Legendary Art', pp. 283, 288–9, 292.
- ¹³⁰ Thomas, 'Love and Work' p. 218. Clara Thomas, 'Anna Jameson: Art Historian and Critic', *Woman's Art Journal*, 1 (1), spring/summer, 1980, p. 20. *Anna Jameson*, ed. Erskine, p. 9.
- ¹³¹ Holcomb, 'Sacred Art and Social Vision', p. 118. Hilary Fraser, 'Women and the Ends of Art History: Vision and Corporeality in Nineteenth-Century Critical Discourse', *Victorian Studies*, autumn 1998–9, pp. 77–100.
- ¹³² Johnston, *Anna Jameson*, pp. 175–6. Holcomb thinks Ruskin was influenced by Jameson ('Sacred Art and Social Vision', pp. 99, 103). Like Thomas, I would suggest rather that they shared current ideas, 'Love and Work', p. 167.
- ¹³³ Lew, 'Cultural Anxiety', pp. 829–56.
- ¹³⁴ Clarke, *Critical Voices*, p. 46.
- ¹³⁵ *GM*, 8, May 1860, pp. 519–21.

The 'cleverest female now in England': Elizabeth Rigby

Like Jameson, Elizabeth Rigby (1809–93) gained the respect of contemporaries as a perceptive connoisseur. Although her work has received some critical attention, she tends to be remembered today as a useful off-shoot of her more famous husband, Sir Charles Lock Eastlake, President of the Royal Academy and first Director of the National Gallery.¹ Rigby's substantial journals and correspondence, which span the nineteenth century, continue to be quoted as a source for Eastlake's activities as painter and collector, and for the art world generally in this period, as she mixed with eminent artists and patrons.² Yet the only biography, by Marion Lochhead, characterizes her primarily as a bubbly socialite, mixing in Edinburgh literary circles and the London art scene, rather than as the pioneer woman critic she undoubtedly was.³ Although, as wife to Eastlake, she certainly had one foot in the intellectual and one in the fashionable camp, as Steegman describes it, she continues to deserve far more serious consideration in her own right.⁴

Rigby (figs 80–2) had established herself as an accomplished periodical essayist well before marrying Eastlake at the 'advanced' age of thirty-nine, and continued to publish long after his death. Robertson has indicated the importance of Rigby's writing, emphasizing her beneficial influence on Eastlake, yet her work has not been studied in any depth, independently of its relation to her husband.⁵ In this chapter I will examine how Rigby established herself as a prominent writer on art, and consider the importance of her contributions to Victorian debates.

The making of a connoisseur

In discussing Rigby's continuation of Jameson's *History of Our Lord* (1864), one reviewer declared that Rigby's 'reputation as an Art critic, and her intimate acquaintance with the Art treasures both of this country and the Continent, are sufficient to satisfy the reader as to the skill and judgment with which she would work out such a programme'.⁶ By this date, then, she was accepted as a connoisseur of broad knowledge and taste. It is important to consider how she achieved this status, given her lack of any professional role within the art world and in the face of apparently negative attitudes towards the female viewer.

Rigby's relationship with art began long before her marriage to Eastlake. Indeed, it was precisely because she was so involved in artistic circles that she met him.⁷ Born into a highly cultured, gentrified background, she had considerable social advantages over Graham and Jameson. Daughter of Edward Rigby, a Norwich obstetrician and published amateur scholar, and with noted literary and artistic connections on her mother's side, she benefited both from financial security and the encouragement to study, write and publish, though, like many women in this period, she criticized the desultory nature of her early education. Her mother Anne was a Palgrave, and sister-in-law to Dawson Turner, antiquary and patron of John Sell Cotman. Her father was related, through the Taylor family of Norwich, to the writers Harriet Martineau and Sarah Austin, as well as journalist Henry Reeve.⁸

Rigby's serious interest in art developed early, and went well beyond the usual dabbling in marriageable accomplishments. Taught watercolour by Cotman, she initially hoped to become an artist, and trained at the Bloomsbury art school of Henry Sass (c. 1832), as well as copying paintings in the British Museum and National Gallery (fig. 83).⁹ This training had a clear influence on her appreciation of art, leading her to pay close attention to matters of technique (to a far greater extent than Jameson) and to emphasize painterly qualities as much as narrative content.¹⁰ Rigby's 'artist's eye' is also evident in her descriptions of people and scenery, and like Graham, she often took the part of artists in critical debates. In 1844 Rigby wrote in her journal,

It is funny to hear two ladies talk knowingly of painting, neither of them able to draw a stroke; discussing tints and backgrounds, and "just a first daub," which is not more vile than their last.¹¹

This is reminiscent of patronising male attitudes to 'lady connoisseurs', but it emphasizes Rigby's belief in the importance of art practice as a foundation for judging art. It suggests that her sense of superiority as a viewer may have derived partly from her art training.

Rigby's journals reveal considerable engagement with art and artists in the 1830s and '40s. She comments in detail on exhibitions in London and Edinburgh, looks over sketches at Dr Munro's and Sir Alexander Crichton's (physician and collector), and visits artists' studios (those of Turner, Sir William Allan and John Watson-Gordon, for example), as well as private collections (of Lord Westminster and Lord Lansdowne).¹² In 1846 she invited Eastlake, Turner and Landseer to dinner, along with Jameson – a measure of her connections within the art world of the time.¹³ It was essentially Rigby's privileged social status that gave her the wealth and leisure necessary for this training in connoisseurship, as well as the personal connections to engage in such activities.

The family were also able to afford travel on the Continent, another vital factor in establishing their daughter's credentials as a connoisseur. Two years living in Germany and Switzerland (1827–9) gave Rigby the opportunity to view galleries across Europe and to encounter contemporary German art in particular.¹⁴ In addition, this stay developed her language skills to a high level, resulting in her translation of Johann D. Passavant's *Kunstreise durch England und Belgien* (1833).¹⁵ This expertise in German, at a time when interest in the country and its writers was growing in England, led to a series of articles on German topics.¹⁶ In 'Lady Travellers' (1845), Rigby stressed the advantages women gained through their knowledge of modern languages, as opposed to men's study of the classics, and, as in the case of many women writers, it was this linguistic expertise that gave Rigby a route into publishing.¹⁷ It also led to her first art criticism proper, when she was commissioned to review the Düsseldorf exhibition for the *Quarterly Review* (1846).¹⁸

The German connection proved of enduring significance. Rigby toured the Frankfurt gallery with its director Passavant in 1848, and that of Berlin with Gustav Waagen in 1852.¹⁹ She assisted her husband in translating the second edition of Franz Kugler's *Handbook of the History of Painting; Part I: Italian Schools* (1851), and her translation of Waagen's *Treasures of Art in Great Britain*, was published in 1854.²⁰ This translation work would have brought her considerable knowledge of English art collections, as well as a close familiarity with the more scientific German approach to attribution, which was to have considerable influence in England. Passavant and Waagen were invited to stay with the Eastlakes when visiting London in 1850, and were in contact with them on later Continental visits.²¹ Rigby, in partnership with her husband, was therefore important for transmitting ideas regarding the 'new' connoisseurship from Germany to England, and for spreading awareness of modern German art. Like Jameson, through her knowledge of languages, Rigby formed an important bridge between England and the Continent.

Despite her obvious interest in art, however, Rigby established herself as a general essayist, rather than as an art critic. In London she became close friends with the Murrays and John Gibson Lockhart, editor of the *Quarterly Review*, who encouraged her to focus on writing rather than painting.²² While living in Edinburgh in 1842, she socialized in literary circles, meeting writers for *Blackwood's Magazine* and the *Edinburgh Review*, such as 'Christopher North' (Professor John Wilson).²³ Through these personal contacts Rigby became the first woman to write regularly for the male bastion of the *Quarterly*. Though Mary Somerville had written for the periodical, it was essentially a very male-dominated environment.²⁴ The fact that her cousin Sir Francis Palgrave also wrote for the *Quarterly*

partly explains her access to it.²⁵ Having read her *Residence on the Shores of the Baltic* (1841), Lockhart declared to Murray, 'I have no doubt she is the cleverest female now in England, the most original in thought and expression too'.²⁶

Like Jameson, Rigby was initially better known as a travel-writer and literary critic, and she tends to be remembered today for her savage attack on *Jane Eyre* (1848).²⁷ From the 1840s onwards she developed a quasi-professional relationship with the *Quarterly Review*, being invited to write book reviews and essays on a wide range of topics, from Evangelical novels to physiognomy.²⁸ She was accorded considerable freedom of choice, as a letter from Lockhart indicates: 'Bid your slave of Albemarle Street send you any books you want; he will be happy to obey his Queen Bess.'²⁹ Unlike Jameson, however, who increasingly specialized in art – perhaps as a personal marketing strategy – Rigby maintained this broad approach throughout her life, her final decade including essays on themes as diverse as 'Temper', the English Romantic poets, Russian society and French history, alongside her art publications.³⁰ It may be that, given her more exalted class background, she sought to remain within the tradition of cultivated amateur scholarship by maintaining a polite breadth of interests, in the mould of essayists such as Hazlitt and Carlyle. In the case of a financially insecure writer, this flexibility could be interpreted as 'scribbling for the market', but as Rigby had no need for money, it is far more likely that she wished instead to be seen as an intellectual all-rounder.

A substantial portion of Rigby's writing nevertheless does deal with art, and this became her major focus after marrying Eastlake in 1849.³¹ Through her husband, Rigby was as close to official art institutions as it was possible for a woman to be at this time, and she turned this position to intellectual profit. She moved in circles where she befriended Sir Robert Peel and Prince Albert, Royal Academicians Landseer and Leslie, collectors Lord Ward, Samuel Rogers and Lord Lansdowne, and critics Thackeray and Ruskin. The dinner parties and private views presented by Lochhead as part of a gay social whirl were in fact important opportunities for accessing current debates at the heart of the art world, which bolstered Rigby's authority as a writer.

Nor were these exchanges limited to the British art world. From 1855 the Eastlakes travelled annually to the Continent in search of Old Masters for purchase by the National Gallery, keeping them up-to-date with the latest thinking in France, Germany and Italy. Through contacts made abroad, they forged links between artists and critics across Europe, introducing Waagen and Rosa Bonheur to Landseer, for example.³² As with Jameson and Graham, we must recognize the vital importance of such social networks for Rigby's writing. Regardless of class position, the common factor between these women is their

close personal friendship with patrons, painters and publishers, giving them access to information from which, as amateurs, they would otherwise have been excluded. They all used their excellent 'networking skills' to facilitate the exchange of ideas.³³

Rigby's growing confidence as a connoisseur during the period of her marriage is evident, and the influence of her husband is undeniable, as travel with Eastlake brought Rigby privileged access to artworks rarely seen by the public.³⁴ She described him as a 'fountainhead of knowledge', and their shared experiences abroad contributed directly to the broadening of her taste. In 1854, for example, she commented on her growing understanding:

Certainly the appetite for seeing pictures *vient en voyant*, and the knowledge too. The different schools of painters, which clustered in the North of Italy ... are now getting disentangled in my mind, and I begin to know their differences and affinities.³⁵

However, Rigby was forthright and knowledgeable in her opinions on art before her marriage, and remained keenly interested in art matters long after Eastlake's death in 1865. In 1871, for example, she was still keenly pursuing matters of attribution, when she visited the Holbein exhibition in Dresden, chiefly to compare the two Madonnas.³⁶ Her continued involvement in discussions about the division of art collections between the British Museum, National Gallery and South Kensington, in an article written with Harriet Grote in 1868, also indicates her independence from her husband as a player in the art world.³⁷

As with many women writers, Rigby was excluded from certain artworks. At the Certosa di Pavia, for example, she complained that she was permitted to go no further than the nave.³⁸ Unlike Piozzi, she did not rail against this exclusion, accepting it as a fact of Catholic practice, but she praised the organizers of the Crystal Palace exhibition in 1855 for enabling women visitors to examine replicas of carvings from the Certosa, which 'have the double attraction of being forbidden fruit to them'. There is perhaps a hint of resentment at women's exclusion when she notes that these 'exquisite fragments' have 'hitherto wasted their sweetness on male eyes alone'.³⁹ Rigby's experience at San Marco in Florence, in 1861 shows how women managed to bypass such restrictions, however. At first the prior refuses her permission to copy miniatures from a choral book, 'saying there was nowhere for a lady to draw, as the convent admits no women'. Eventually, however, Rigby's charm wins him over, 'till he grinned from ear to ear; and I got my big book, and a comfortable place in a kind of refectory'.⁴⁰

In spite of such difficulties, Rigby demonstrated through her writing that it was possible for a woman to become a connoisseur. In 1854 she set out her views on connoisseurship in a review of Waagen's *Treasures of Art in Great Britain*:

There is no greater mistake than to suppose that connoisseurship in the formative arts is a knack or an instinct with which favoured individuals are born On the contrary, if there be any study in life in which the gift of ardent enthusiasm will do little without unwearied diligence, sound sense, and true humility, it is pre-eminently the study ... of Art.

This belief in the ability to acquire connoisseurship through education and hard work, rather than birth, indicates that she considered it potentially accessible to herself as a woman. In contrast to Jameson, Rigby likened the approach of the art critic to that of a student in the 'exact sciences': 'Nothing is left to feeling, predilection, or wish – his stand must be taken upon a slowly gathered accumulation of facts, each one resting securely on that beneath it.'⁴¹ It was this intellectually rigorous approach that underpinned her art-writing. Of Passavant, Rigby had written that the study of Old Masters, his practice as an artist and talents for research had 'raised him to the rank of one of the first connoisseurs of the day'.⁴² With all these factors in place herself, Rigby fitted her own definition of a connoisseur admirably. Privileged access to art training, travel and influential social connections meant that Rigby was well placed to enter debates around art.

Rigby as a writer on art

'Fairly bitten with all the true pre-Raphaelites'

As in the case of Graham and Jameson, Rigby has been most closely associated with the promotion of early art, whether German and Netherlandish or Italian.⁴³ As niece to Dawson Turner, who collected early Italian masters, Rigby may well have been encouraged to appreciate such works. Though initially she had some reservations about their 'technical defects', she recognized their 'religious earnestness and simplicity' from at least 1846.⁴⁴

Rigby's taste for the Primitives was encouraged by Eastlake – whose interest may in turn have been shared with Graham.⁴⁵ Following their trip through Belgium, the Netherlands and Germany in 1852, Rigby was full of admiration for the old German and Netherlandish artists. She described touring the Berlin Gallery, 'till I was tired of a state of rapture', experiencing a growing admiration for Memling, and for Van Eyck's 'intense' early pictures, with their 'earnest conception, fine feeling for colour, and profuse powers of imitation'. The Italian Primitives were also a revelation to her on this trip. In Dresden she declared, 'I feel that the early Italian pictures in the Berlin Gallery have almost spoilt my eye for the late masters; I had no idea that the pre-Raphaelites could have given me such intense pleasure.'⁴⁶ Rigby certainly seems to have undergone a thorough conversion.

She advised a friend visiting Italy in 1858 to concentrate on 'the great four', Botticelli, Ghirlandaio, Filippo and Filippino Lippi, who constituted 'the core of Florentine art', together with Benozzo Gozzoli and Fra Angelico.⁴⁷

In her 1854 article on Waagen, Rigby charted the change in taste that had taken place regarding the Primitives, partly in response to the second volume of Ruskin's *Modern Painters* (1846). She described how a pure taste for Quattrocento masters had spread within England, so that what was once seen as the 'childlike helplessness' of art, now looked like a 'divinity'.⁴⁸ Yet in 1855 this taste seems still to have been a minority one. Rejecting the 'affectation and mere mechanical facility' of the Carracci, Rigby was instead 'fairly bitten with all the true pre-Raphaelites ... and I shall be truly proud if we succeed ... in introducing them into England, where already there are a chosen few who adore them.'⁴⁹ She saw herself as numbered among this 'chosen few', and was keen to convey her enthusiasm for early art to a broader public through her writing, as well as through Eastlake's purchases for the National Gallery. In 1855, for example, Rigby welcomed the fact that those who could not travel abroad were able to experience the beauties of early art through the replicas displayed at the Crystal Palace. She complained about the lack of casts from the school of Pisano, however, which she saw as the vital link between 'mother antique and daughter Renaissance'. Like Jameson, she responded to the 'unspeakable charm' of Quattrocento sculpture, praising Donatello and Luca della Robbia for their purity. She compared della Robbia's *Cantoria* with Van Eyck's contemporary *Ghent Altarpiece*, as masterpieces representing the act of singing (figs 84, 85).⁵⁰

Despite Ruskin's attacks, Raphael remained Rigby's model of perfection in art, the culmination of earlier beauties. It was his 'slow-grown beauty' and classical restraint that appealed to her, and, like Jameson, she saw the Dresden Sistine Madonna as 'faultless' (fig. 86).⁵¹ While encouraging a growing catholicity of taste, therefore, and an appreciation of early art, Rigby demonstrated her loyalty to the academic hierarchy, contesting conventional notions of female taste through her preference for Raphael.

'There never was such a mistake as that school altogether': modern German art

Rigby also had considerable influence on artists and the public through her criticism of contemporary art. As we have already seen, one of her most innovative roles involved promoting an awareness of German connoisseurship among English readers. In spite of her respect for the 'scientific criticisms' of Passavant, Waagen and Kugler, however, Rigby's view of German art was somewhat less than enthusiastic. To Murray, she wrote, 'There

never was such a mistake as that school altogether.... their dreadful colouring and laboured wax-work finish are intolerable'.⁵²

In her article on 'Modern German Painting' (1846), she was scathing about the Düsseldorf school, complaining that in recording excess factual detail, they neglected the central subject. She criticized the figure of Tasso in Carl Ferdinand Sohn's *Tasso and the Two Leonoras* (1839), for example (fig. 87):

We see the hairs in his beard, the pattern on his vest, the fur of his doublet, the clocks of his stockings, the oranges above his head, and the plants at his feet; but we see nothing of Tasso's own expression, or, if we do, it is only that of a man who is naturally mortified at finding his clothes running away with all the attention due to himself.

In condemning this lack of focus in the composition, she confronts the traditional idea that women were attracted to random detail and fashionable accessories. In all genres, she finds

the same glare of tawdry ornament – the same angling for the eye in over-finished detail – the same absence of all that true philosophy of art which consists in ... blending the idea of the mind with the work of the hand

The 'tea-tray and sign-post painting', as she describes it, of artists like Wilhelm Schadow was supposed to be to women's taste, but Rigby follows the academic line in rejecting 'mere labour' and gaudy colour (fig. 88). Interestingly, she uses the image of embroidery to express the lack of creativity in German art: 'all is hard, positive, and defined, as if slavishly sticking to a pattern from which they dared not swerve ... like ladies at work with their Berlin wool.'⁵³ Like Merrifield and Jameson, she disassociated herself from poor feminine taste by attacking this traditional female pastime.

The German fresco-painters fared little better. Rigby attacked what she considered the imitative character of Cornelius and his fellow Nazarenes, whose work she dismissed as mannered and affected. Having escaped the 'insipidity of Mengs', the Nazarenes had become enamoured of the early masters, but had adopted their 'peculiarities' along with their manner. Critics were misled by the lofty conceptions of these artists:

It is easy to depict virgins, saints, and martyrs with folded palms and downcast eyes, with gold glories round their heads, and little stiff sprigs at their feet. It is easy to denude them of all earthly expression whatsoever, which these artists most successfully do; but to clothe them with a spiritual one – this is another thing.

The Nazarenes imitated the mystical forms of early art, but missed its spirit, Rigby maintained, losing sight of nature and of their own age.⁵⁴ Cornelius, she said, was 'the great gun of German art, and a mere pop-gun in reality'. She accused him of covering miles of cartoon with what claimed to be grand historical compositions, but were in fact nothing more than an endless repetition of large, ill-drawn figures. After a visit to his

studio in 1852, she remarked caustically: 'He says of himself that he stands alone in art, and it is very much to be hoped that he will ever do so.'⁵⁵

While respecting that their aims were noble, Rigby was severe on the achievements of German painters, rejecting them as models for English artists. Although she praised the German states for their generous patronage of public decorative schemes, she criticized the current 'mood of deification' of German art, and questioned whether England was really lagging so very far behind her European neighbour. 'Our English artists can match the best in Germany', she insisted.⁵⁶ Her essay offered a ringing endorsement of artists such as Stothard, Etty, Eastlake and Phillips, whose use of colour in particular was praised as superior to the German fresco-painters. This expression of intense patriotism marks Rigby's similarity with many male writers of the period, of course, and her nationalistic attitudes probably made her all the more acceptable as a writer for the *Quarterly*.

In criticizing German art, Rigby was voicing concerns already raised in current debates. She had read the select committee reports regarding the redecoration of the Houses of Parliament and was familiar with the arguments involved.⁵⁷ Nevertheless, she adopted a controversial stance, challenging the prevailing craze for fresco and questioning the government's reliance on the figure of Cornelius, for example. Rather than taking the Munich school as a model, she recommended the work of Ernst Deger, which she saw as more spiritual.⁵⁸ Although her criticism of the Nazarenes was not new, this recommendation of an alternative model, based on first-hand experience abroad, demonstrates Rigby's originality, while her engagement in the debate on monumental history painting again counters expectations of women's taste.

Ruskin's nemesis: the 'trouncing' of *Modern Painters*

As we have seen, through her discussion of German art, Rigby reflected on contemporary art in Britain. She took a keen interest in many aspects of art culture, showing a strong political, practical, and even commercial, awareness. In her 1855 article on the Crystal Palace, for example, she criticized various aspects of the exhibition, such as the omission of painting, and suggested that the display of even one famous Italian work could have been used as a money-making venture.⁵⁹ In her journals she responded to contemporary painters at Royal Academy exhibitions, praising Wilkie, Landseer, Dyce and Etty, while deploring the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, and contemporary artists are often discussed incidentally in her *Quarterly* articles.⁶⁰ However, perhaps her most striking contribution to art debates in England came in her 1856 review of Ruskin's *Modern Painters*, described by

Lochhead as one of 'the great prose-hymns of hate'. Murray described her at the time as 'trouncing *Modern Painters*'.⁶¹

This essay marks a high-point of confidence in Rigby's role as connoisseur. The tone is combative and unapologetic as, step by step, she points out the inconsistencies in Ruskin's reasoning, attacking his ignorance, his arrogance, and even his morality. Ruskin is a brilliant intellect and confident thinker, Rigby concedes, but he has no higher moral qualities. His writing displays 'a reckless virulence of language almost unparalleled in the annals of literature'. She accuses Ruskin of being a deliberate 'controversialist', attracting attention to himself by consistently countering received opinion, with his 'crochety contradictions and peevish paradoxes'. As in the tale of *The Emperor's New Clothes*, 'he persuades his readers that it is the test of their religion and morality to see as he sees, and the delusion is kept up till some one not more clever, but more simple, ventures to speak the plain truth'.⁶² In other words, like the young boy in the story, Rigby offers herself as the mouthpiece of honest truth in the face of Ruskin's illusory fallacies.

Rigby sees Ruskin's principles in art as fundamentally unsound. Above all, she takes issue with his identification of poetry and painting. The subject of a work of art, she says, is of minor importance compared with the painter's language of colour, chiaroscuro and expression, which gives pleasure in itself, even where the thought, or subject, is of the commonest order. Following writers such as Payne Knight, she insists that the formal 'language' of painting and the subject-matter are inseparable: 'what Nature has joined together let no sophistry sunder!' Ruskin's focus on the literary in art is wholly misguided, Rigby declares, revealing his limitations as an art-viewer. He likes pictures full of incident simply because they give him the opportunity to display his own cleverness; they 'furnish a text for those arbitrary interpretations and egotistical rhapsodies ... which fill Mr. Ruskin's books'. Rigby insists that connoisseurship would be easily attained if the subject were the highest merit in a work of art, as stories appeal merely to ignorant viewers: 'every exhibition shows that the story is all the uneducated care for'.⁶³ Here, then, we have a woman accusing a male critic of being a vulgar, uneducated viewer because he is interested only in narrative content, turning on its head the notion that women were trapped at this level of appreciation.

Rigby further attacks Ruskin's views on morality in landscape, declaring that 'Whether sacred or historical, landscape or domestic, art was *not* given to man either to teach him religion or morality'. Ruskin imputes to art 'responsibilities that do not belong to her', of teaching religion, morality, or even history, so that 'it is easy to convict her of not acting up to them.' He is guilty of applying 'false tests and false conclusions consequent on

false premises'. Because Ruskin thinks art is supposed to be a means of moral teaching, 'he finally overwhelms us with the indignant denunciations of that awful period, when, having reached the guilty summit of perfection, Art altogether ceased to do what from the beginning it had never been intended to do.' Ruskin's attack on Raphael – 'like a fisherman's wife' – is deeply damaging to young artists, Rigby claims, and taints the viewer's enjoyment of these precious works.⁶⁴

Rigby also criticizes Ruskin's 'ostentatious contempt for the whole Dutch school'. It is all too easy, she says, to sneer at men who painted 'stagnant ditches, pollard willows, and stupid boors', but Dutch art is like a handmaiden, sent to reveal the beauty of the lowly things of man, alongside depictions of saints and Madonnas.⁶⁵ This appreciation of Dutch art was often associated with a superior level of aristocratic connoisseurship, and Rigby defends such works as appealing particularly to English, Protestant taste.⁶⁶

The confidence of Rigby's writing is impressive, and she especially underlines her authority as a critic in discussing Ruskin's famous promotion of Turner. She insists that Turner did not need to be defended; he had died rich and famous without Ruskin's help.⁶⁷ Rigby had had some contact with Turner, inviting him to dinner in 1844 and visiting his studio in 1846, and she had always been appreciative of his work. In Edinburgh in 1845, for example, she referred admiringly to his landscapes:

It is absolutely unfair to place Turner in competition with others; it is like exhibiting a little bit of reality among ranks full of imitation; it is a room full of paintings, and a small open space among them, through which you behold the most airy, limpid, cool landscape, with distance interminable.⁶⁸

Emphasizing her position as an established and experienced connoisseur, she writes, 'We have always looked upon Turner, even before Mr. Ruskin was born, as one of the greatest landscape-painters in the world'. In conclusion, she writes,

Separate what is really to be thought and said about art from false assumption, futile speculation, contradictory argument, crochety views, and romantic rubbish, and ninety-nine hundredths of what Mr. Ruskin writes ... will fall to the ground.

Ruskin's work, she predicts, will soon be forgotten, as anyone with eyes and sense will ignore him.⁶⁹ Sadly for Rigby, she was herself the one to be forgotten. It may be that the focus on the figure of Ruskin in Victorian studies led to her being side-lined as a reactionary, oppositional figure.

This article demonstrates Rigby's fearless intervention in debates of the period, and her arguments were seen as intelligent even by those who disagreed with them.⁷⁰ Her opposition to Ruskin is fiercely outspoken, in a manner impossible for her husband, given

his role as President of the Royal Academy, even though Eastlake no doubt seconded her sentiments. Indeed, there was some confusion over authorship at the time, with some suggesting Eastlake had written the article. It is more likely that Rigby was simply voicing the views of those in the Eastlake circle generally.⁷¹ In attacking Ruskin's exhibition criticism for inflicting wanton injury on contemporary artists, for example, she was not just responding to Ruskin's criticism of her husband's works, in *Academy Notes* (1855), but also defending other 'artist-victims' among their friends.⁷² Prince Albert, who was in frequent contact with Eastlake, had also hinted at his distaste for Ruskin's aggressive criticism in a speech to the Royal Academy in May 1851.⁷³ In writing the article, Rigby was able to act as anonymous spokesperson for those who felt hampered by their official position and were unable to express their views freely.

Rigby's logical approach, systematically dismantling Ruskin's arguments, challenged views on women's inability to think rationally. Her self-assurance is supreme as she champions painterly values, the 'heightened ideal', and academic qualities of grandeur, power and grace, so that the merely literary and literal in art are associated instead with a 'vulgar' male writer. It is a measure of women's growing confidence as art-writers that we have here a female amateur roundly accusing a well-known professional male critic of being an inadequate connoisseur.

The modest woman writer and the cloak of anonymity

Rigby's achievements in art-writing were more unconventional than one might expect, perhaps, given Steegman's comment that she 'did not originate'.⁷⁴ This section will investigate how Rigby negotiated perceptions of women writers through her work, and consider how her publishing choices were influenced by her class position and her views on proper femininity.

As in the case of many women writers on art, Rigby challenged stereotypes of women's poor taste through her endorsement of academic values and her authoritative tone. Rigby's writing persona differs significantly from that of Jameson and Graham, however. She does not stress her femininity in the way that Jameson does, nor is she as apologetic as Graham. She writes with a confidence that seems to derive from her superior class status, coupled with her personal contacts in literary and art circles. As wife to Eastlake, especially, she must have felt secure in expressing controversial opinions, as her views were backed up by discussions with those high up in the art world. To underline this

social difference, it is interesting to compare Jameson's respectful, even obsequious, letters to Peel with Rigby's journal, which indicates that they were on far more equal terms.⁷⁵ With direct access to Murray and Lockhart, Rigby had no need for the cautious process of modest self-presentation Jameson required to establish her publishing career. There is an air of entitlement in Rigby's approach from the beginning.

However, significantly, in all the work so far discussed, Rigby was writing anonymously, thereby evading negative perceptions of the female connoisseur. Anonymity was traditionally dictated by the essay context, but it is interesting to consider why Rigby preferred this anonymous form to public recognition of her name. Anonymity was often a strategy for avoiding prejudice against women writers, and Rigby was certainly conscious of this, declaring to Murray that to include 'By a Lady' on the title page was never a recommendation for any book.⁷⁶ Rigby avoided the display of her name to a far greater extent than any of the women writers so far discussed, in books as well as essays; her Passavant translation is anonymous, as is the Waagen. By the time she was wife to Eastlake, anonymity proved a tactful way to avoid embarrassing her husband through her outspoken views, but even before this, the choice may reflect her greater class security than Jameson or Graham. Financially comfortable, she had no need to create a commercial persona or cultivate public 'notoriety' through her title pages, and could therefore afford to be coy. Given her more established social background, she no doubt felt more inclined to adopt the role of anonymous dilettante amateur, in the Bluestocking tradition. As in the case of Mary Berry, Rigby's choice may also indicate a continuing concern among women of a higher class bracket to avoid public exposure through publishing.

Rigby's conventional attitudes to women may also have influenced her preference for anonymity, as her textual invisibility reflects her views on the modesty required of learned women. She objected to 'Blues', such as Agnes Strickland, for example, who seemed to think 'the most fortunate thing in life is to "get a name"', claiming that she herself had no interest in 'ambition or applause'.⁷⁷ Rigby was generally more conservative in her outlook than Jameson and Graham, being a High Anglican Tory and frequently something of a snob, but they all share an ambivalent attitude to women's role.⁷⁸ Like Jameson, Rigby believed in essential differences between the sexes, and felt these should be maintained for the harmonious functioning of society. Her journals reveal a view of women as emotional rather than cerebral creatures, for example. In 1840, she wrote:

Why do men invariably judge better than women? Simply because their feelings have less interference It is well our duties are more confined and prescribed than theirs, or, with such rash monitors within us, what should we do? Our feelings are like the element fire – most excellent servants but wretched mistresses Woman is made to lean, man to

support; and, in the goodness of Providence, a feeling of happiness belongs to the exercise of these respective propensities.⁷⁹

Instinctively, Rigby felt women should be 'real women', which meant a life of domestic retirement and family duty. In 1881 she wrote: 'I judge of my sister women in a very matter-of-fact way – as to whether, namely, they are good daughters, wives, or mothers I have no other test of character.'⁸⁰

However, Rigby's conformist views on femininity seem to have had little impact on her actions. They certainly did not stand in the way of her ambitions, initially as an artist, and later as a writer. In 1847, criticizing Picturesque landscapes, she wrote 'I should like to choose a totally different class of pictures, more formal and truthful – the Holbeins of landscape – and break the public in to admire those'.⁸¹ This reveals a clear desire to mould public taste through her writing. Though she often wrote within the traditionally 'feminine' genres of travel-writing, fiction, translation and biography, she also entered the heavily male-dominated field of essay-writing, contributing to heavyweight periodicals rather than women's magazines. When asked to contribute to a new 'Lady Magazine', she declared 'What is not good enough for a man's taste is too bad for a woman's'.⁸² She never seems to have written for women separately, as Jameson did, implying greater confidence in her abilities as a writer, as well as in the intellect of female readers.

In her personal life, Rigby seems to have been a relatively equal partner to her husband, believing that women should be far more than just 'good adjectives' and 'good doormats' to their husbands.⁸³ Ernstrom has emphasized the mutually creative exchange of the Eastlake partnership, describing them as 'equally lenders and borrowers in turn' in intellectual terms.⁸⁴ Though far less of a proto-feminist than Jameson, and without her campaigning zeal, Rigby nevertheless believed in the logic of women's being given the vote, and strongly approved of professional women artists, such as Rosa Bonheur.⁸⁵ Above all, Rigby seems to have supported women's claims to a life of the mind. She proclaimed the superiority of the educated English lady, bemoaning the dullness of female society in Germany and Russia.⁸⁶ Like Jameson, she called for improvements in women's education, especially as a means to employment, and expressed increasing sympathy for women forced by 'worldly distress' to take on an active role.⁸⁷ While planning an article on female education in 1878, she wrote,

the worms have turned, and insist on knowing more and better. Considering ... a good many ladies, in default of either resource, are left to starve or to maintain themselves, I think they have a right to break through that ideal of feminine helplessness which gentlemen deem so attractive, and prepare for the possibility of helping themselves.⁸⁸

Rigby assumed that being a woman of letters was perfectly compatible with being a proper lady, but in her assessments of fellow women writers and artists, she is always acutely aware of their adherence to, or departure from, conventional femininity. Harriet Grote is described as 'the cleverest woman in London, only of masculine and not feminine character', while Jameson and Rosa Bonheur are considered more suitably feminine.⁸⁹ On Jameson's death, Rigby wrote that she was 'a very *strong* woman, though never approaching the man – profound and conscientious in all she did, and devoted to such good works as the world knew nothing of'.⁹⁰ It is interesting to note the stress on Jameson's femininity and on her good works, kept modestly hidden from the world, as much as on her intellectual achievements. Rigby therefore adhered closely to the model of the proper woman writer, as established by earlier generations.

What Rigby perceived as essential feminine attributes were often positive qualities, which gave women particular strengths in their writing. She echoes Jameson's views on female artists, for instance, when she writes, 'How little the female writers of the present day seem aware of their great responsibility: eager to show what they can do like men, they disregard the fact that they are capable of much more as women.'⁹¹ In her 'Lady Travellers' article, Rigby suggested there were 'peculiar powers inherent in ladies' eyes'; she praised particularly their superior 'power of observation' and attention to detail. Women's informal education also meant they were less blinkered by preconceived ideas than men, more open to fresh impressions. Reporters of both sexes were required, she believed, to 'supply each other's deficiencies'.⁹²

Rigby therefore underlined the importance of 'womanliness' in writing. It was not 'high endowments of mind' that mattered in the woman writer, but her 'soundness of principle and healthiness of heart, without which the most brilliant of women's books, like the most brilliant woman herself, never fails to leave the sense of something wanted'. She criticized Madame Calderon de la Barca's 'unwomanlike' writing, which, though it would be admirable if written by a man, had 'neither a woman's hand nor heart in it'. Modern philosophers could write what they pleased about the mental equality of the sexes, Rigby stated, 'but ladies may depend upon this, that some of the most vigorous and forcible writing in the English language would lose all its charm with a woman's name prefixed to it.'⁹³ Perhaps this is the very reason why she chose not to place a woman's name in front of her own vigorous and forcibly written prose.

There was clearly a conflict between Rigby's belief in modest femininity and her desire to express forthright opinions which could only be resolved by writing anonymously. The fact that she believed women should only write in a particular way to be

acceptable meant that Rigby would have felt constrained writing as a woman. This may explain why the essay form proved so appropriate to her. The anonymity of much of her writing gave Rigby the opportunity to be less of a 'proper' woman writer, in that it allowed her to be provocative and outspoken, as in her criticism of Ruskin. It even allowed her to adopt a male voice on occasion, to discuss issues considered inappropriate to women, or ironically to undermine male prejudices about women.⁹⁴ In 'Modern German Painting', for example, she says the French writer Count Raczinski has praised the Christian virtues of the German artists. If this makes them paint with such mediocrity, she declares, 'we must say, give us a little vice!'⁹⁵ It is difficult to imagine such a sentence being uttered openly by a woman. It was no doubt because Rigby had such a strong sense of how women 'ought' to write that she chose to publish anonymously, allowing her to express opinions with greater freedom than within the framework of conventional expectations. Anonymity may therefore have been prompted as much by Rigby's beliefs in essential femininity as by her social background.

Revealed as a woman

The pose of dilettante anonymity and feminine modesty did not necessarily mean that the identity of the writer remained a secret, and Rigby was complimented for her contributions in private letters.⁹⁶ Within art and literary circles of the time, apart from occasional confusion over authorship, it tended to be known who had written particular essays. Rigby was therefore not as invisible as we might think, despite her preference for anonymity. I will now consider how her self-presentation changed when she wrote openly as a woman.

As far as contemporaries were concerned, one of Rigby's most important contributions to art literature (and the first to carry her name) was her completion of *The History of Our Lord* (1864), fifth volume in the *Sacred and Legendary Art* series, following Jameson's death in 1860. As in the case of earlier women writers, Rigby may have felt happier putting her name to a work on a religious topic. She was also able to excuse away any desire for fame by insisting that the work had been undertaken in homage to an old friend and at the request of others – a fact often stressed in the reviews. There is a great measure of regard in the Eastlakes' references to Jameson, just as they had been hugely respectful of Graham as a female connoisseur.⁹⁷ A certain warmth seems to have existed between them on a personal level, despite their social disparity, and Rigby admired Jameson's work as a writer.⁹⁸ In the 'Lady Travellers' article she had praised Jameson's

Diary of an Ennuyée for its descriptions and opinions.⁹⁹ She also recommended her 'admirable' sculpture handbook in the 'Crystal Palace' essay (1855) and the *Sacred and Legendary Art* series in the 1874 edition of Kugler.¹⁰⁰ The importance of Jameson as a role model for later women writers on art cannot be overstated.

The relish with which Rigby threw herself into the task of completing Jameson's work indicates how well it chimed with her own interests. She shared with Jameson a fascination with early Christian art and with tracing the 'chain of genealogy' in imagery from the Greeks to the Renaissance. In her Waagen review (1854) she had described medieval manuscripts and miniatures as 'the great storehouse' in which Christian imagery 'lay for centuries embalmed', holding fast to the 'true tradition', while her 'Crystal Palace' article (1855) had pointed to Greek winged Victories as precedents for announcing angels in Christian art. The later *Frescoes by Raphael ... in the Vatican* (1879), engraved by Grüner and Langer, with texts by Rigby, also reveals her continuing interest in typology.¹⁰¹ Together with Twining and Jameson, Rigby contributed to the beginnings of iconographical studies.

Reviews were generous in their response to *The History of Our Lord*. 'Lady Eastlake,' wrote William Macpherson, 'has drawn a luminous and instructive history.'¹⁰² As Ainslie Robinson has shown, critical reactions depended on the loyalties of the various periodicals, the *Quarterly Review* naturally concentrating on Rigby's role in the text, and the *Art Journal* on Jameson's.¹⁰³ Rigby was acknowledged in most reviews to have handled the religious theme with tact, though the *Dublin Review* accused her of being too overtly Protestant, and lacking the more liberal sympathies of Jameson. Although reviewers apportioned praise differently between the two writers, all agreed on the importance of the work, claiming that only women could have dealt with the subject with such sensitivity.

This was the only publication to carry Rigby's name during her married life. Although they collaborated on certain projects, such as the editions of Kugler, Rigby was always concerned to efface herself as an author in favour of her husband, as any properly modest wife was expected to do. She was somewhat embarrassed by the Oxford encomium of 1853, on the occasion of Eastlake's being awarded an honorary doctorate, as it included a reference to his '*conjugam clarissimam*'.¹⁰⁴ She preferred to take a background role, supporting his work in a more conservatively acceptable manner. Intriguingly, however, Rigby became much less of a wall-flower after her husband's death; post-1865 most publications do bear her name – as 'Lady Eastlake' – and she demonstrates a growing desire to claim credit for her work.¹⁰⁵ Her irritated exchange with Murray, demanding the

inclusion of her name on the title page of the fourth revised edition of Kugler (1874), indicates a distinct volte-face from the pose of anonymous amateur. She argued that commercial advantages were attached to the use of her name, indicating a high estimation of her reputation by this date. This could reflect a change in social attitudes, in that it was by now considered more acceptable for a woman of her class to publish, or it may be that, as a widow, she felt she had by now paid her dues to Eastlake, and was at last free to claim some credit for herself. Certainly, Rigby had no financial need to alter her position on anonymity. She may simply have felt that she deserved recognition for what was clearly her own work, given that Eastlake had died nearly ten years previously.

Under her own name, Rigby edited Eastlake's writings and her father's letters, published memoirs of her husband, of John Gibson and Harriet Grote, and translated a German work on Coleridge.¹⁰⁶ In writing memoirs of old friends, editing family papers and translating, Rigby was publishing in forms deemed eminently suitable for women.¹⁰⁷ Her more challenging essays, meanwhile, continued to be published anonymously. When writing openly as herself, Rigby was more modest in self-presentation. Her memoir of Eastlake makes barely a mention of their married life or of her involvement in his collecting trips, brushing over this period of his life with great reticence.¹⁰⁸ In the preface to *Five Great Painters* (1883), reprinted from essays first published in the *Edinburgh and Quarterly Review* in the 1870s, she effaces her claims to authority almost entirely:

the writer founds her claim to the indulgence of the reader on no study or thought of her own, but solely on the advantages enjoyed by her for long years at the side of the late Sir Charles Lock Eastlake.¹⁰⁹

Although she had gained significantly from her husband's knowledge, there was clearly a two-way exchange within the partnership. Rigby's extreme self-deprecation here, in sharp contrast to the authoritative tone of her Ruskin review, can surely be explained only by the lack of anonymity and the desire to present herself as a dutiful, devoted wife. It may be, as in the case of Graham, that this self-presentation as a modest woman has contributed to Rigby's virtual disappearance from histories of art history.¹¹⁰

Conclusion

There are great contradictions in Rigby. More conservative than Jameson in her social views, she is nevertheless more challenging as a writer than any of the women so far considered. While stressing her overall loyalty to traditional academic hierarchies, she

simultaneously promoted a greater catholicity of taste. She demonstrated that women could write as the intellectual equals of men, and yet because she chose to write anonymously, she did little to challenge prevailing prejudices concerning women writers and art-viewers. Though Jameson was more of a feminist campaigner, she wrote in a far more conventionally feminine voice than Rigby, while Rigby, the more conservative of the two in terms of her views of women, was the more 'masculine' in tone. Ironically, although Jameson is often considered less scholarly than Rigby, she ultimately did more to challenge perceptions of the female connoisseur because she wrote openly as a woman.

Both writers apparently disregarded anti-female prejudice in art-viewing, speaking with confidence and authority in their texts. The stereotype of the ignorant viewer is instead projected onto others, generally of a lower class.¹¹¹ Jameson and Rigby could be just as derogatory about female viewers as male writers had been, while claiming for themselves the right to superior connoisseurship.¹¹² As in the case of earlier women art-writers, they continued to emphasize that their authority was derived from extensive research, travel and experience, but their self-presentation as writers was far less apologetic than before.

In Rigby's writing, there is no evidence of any desire to project a distinctively feminine way of looking at art. Like Jameson, she sees women as possessing useful skills in relation to art-viewing, but she writes in a voice that is indistinguishable from male writing. Both Jameson and Rigby continue to emphasize that they are 'proper' women writers, and to see their femininity as being of equal importance with their intellectual achievements. In the move from Jameson to Rigby, however, there is a definite evolution from a self-consciously feminine voice to a more individual presentation, albeit aided and abetted by anonymity. It may be that Rigby's greater confidence indicates a response to growing tolerance of women as writers and art critics. However, it also appears to reflect her more secure class position and personal circumstances.

Rigby saw connoisseurship as a form of 'modern profession', requiring 'the astuteness of the lawyer, the diagnosis of the physician, and the research of the antiquary and historian'.¹¹³ Though she has not been described as a professional art historian, as Jameson has, because she was never reliant on the financial proceeds of her work, Rigby was most certainly, by her own definition, a respected connoisseur, who encouraged the notion that it was acceptable for educated women to contribute to public debates through journalism. As in the case of Jameson, it seems that Rigby was far from being excluded from the 'Republic of Taste' of her own day, but was warmly encouraged in her work by male artists, publishers and writers.

Though certain prejudices concerning the female viewer were still operating, it is clear that individual women could and did win recognition as art critics – and Rigby was certainly one of these. Her writing was probably never as widely known as that of Jameson, partly because of her preference for anonymity, partly because she did not specialize in art to the same extent, and partly because she wrote for a more select readership. She was far less of a popularizer than Jameson, writing for a cultured elite rather than the common reader. Nevertheless, she was seen by contemporaries as possessing taste and judgment, and evidently wielded considerable influence within the art world. Her success as a writer demonstrates the increasing acceptance of female connoisseurs within the Victorian art world. It is therefore all the more disappointing that she receives so little recognition today.

¹ Adele M. Ernstrom, “Equally lenders and borrowers in turn”: the working and married lives of the Eastlakes’, *Art History*, 15 (4), Dec. 1992, pp. 470–85. She will be referred to as Rigby throughout, in order to avoid confusion with her husband.

² *Journals and Correspondence of Lady Eastlake*, ed. Charles Eastlake Smith, 2 vols, London, 1895. She edited Charles Eastlake’s *Materials for a History of Oil Painting*, II, London, 1869, and *Contributions to the Literature of the Fine Arts* (1848), second series, London, 1870.

³ Marion Lochhead, *Elizabeth Rigby, Lady Eastlake*, London, 1961.

⁴ Steegman, *Victorian Taste*, p. 7.

⁵ Robertson, *Sir Charles Eastlake*, pp. 100–21.

⁶ *Notes and Queries*, 7 May 1864, p. 389. After Jameson’s death (1860), Rigby completed this final volume in the *Sacred and Legendary Art* series. Ainslie Robinson, ‘The History of Our Lord as Exemplified in Works of Art: Anna Jameson’s coup de grâce’, *Women’s Writing*, 10 (1), 2003, pp. 187–200.

⁷ Having admired his work since at least 1844, Rigby met him in 1846 at Murray’s, when Jameson was also present. *Journals*, I, pp. 118, 185, 187–8.

⁸ For family trees, see Robertson, *Sir Charles Eastlake*, pp. 101–4. *Journals*, I, pp. 4–5. Lochhead, *Elizabeth Rigby*, pp. 2–3.

⁹ *Journals*, I, pp. 6–8. According to her nephew, ‘she drew and sketched on every occasion for nearly sixty years ... and has left some 2,000 specimens of her remarkable industry and talent’ (*Journals*, I, p. 4). Tate Britain and the Victoria & Albert Museum hold drawings by her.

¹⁰ See, for example, her description of Van Dyck, *Journals*, I, p. 168, Nov. 1845.

¹¹ *Journals*, I, p. 148, Nov. 1844.

¹² *Journals*, I, pp. 50–3, 59, 118–20, 157–9, 168, 183–92, 205–6.

¹³ *Journals*, I, pp. 187–8.

¹⁴ She also spent time in Russia and the Baltic states visiting her married sisters, two of whom were Estonian baronesses.

¹⁵ Johann D. Passavant, *Tour of a German Artist in England*, London, 1836. *Journals*, I, p. 5. This was reviewed with Graham’s *Essays Towards the History of Painting* in the *British and Foreign Review*, July 1836, pp. 150–67. Passavant, the reviewer says, ‘has had the good fortune to be translated by a very accomplished artist’.

¹⁶ Including reviews of Goethe’s letters, *Foreign Quarterly Review* (July 1836), and of ‘Biographies of German Ladies’, *QR*, 73, Dec. 1843.

¹⁷ ‘Lady Travellers’, *QR*, 76, June 1845, p. 99. Sherman and Holcomb (eds), *Women as Interpreters of the Visual Arts*, p. 10.

¹⁸ ‘Modern German Painting’, *QR*, 77, March 1846, pp. 323–48.

- ¹⁹ *Journals*, I, pp. 217, 283.
- ²⁰ Franz Kugler, *Handbook of the History of Painting*, ed. Charles Eastlake, transl 'By a lady' [Margaret Hutton], London, 1842. Rigby translated new material on the Catacombs and early Christian mosaics for the second edition (London, 1851), though her contribution is not acknowledged (*Journals*, I, p. 237, July 1849). Gustav Waagen, *Treasures of Art in Great Britain* [transl. Elizabeth Eastlake], 3 vols, London, 1854.
- ²¹ Waagen, *Treasures of Art*, p. iii. Robertson, *Sir Charles Eastlake*, pp. 110–11, 129. Rigby also described Kugler as 'a gentleman of high reputation among the German Art-critics'. Kugler, *Handbook*, fourth revised edn, ed. Elizabeth Eastlake, London, 1874, p. iii.
- ²² She was first introduced to Murray by Henry Reeve c. 1840, *Journals*, I, p. 8.
- ²³ Lochhead, *Elizabeth Rigby*, p. 37.
- ²⁴ Myron F. Brightfield, 'Lockhart's Quarterly Contributors', *PMLA* 59 (2), June 1944, pp. 491–512.
- ²⁵ Smiles, *A Publisher and his Friends*, II, pp. 441–2.
- ²⁶ Lochhead, *Elizabeth Rigby*, p. 29.
- ²⁷ 'Vanity Fair and Jane Eyre', *QR*, 84, Dec. 1848, pp. 153–85.
- ²⁸ For Rigby's publications, see Robertson, *Sir Charles Eastlake*, pp. 428–30.
- ²⁹ Lochhead, *Elizabeth Rigby*, p. 58.
- ³⁰ These included *Five Great Painters* (1883) and essays on connoisseurs Samuel Rogers and Giovanni Morelli.
- ³¹ Ernstrom suggests she wrote less on art after his death, but this does not appear to be the case. 'Equally lenders and borrowers', p. 471.
- ³² Robertson, *Sir Charles Eastlake*, pp. 142–61, 136. *Journals*, II, pp. 41–4, July 1854.
- ³³ Mitchell, 'The busy daughters of Clio', pp. 113–18. Another common factor is their childlessness.
- ³⁴ Ernstrom, 'Equally lenders and borrowers', p. 476.
- ³⁵ *Journals*, II, pp. 24–5.
- ³⁶ *Journals*, II, pp. 222–3. Michael Hatt and Charlotte Klonk, *Art History: A Critical Introduction to Its Methods*, Manchester and New York, 2006, p. 62.
- ³⁷ 'The British Museum', *QR*, 124, Jan. 1868, pp. 147–79.
- ³⁸ *Journals*, II, p. 63, Sept. 1855.
- ³⁹ 'The Crystal Palace', *QR*, 96, March 1855, p. 333. First erected in 1851 in Hyde Park, the Crystal Palace re-opened in Sydenham in 1855.
- ⁴⁰ *Journals*, II, pp. 171–2.
- ⁴¹ 'Treasures of Art in Great Britain', *QR*, 94, March 1854, p. 467. She later considered Morelli 'the ablest connoisseur of art of his time' for applying scientific methods to art. 'Giovanni Morelli: the Patriot and the Critic', *QR*, 173, July 1891, pp. 235, 242.
- ⁴² Passavant, *Tour of a German Artist*, p. xvi.
- ⁴³ Steegman, *Victorian Taste*, pp. 236–9.
- ⁴⁴ 'Modern German Painting', *QR*, 77, March 1846, pp. 323–48, esp. 325–6. See her praise for Holbein's 'truth' in *Journals*, I, pp. 190, 205–6, 1846.
- ⁴⁵ Robertson, *Sir Charles Eastlake*, p. 34.
- ⁴⁶ That is, in the literal sense of artists before Raphael. *Journals*, I, pp. 283–4, 285–6. 'Treasures of Art', p. 497.
- ⁴⁷ Letter to Jane Gifford, *Journals*, II, pp. 89–90, July 1858. See also *Journals*, II, pp. 102–3, Sept. 1858.
- ⁴⁸ 'Treasures of Art', pp. 482–4.
- ⁴⁹ *Journals*, II, p. 76.
- ⁵⁰ 'Crystal Palace', pp. 330, 332.
- ⁵¹ *Journals*, I, pp. 127, 150.
- ⁵² George Paston, *At John Murray's 1843–92: Records of a Literary Circle*, London, 1932, p. 32.
- ⁵³ 'Modern German Painting', pp. 333–5, 343.
- ⁵⁴ 'Modern German Painting', pp. 337, 324–30.
- ⁵⁵ *Journals*, I, p. 285, Sept. 1852. Eastlake also had reservations about Cornelius, considering his works 'vulgar and exaggerated' (*Contributions*, pp. 126–7).
- ⁵⁶ 'Modern German Painting', p. 328.

- ⁵⁷ 'Modern German Painting', pp. 347–8. In November 1845, for example, she had read the Reports of the Fine Arts Commission, commenting that 'Eastlake evidently thinks that the Germans are a purely imitative school'. *Journals*, I, p. 169.
- ⁵⁸ 'Modern German Painting', pp. 345–7.
- ⁵⁹ 'Crystal Palace', pp. 340–1.
- ⁶⁰ *Journals*, I, pp. 118, 183–5, 243. Lochhead, *Elizabeth Rigby*, p. 133.
- ⁶¹ 'Modern Painters', *QR*, 98, pp. 384–433, March 1856. Lochhead, *Elizabeth Rigby*, p. 116. This marked the publication of Ruskin's third volume in the series. Paston, *At John Murray's*, p. 164.
- ⁶² 'Modern Painters', pp. 387, 423, 386.
- ⁶³ 'Modern Painters', pp. 388, 398, 392–3, 395, 399–400.
- ⁶⁴ 'Modern Painters', pp. 404, 426, 420.
- ⁶⁵ 'Modern Painters', pp. 397, 408–9.
- ⁶⁶ 'Treasures of Art', pp. 498–500.
- ⁶⁷ 'Modern Painters', pp. 407–8.
- ⁶⁸ *Journals*, I, pp. 119–20, 185–9, 158–9.
- ⁶⁹ 'Modern Painters', pp. 410, 432–3.
- ⁷⁰ Wendell Stacy Johnson, "'The Bride of Literature": Ruskin, the Eastlakes, and Mid-Victorian Theories of Art', *Victorian Newsletter*, 26, autumn 1964, pp. 23–8 (esp. pp. 26–8). [George Richmond] 'Pictures and Picture-Criticism', *National Review*, July 1856, p. 84.
- ⁷¹ Henry Crabb Robinson, ed. Morley, II, p. 759.
- ⁷² 'Modern Painters', pp. 430–2.
- ⁷³ Quoted in [Elizabeth Eastlake] 'The late Prince Consort', *QR*, 111, Jan. 1862, p. 189.
- ⁷⁴ Steegman, *Victorian Taste*, p. 187.
- ⁷⁵ BL Peel Papers, Add. 40532, ff. 168–9, 40541, ff. 338–9. Robertson, *Sir Charles Eastlake*, pp. 108–110.
- ⁷⁶ Lochhead, *Elizabeth Rigby*, pp. 29–30. Virginia Blain, 'Anonymity and the Discourse of Amateurism: Caroline Bowles Southey negotiates *Blackwoods* 1820–47', in Barbara Garlick and Margaret Harris (eds), *Victorian Journalism: Exotic and Domestic*, St Lucia, 1998, pp. 1–18 (esp. pp. 5, 11–12, 14–15).
- ⁷⁷ *Journals*, I, pp. 122, 40.
- ⁷⁸ Rigby was often scathing about the poor, for example. See 'Crystal Palace', p. 351, and Lochhead, *Elizabeth Rigby*, pp. 134–5. Even Queen Victoria found her 'pompous', Bernard Denvir, 'The Eastlakes', *QR*, 295, Jan. 1957, p. 85.
- ⁷⁹ *Journals*, I, pp. 20–1.
- ⁸⁰ Letter to Layard, *Journals*, II, p. 272, Sept. 1881.
- ⁸¹ *Journals*, I, p. 209, July 1847.
- ⁸² *Journals*, I, p. 34, 1842.
- ⁸³ Lochhead, *Elizabeth Rigby*, p. 132.
- ⁸⁴ Ernstrom, 'Equally lenders and borrowers in turn', pp. 480–2.
- ⁸⁵ *Journals*, II, pp. 283–4, 41–4.
- ⁸⁶ Lochhead, *Elizabeth Rigby*, p. 7. 'Crystal Palace', p. 329.
- ⁸⁷ *Journals*, II, p. 256, March 1878.
- ⁸⁸ Letter to Layard, *Journals*, II, pp. 254–5, Jan. 1878. 'The Englishwoman at school', *QR*, 146, July 1878, pp. 40–69.
- ⁸⁹ *Journals*, I, pp. 323, June 1855; II, pp. 41–4, July 1854.
- ⁹⁰ Letter to Jane Gifford, *Journals*, II, p. 137, March 1860.
- ⁹¹ *Journals*, I, p. 39, Dec. 1842.
- ⁹² 'Lady Travellers', pp. 98–100. See also Rigby's review of 'Art and Nature', *QR*, 91, June 1852, p. 1: the writer ('M.J.M.D.') has turned to account that 'weakness in which lies a lady-tourist's strength', that is, the absence of classical learning, which makes women more original.
- ⁹³ 'Lady Travellers', pp. 137, 117.
- ⁹⁴ In 'Lady Travellers' and 'The Art of Dress', *QR*, 79, March 1847.
- ⁹⁵ 'Modern German Painting', p. 344.
- ⁹⁶ Lochhead, *Elizabeth Rigby*, p. 62.
- ⁹⁷ Eastlake, *Contributions*, pp. 92–6.
- ⁹⁸ *Journals*, I, pp. 187–8, 248, May 1846 and 1850. This was in spite of Rigby's anti-Irish prejudice, see Lochhead, *Elizabeth Rigby*, p. 97.

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- ⁹⁹ 'Lady Travellers', p. 105. She also mentions Graham's *Residence in the Brazils* among 'older works of great value and attraction'.
- ¹⁰⁰ 'Crystal Palace', p. 338. Kugler, *Handbook*, 1874, p. xi. Her preface to *The History of Our Lord* is also fulsome in its praise.
- ¹⁰¹ 'Treasures of Art', p. 469. 'Crystal Palace', p. 327. *Frescoes by Raphael on the Ceiling of the Stanza dell'Elidoro in the Vatican*, London, 1876.
- ¹⁰² [Elizabeth Eastlake and William Macpherson] 'Christian Art', *QR*, 116, July 1864, pp. 143–76 (esp. pp. 144–5).
- ¹⁰³ Robinson, 'The History of Our Lord', p. 192.
- ¹⁰⁴ *Journals*, I, pp. 311–12. Ernstrom, 'Equally lenders and borrowers', pp. 479–80.
- ¹⁰⁵ An exception is *Fellowship: Letters to My Sister Mourners* (1868), which may have felt too personal as a topic.
- ¹⁰⁶ Robertson, *Sir Charles Eastlake*, pp. 429–30.
- ¹⁰⁷ Mitchell, 'The busy daughters of Clio', pp. 121–3.
- ¹⁰⁸ Eastlake, *Contributions*, p. 183.
- ¹⁰⁹ Elizabeth Eastlake, *Five Great Painters*, 2 vols, London, 1883, preface (n.p.).
- ¹¹⁰ Confusion between maiden and married names also contributes to the disappearance of women writers. See, for example, Winter, 'German Fresco Painting', where she appears not to realise that Elizabeth Rigby and Lady Eastlake are the same person (pp. 313, 319).
- ¹¹¹ Elizabeth Eastlake, *Life of John Gibson, RA, Sculptor*, London, 1870, pp. 15–16.
- ¹¹² *Ibid*, pp. 221–2.
- ¹¹³ 'Giovanni Morelli', p. 236. *Journals*, II, p. 303.

Conclusion

Throughout this thesis, I have endeavoured to maintain a double focus, studying perceptions of the female art-viewer, as constructed by the press, alongside perceptions of art, as expressed by the female viewers themselves. This has enabled me to contextualize the growing importance of women writers on art in the first half of the nineteenth century, and to demonstrate increased acceptance of the female connoisseur within the 'Republic of Taste' by 1860.

The first two chapters of my thesis revealed the extraordinary persistence of negative stereotypes of female art-viewing between 1780 and 1860 – and, indeed, well beyond that date. I demonstrated that in late-eighteenth-century exhibition pamphlets, poems and sketches, women's taste tended to be conflated with that of vulgar, lower-class viewers, suggesting an inability to engage with art on anything other than a superficial level. My survey of satirical writing in the first half of the nineteenth century demonstrated the enduring strength of such notions, associating female viewers with vanity and fashion, and insinuating that they treated exhibitions as social events, rather than as opportunities for meaningful aesthetic experience. Women's art-viewing continued to be seen as requiring male instruction and male protection, while women's supposed taste for gaudy colour and less demanding genres remained a constant of comic sketches from Pasquin and Pindar to *Punch*.

However, by studying letters, journals and institutional records, I indicated in Chapter 1 that women were in fact sophisticated spectators, forming a vital part of the late-eighteenth-century art world. Women collectors were certainly lampooned, but there were also many positive role models for female art-viewers in this period. As I have shown, several factors point to great respect for women's taste: the premiums offered by the Society of Arts; the cultivation of women's patronage; and the compliments paid to individual women by such figures as Reynolds and Walpole. My research therefore emphasizes that women were not excluded to the extent one might expect, given prevailing views on their inability to appreciate art. There have been some studies of women artists in this period, but this work needs to be extended to cover the activities of women as informal facilitators on behalf of artists. Further work remains to be done, in particular, on women's involvement with the Society of Arts and the emerging art institutions of the early nineteenth century, such as the British Institution and watercolour societies.

In Chapter 2 nineteenth-century satirical magazines were contrasted with more serious periodicals, which revealed very little distinction between the presentation of art topics to male and female audiences. I suggested that the comic discourse of *Punch* existed alongside a more positive view of women's intellectual abilities in the field of connoisseurship. In my analysis of John Bell's *La Belle Assemblée* and *Bell's Weekly Messenger*, intended for a female and mixed readership, respectively, initial findings suggested that art appreciation was essentially a shared culture, in which men and women spoke a common language. A detailed comparison of other magazines would be helpful here (e.g. the *Lady's Monthly Museum* with the *Monthly Mirror*, or *British Lady's Magazine* with the *Examiner*), to see if this hypothesis holds true for other publishers. This is an area that offers potential for further research, to enhance our understanding of how women were targeted as part of the expanding audiences for art, especially in the pre-Victorian period.

It is evident from my examination of journals and correspondence that women's involvement in the art world steadily increased in the nineteenth century. The area that most clearly demonstrates growing acceptance of the female connoisseur, however, is publishing. Actress and poet Mary Robinson suggested in 1799 that publishing was the perfect solution for women, as a means of countering their exclusion:

Since the sex have been condemned for exercising the powers of speech, they have successfully taken up the pen.... The press will be the monuments [sic] from which the genius of British women will rise to immortal celebrity....¹

Her comments were to prove prophetic (if a trifle optimistic), as Chapters 3 to 8 demonstrate. From their position 'beyond the fringe', in professional terms, the women studied here all relied on books and essays to locate themselves at the centre of contemporary art debates. Publishing gave these women a semi-official position, as critics, which they were not otherwise able to occupy. Gerrish Nunn suggested that there was little art-writing by women before the 1880s.² By revealing the astonishing quantity of women's published art-writing in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, across a wide range of genres, my research has revealed that nothing could be further from the truth. Much of this material has been neglected, partly because of confusion over authorship, but inescapably, also, because of the sex of the writers. Contemporary reactions to their work demonstrate that women's views on art were highly respected, indicating that they had far more influence on public taste than subsequent art-historical studies have implied.

My research has pointed not only to the quantity of women's writing on art, but also to its quality, emphasizing the originality of many of their contributions. Although a

condition of publication was their overall compliance with academic discourse, these women were nevertheless beginning to question traditional assumptions, alongside male writers of the time, and to push the boundaries of taste. Graham, for example, was a key figure in promoting in the *Primitives*, and her notes on early Italian painters demand more detailed investigation. Though Jameson has received considerable attention, both she and Rigby still deserve to be more widely known for their significance in discussing German art and disseminating new theories of connoisseurship. Jameson is especially significant for her success as a middle-class woman who openly acknowledged both her class and her sex, but used these to her advantage, rather than denying them as a handicap. Given the quality of her writing and her role as a major figure within the art world, Rigby demands a long-overdue, full-length study. I underline, though, that even with the extraordinary confidence she demonstrated, born of her class status, social connections and intellectual background, Rigby was still constrained by the demands of proper femininity, choosing to write anonymously in order to allow herself greater freedom.

Merrifield is another figure of great interest for her study of early documents and application of scientific principles to art. Her obvious importance in Victorian art circles contrasts sharply with the lack of recognition she has received since, and I have demonstrated that she deserves attention in future research. The writings of Flower Adams and Stickney Ellis also merit wider currency in the context of Nonconformist writing on art. The influence of religious belief on art-writing has been touched on in my study, but this is another topic that calls for further exploration. Since virtually all of these writers were Protestants of varying 'shades', it would be interesting to compare their work more closely with self-consciously Protestant male writers, such as Ruskin, and with Catholic responses to art, by French women art critics emerging in the same period, for example.³

Apart from drawing attention to important individuals omitted from the art-historical canon, I have attempted to draw general conclusions about women's art-writing in this period. My case studies have revealed that the central factor uniting all these individuals is the need for careful self-presentation framed by conventional femininity. Throughout this thesis I have examined the strategies women employed to minimize the effect of negative stereotypes of female viewing on the reception of their work. In Chapter 3, for example, I demonstrated how travel-writing enabled women to write on art within a suitably 'feminine' genre. I showed how Miller, Piozzi and Starke underlined their Protestantism, patriotism and politeness in defending their claims to connoisseurship. Professed modesty was vital, but this was countered by an equal emphasis on the advantages brought by travel and education. Chapters 4 and 5 explored the importance of

religion and science as appropriate contexts for women's writing, offering Flower Adams, Twining and Merrifield the opportunity to publish on art with growing confidence. Chapters 6 to 8 charted women's increasing specialization as art critics, and examined the varying ways in which Graham, Jameson and Rigby complied with, or resisted traditional stereotypes, in order to obtain recognition.

It was a condition of their success that these women were perceived by readers and reviewers as 'proper' female writers, their work 'shaded by sweetness, veiled by modesty'.⁴ In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries women were more cautious in writing on art, as their presence within the print market was still relatively novel and socially sensitive. They emphasized their religious and national loyalties, and presented their work as 'useful', serving the common good. In contrast to the boldly authoritative tone of Payne Knight, Hazlitt and Ruskin, they tended to construct a diffident persona in an attempt to deflect accusations of pride. I have explored the various strategies women deployed, from anonymity and choice of genre, to the use of prefaces as self-denigratory framing devices. As we have seen, men occasionally made such disavowals, too, but this seems to have been of greater importance for women.⁵ The fact that reviewers often focus on the moral qualities of the woman writer behind the text indicates the continuing need for such careful strategies.

During the mid-nineteenth century, despite the continuing emphasis on acceptable femininity, my research reveals a clear increase in confidence, as women published on art, not just within the 'feminine' contexts of travel-writing, biography and fiction, but as serious critics, writing exhibition reviews, composing scholarly histories of art, and even, in the case of Rigby, challenging acknowledged connoisseurs like Ruskin. With growing assertiveness, they emphasized their skills, pointing to experience derived through travel, education and research. More equal access to travel, in particular, in terms of both sex and class, seems to have been a major factor in enhancing women's authority, as my case studies have shown. Though not all benefited from a classical education, these women were extremely well-educated. Their lack of Latin and Greek does not seem to have held them back, any more than it did many middle-class men writing on art at this time, but it is evident that their talent for modern languages was a key element in their success. Many women translators remain shadowy figures, deserving further research: the mysterious Margaret Hutton, who translated Kugler's guides, and Mrs [Eliza] Foster, the translator of Vasari, for example.⁶ Another important factor seems to be the informal, or 'desultory', nature of women's education, which, paradoxically, seems to have acted as a stimulus to their creativity. In almost every case these women were largely self-taught, and it was

partly this, I would suggest, that gave them the motivation for independent research, as well as prompting their often unconventional approach to a topic.

My research has also underlined the vital importance of social networks, which provided these women with access to information and artworks, as well as to publishing contacts, thereby overcoming their amateur status. The intimate links between these women and the professional artists, patrons and gallery directors of their time emphasize the extent of their participation in the 'Republic of Taste'. All established connections with artists and writers across Europe and, in the case of Jameson, in America. One avenue for future research might be to investigate these networks from a European-wide or trans-Atlantic perspective, exploring the interaction between English women art-writers and informal 'salons' such as the 'Villino Trollope' in Florence, the circle of Princess Anna Amalia in Weimar and Rome, or of Margaret Fuller in Boston. Given the links between male critics and the theatre in the early nineteenth century, it would also be interesting to explore the theatrical connections of Starke, Morgan, Flower Adams and Jameson.⁷ The relationships forged between women writers and their publishers also deserve closer attention.

Another common factor is the class status of these writers, which proves to be at least as important an influence on their work as their sex. Despite the preponderance of titles (Lady Miller, Lady Morgan, Lady Callcott, Lady Eastlake), all of the writers I have discussed were middle-class in origin, though of varying degrees of 'gentility'. They rose to the title of 'Lady' through their husbands' advancement within an increasingly meritocratic society, and none was aristocratic by birth. It was through publishing that these middle-class writers established their reputation. As the *New Monthly Magazine* put it in 1829:

There is a dignity in type, which imposes on those who have not dabbled in printing-ink.... To have printed a volume, no matter what it may be, is more than ever a passport to society, and is often available, where birth, fortune, and official station, will not effect the purpose.⁸

Their success indicates the increasing openness of the art world to middle-class female connoisseurs, despite the sneering stereotypes of Pasquin. Given the entry of middle-class men into art-writing during the same period, it would be instructive to compare more closely their strategies for participation in the art world.

These women all demonstrate the vital importance of travel, education and class location as influences on their art-writing. However, my work has demonstrated that the differences between them are as striking as their similarities, and that they often share

more features with men of the same religious and social background, than with each other. The most important task throughout has been to see women's writing in the context of work produced by male contemporaries, rather than as an isolated phenomenon. I have shown that, apart from their modest prefaces, women share many characteristics with men's writing of the period. It was precisely because these women complied with the existing discourse – united with male critics by a common language and common values – that they were permitted to contribute to debates. With the exception, perhaps, of Jameson, theirs was not an essentially feminine voice. Nor was it a 'feminist' discourse, except insofar as their success opened up possibilities for professional journalism by women later in the nineteenth century. Though in some cases these women contributed to debates around the 'Woman Question', and many supported female art education, their writing quietly assumes their right to participate as critics, rather than confronting the patriarchal order head-on.

The feminist project has been helpful in revealing the extent of women's exclusions from the Victorian art world and the difficulties they encountered. Practical barriers existed on a legal, economic and social level, and critical opinions were widespread. Many derogatory comments were made about Bluestockings, for example, suggesting a backlash against intellectual women in the early nineteenth century.⁹ My research indicates, however, that women were able to negotiate such prejudices through writing on art. The uncomplimentary image of the Bluestocking (fig. 89), slovenly in her attire and mannish in her manners, was a consciously exaggerated type that had been in place at least since the early eighteenth century. It seems unlikely that it represents an attempt to suppress learned women in the post-Revolutionary period, to punish them for dabbling in political writing *à la* Wollstonecraft. Eastlake and Jameson themselves criticized certain women writers as 'Blues', but certainly did not mean by this that women should not write. Bluestockings were comic figures, attacking affected pretenders to learning, but were not intended to attack learned women *per se*. In the same way, the vain 'young miss' gazing at her reflection instead of the artworks at the Manchester Art-Treasures exhibition (fig. 31) did not deny connoisseurship to Everywoman.

Given that critical stereotypes of female art-viewing seem to have existed alongside a capacity to respect the good taste of individual women, the influence of these negative stereotypes must be called into question. It is evident that there were greater barriers for women than for men within connoisseurship, thanks to the long history of prejudice against female judgment. Nevertheless, as I have shown, there were also stereotypes of vulgar male viewing, from the ignorant middle-class merchant to the pretentious Grand Tour

dilettante. My research suggests that the stereotype of the female art-viewer was not something inescapably tied to all women, as a sex, but represented a satirical extreme against which the 'proper' female viewer was to be measured. It was a consciously comic exaggeration, and did not indicate that all women were considered incapable of judging art, any more than the image of the myopic virtuoso (fig. 90) implied that all men were blinkered connoisseurs.

It is also important to recognize that in studying the work of women art-writers, we do not find a universal picture of entrenched patriarchal resistance against which women had to fight. As my case studies show, there are many examples of women being encouraged by their male relatives, husbands, friends and publishers. Weighty periodicals like the *Art Journal* and *Athenaeum* were not resistant to the expertise of the female critic, but often welcomed her views. There is evidence of respect for women's taste at an individual level, even among male writers who expressed misogynistic suspicion of 'scribbling women' in general. We must acknowledge that praise for women's work by publishers and reviewers is as much a feature of early Victorian England as satirical attacks on 'Blues'. In her preface to *An Art-Student in Munich* (1853), the painter Anna Mary Howitt protested against the suggestion 'that it is man who thwarts every effort of woman to rise to eminence in the life of Art'. She declared

that her experience hitherto, ... has been the most perfect refutation of such calumny. Invariably and repeatedly, when a hand has been required to put aside the sharp stones and thorns which peculiarly beset a woman upon the path of Art, strong, manly hands have been stretched forth with noble generosity to remove them; and manly voices have uttered words of teaching, of encouragement, and of prophecy of happy achievement.¹⁰

This was equally true of female authors. Men did not deserve the abuse levelled at them by 'some lady-writers', Rigby wrote, as many had been 'most liberal' in the movement for improved female education.¹¹ Kingsley's comments, quoted in the Introduction, show that female qualities could be highly valued in the context of connoisseurship, their supposed sensitivity, emotional empathy and instinctive religious sympathies being seen as important skills in the context of art-historical interpretation.

Indeed, despite the growing professionalization of male critics, even women's marginal social position seems not to have counted against them. I have shown how these women made a virtue of their absence from the professional sphere, stressing the advantages of the educated amateur over the male artist, for example.¹² Benefiting from considerable insider information and the leisure time necessary to conduct research, they positioned themselves midway between the general public and the art world, acting, like

Jameson, as 'gentle interpreters between genius and popularity'. It was precisely because they were relatively independent that they could speak with such freedom. In an article on the critic Giovanni Morelli, Rigby stressed that he was able to question 'time-honoured' attributions because he was not tied by loyalty to any particular collection.¹³ The same was true of women writers, who had no official association with art institutions. Like the leisured aristocrats of the eighteenth century, perhaps, it was women's very freedom from professional vested interest that was seen to guarantee the disinterested nature of their aesthetic judgments. In this way women took up and made their own the well-worn arguments of Shaftesbury and Payne Knight concerning the superiority of the leisured amateur over the professional artist.

Apart from Pullan's work on Frances Reynolds and Priscilla Wakefield, this is the first study to focus on women's art-writing of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and I hope that my 'little book' will be useful in opening up new avenues for research. The wealth of material uncovered means that much still remains to be explored. I have been unable, for instance, for reasons of space, to tackle the question of women's literary responses to art, such as the ekphrastic poetry of Hemans and Landon. The annuals offer another site for the interaction of word and image, and one in which women were closely involved. *A Voice from a Picture* (1839), by artist Harriet Gouldsmith, deserves more detailed discussion, for its biting attack on the workings of the art market, while Howitt's semi-autobiographical 'Sisters in Art' (1852) and *An Art-Student in Munich* (1853) offer insights into the experiences of women painters as art-viewers.¹⁴ Through their fiction and poetry, writers such as Charlotte Brontë, Elizabeth Barrett Browning and George Eliot defended women's responses to art, critiquing men's attempts to control their viewing. This is an area that would benefit from an interdisciplinary approach with literary studies.

Articles by women artists are an area of particular potential, including Joanna Mary Boyce's exhibition reviews for the *Saturday Review* (1855–6), and essays for the *English Woman's Journal* by Howitt, Bessie Rayner Parkes and Barbara Leigh Smith.¹⁵ Surely, too, there is much that still needs to be identified as women's writing, behind the anonymous façades of periodicals and newspaper columns. Having focused almost exclusively on named male critics, art historians need now to redress the balance, by recognizing the important part played by anonymous journalism in moulding public taste. One way to identify such contributions is through the study of private journals and letters, which offer enormous scope for further work. Private family documents, like the journals of Thereza Llewelyn, present considerable difficulties for research, as they remain

uncatalogued and unindexed, but they are invaluable for revealing responses to art that are unmediated by the need for public presentation.

Study of such texts will enable us to assess more accurately the extent to which women's participation in art culture followed a trajectory from exclusion to inclusion across this period. As my thesis has already demonstrated, the historical narrative is far from straightforward. Women's exclusion was considerably less than one might expect in the eighteenth century, while, despite a shift in perceptions of women's ability to appreciate art, their inclusion was far from complete by the 1860s. Even in the late 1870s Vernon Lee bemoaned the fact that women's views were not taken seriously.¹⁶ There is little evidence that women's art-writing had a wholly transformative effect on negative attitudes to the female art-viewer, but my research suggests that acceptance of individuals could happily co-exist with satirical stereotypes, at the end of the period just as at the beginning.

What has emerged most clearly from my work is that these women writers have been displaced from their proper position within the art history of this period – a result, perhaps, of their unofficial role. A relative lack of dominant male art historians, with the exception of Ruskin and Eastlake, meant that women played a prominent part in art-writing of the early Victorian period, but it may be that Ruskin, in particular, has overshadowed them, skewing the focus of art-historical studies. This imbalance needs to be corrected. These women did not demand official positions in academies or museums; most never considered that they might become professional journalists or curators. They insisted very firmly, however, on admission to the 'Republic of Taste', stressing that they could be simultaneously women and connoisseurs. Instead of being misled by their amateur status, we need to recognize the intellectual contribution made by individuals such as Graham, Jameson, Merrifield and Rigby, and to relocate them far more centrally in our studies of the nineteenth century.

¹ [Mary Robinson] Anne Frances Randall, *Letter to the Women of England on the Injustice of Mental Subordination*, London, 1799, pp. 90–1.

² Gerrish Nunn, 'Critically Speaking', p. 118.

³ Vivian P. Cameron, 'Two Eighteenth-Century French Art Critics', *Woman's Art Journal*, 5 (1), spring/summer 1984, pp. 8–11. Doy, *Women and Visual Culture in Nineteenth-Century France*, pp. 130–57, 168–80.

⁴ M. A. Stodart, *Female Writers: Thoughts on their Proper Sphere and on their Powers of Usefulness*, London, 1842, p. 127.

⁵ See, for example, Edmund Head's preface to Kugler, *Handbook of the History of Painting, Part II*, London, 1846.

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- ⁶ See Pat Rubin, “Not ... what I would fain offer, but ... what I am able to present”: Mrs Jonathan Foster’s translation of Vasari’s *Lives*’, in Charles Davis, Sabine Feser, Katja Lemelsen and Alessandro Nova (eds), *Le Vite di Vasari: Genesi – Topoi – Ricezione*, forthcoming, 2009.
- ⁷ Barnett, ‘Contemporary response to British art’, pp. 59–63. Shearer West, ‘Montagu, Siddons, Lady Macbeth’, lecture at ‘Brilliant Women’ conference, National Portrait Gallery, London, 25–6 April 2008.
- ⁸ ‘The “Bubble Reputation”’, *New Monthly Magazine*, 25, 101, May 1829, p. 449.
- ⁹ Eger and Peltz, *Brilliant Women*, pp. 127–30.
- ¹⁰ Anna Mary Howitt, *An Art-Student in Munich*, 2 vols, London, 1853, I, p. viii.
- ¹¹ *Journals and Correspondence*, ed. Eastlake Smith, II, p. 256. See Mitchell’s similar conclusions in ‘The busy daughters of Clio’, pp. 110–17.
- ¹² Kane Lew, ‘Cultural Anxiety in Anna Jameson’s Art Criticism’, pp. 829–56.
- ¹³ [Eastlake] ‘Giovanni Morelli’, pp. 242–3.
- ¹⁴ ‘Sisters in Art’, *Illustrated Exhibitor, and Magazine of Art*, 1852, II, pp. 214–16, 238–40, 262–3, 286–8, 317–19, 334–6, 347–8, 362–4.
- ¹⁵ ‘Remarks on some of the French pictures at the Paris Exhibition, 1855’, *Saturday Review*, 1 and 29 Dec. 1855, pp. 79–81, 153–4; ‘The Royal Academy’, 10, 17 and 24 May 1856, pp. 31–2, 57–9, 79–80.
- ¹⁶ Fraser, ‘Writing a Female Renaissance’, p. 176.

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