

How to Portray a Trade? Identity and Interpretation in Johan Zoffany's *An Optician with His Attendant*

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Johan Zoffany's *An Optician with His Attendant* (1772) underscores the conventional character of the depiction of a tradesman and, by extension, trade generally in eighteenth-century Britain. Despite the striking visual naturalism of this painting, it resists classification as a straightforward portrait. The sitter has been identified alternately as Peter Dollond and John Cuff, both important opticians. Each proposal, however, entails complications. This article considers the ways in which this Royal Collection painting misrepresents the working lives of both men. The picture provides insight—not into the life of an individual—but into the problem of how trades could be represented.

abstract

TODAY, PAINTER Johan Zoffany (1733–1810) is well known for two ambitious group portraits from the 1770s: *The Academicians of the Royal Academy* and *The Tribuna of the Uffizi*. The former was exhibited, appropriately enough, at the Royal Academy in the spring of 1772. The latter was begun a few months later—soon after Zoffany's arrival in Florence, Italy—and completed in 1777. Together the two canvases depict fifty-eight individuals, all of whom have been identified, including the two exceptional women among these otherwise all-male ensembles. Both paintings were commissioned by the English royal family, and as Desmond Shawe-Taylor notes in the catalogue from a recent exhibition that included the two pictures, they have hung near each other for the last two hundred years.¹ *The Academicians* celebrates the newly

¹ Desmond Shawe-Taylor, *The Conversation Piece: Scenes of Fashionable Life*, exhibition catalogue (London: Royal Collection Publications, 2009), 137. In *The Academicians*, the heads of Angelica Kauffman and Mary Moser are depicted as portraits hanging on the wall since it was considered improper for women to study from the nude model; in this sense, they are both included as Royal Academy members and excluded as women. For more on Zoffany's life and career, see Penelope Treadwell, *Johan Zoffany: Artist and Adventurer* (London: Paul Holberton, 2010). I am grateful to the staff of the Royal Collection for their kind assistance, especially Katie Holyoak. Thanks also to Lucy Worsley at Historic Royal Palaces and to Martin Postle at The Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art.

established Royal Academy, founded in 1768, while *The Tribuna* looks to Italy for standards of taste embodied in the ancient and early modern works of art here admired and discussed by British grand tourists.

A third painting by Zoffany, also from the Royal Collection and also dating to the year 1772, supplies a useful counterbalance to these aspirational claims for the significance of skilfully made objects. Exhibited at the Royal Academy as *An Optician with His Attendant* (see Figure 1), this modest-sized painting, roughly 3 feet by 2 feet (89.8 x 70.0 cm), portrays a ruddy-faced instrument maker seated at his workbench with another man standing behind him. Warm sunlight streams through a window in the upper right-hand corner while an assortment of tools and materials—including several impressively rendered pieces of glass—line the two walls of this tidy workshop corner. With spectacles perched on his turban-wrapped head, the seated optician wears a welcoming look of genial interest, as the standing figure, by contrast, appears to be lost in thought, staring stoically at some imprecise point below the window.

Since the late 1960s, scholars have followed Oliver Millar in identifying the optician as John Cuff. Yet, the first textual evidence for the claim dates only to the early nineteenth century, and for nearly a hundred years, starting in 1859, the painting was associated with Peter Dollond.² Both men were important eighteenth-century instrument makers, and their careers highlight key traits of the optician trade. The identification of each as the sitter in Zoffany's painting holds certain attractions (historical and imaginative), though problems abound in either case.

From the beginning, critics have remarked on the picture's pronounced degree of naturalism that conveys something of the real experience of an optician's labours, though for Horace Walpole this was hardly cause for adulation: "Extremely natural, but the characters too common in nature, and the chiaroscuro destroyed by his [Zoffany's] servility in imitating the reflexions of the glasses."³ Like other twentieth-century art historians,

² Oliver Millar, *The Later Georgian Pictures in the Collection of Her Majesty the Queen*, 2 vols. (London: Phaidon, 1969), 1:152. The painting is signed and dated: "Zoffany pinx 1772." See also Millar, *Treasures from the Royal Collection*, exhibition catalogue (London: Queen's Gallery, Buckingham Palace, 1988), 51–52; and Lucy Whitaker's entry describing the painting in *George III and Queen Charlotte: Patronage, Collecting, and Court Taste*, ed. Jane Roberts (London: Royal Collections Publications, 2004), 186.

³ Cited in Millar, *The Later Georgian Pictures*, 152.



Figure 1. Johan Zoffany, *John Cuff and His Assistant*, 1772, oil on canvas. The Royal Collection © 2010 Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. Reproduced by permission.

Mary Webster tied the painting's "sympathetic precision" and "fidelity to nature" to seventeenth-century Dutch genre scenes, while historians of science have typically approached the picture as a straightforward illustration of what an instrument maker's workshop would have looked like.⁴ Apart from these

⁴ Mary Webster, *Johan Zoffany, 1733–1810*, exhibition catalogue (London: National Portrait Gallery, 1976), 55–56. A decade earlier, Frederick Cummings pointed to precedents in "the lighted interiors of Vermeer and De Hooch," suggesting that "the objectivity and open-air quality of this light [in Zoffany's picture] is a connecting link between French 19th-century art



Figure 2. Microscope designed and introduced by John Cuff in 1744. Used by permission from the Wellcome Library, London.

concerns over the sitter's identity and Zoffany's dependence upon Netherlandish precedents, the painting has received little scholarly attention.⁵

In a volume dedicated to the representation of trades in the eighteenth century, it seems appropriate to consider more carefully this compelling picture. Within this context, questions regarding who is represented and the painting's style both merit attention. Those two lines of inquiry will facilitate a greater appreciation for the conventions of naturalism at work within the image (as opposed to a simple acceptance of its supposed objectivity) and an appreciation for the relationship between this naturalistic aesthetic and contemporary understandings of mechanical trades. The picture underscores the vital role an older virtuosic tradition, heavily dependent upon the history of trades, played for the fine arts in Britain. Dating back to the seventeenth century, an empirical sensibility associated with the

and the Dutch 17th century." See Frederick Cummings and Allen Staley, eds., *Romantic Art in Britain: Paintings and Drawings 1760–1860*, exhibition catalogue (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1968), 83–84. Shawe-Taylor ties the painting to David Teniers and Ter Borch (120–23).

⁵ Given the interest in the sitter's identification, scholars have shown almost no interest in connecting the actual biographies of John Cuff or Peter Dollond to the picture. Their names have functioned primarily as placeholders or titles rather than as points of interpretive access.

New Science of the Royal Society helped provide a basis for the emergence of a distinctly British platform for the arts. Thanks to its flexibility, this platform accommodated not only an artisanal conception of production but also a fine art tradition derived from Continental art theory.⁶ Zoffany's trio of paintings underscores the importance of that empirical discourse even as it signals the growing divide between aesthetic and mechanical knowledge.

John Cuff

In the 1740s and 50s, John Cuff (1708?–72?) occupied a shop on Fleet Street just a few doors from where the Royal Society met at Crane Court. From this Fleet Street location, this son of a clockmaker sold spectacles, microscopes, telescopes, camera obscura boxes, and magic lanterns, all of his own making, as well as various mathematical instruments, thermometers, and other devices for the scientifically inclined. His solar microscopes, which could project an image onto a screen, were a regular feature in public lectures, and one of his aquatic microscopes was used by John Ellis for his *Natural History of the Corallines* of 1755. Cuff is best known for his double reflecting microscope invented in 1742 under the guidance of his patron Henry Baker, a member of the Royal Society and the Society of Antiquaries.⁷ Baker's first book, *The Microscope Made Easy*, appeared in November of that year and gave pride of place to Cuff's new all-brass instrument that facilitated easy viewing with its smooth fine-screw focus and single-pillar design (see Figure 2). Thanks to the translation and wide distribution of the text, Cuff garnered an international reputation, and his own trade cards and pamphlets were available in French. The "Cuff-Microscope" is a regular fixture of histories of eighteenth-century science, and it is difficult to overstate the prominence of the device within the period around 1750.⁸

⁶ See Carol Gibson-Wood, *Jonathan Richardson: Art Theorist of the English Enlightenment* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000); and Craig Ashley Hanson, *The English Virtuoso: Art, Medicine, and Antiquarianism in the Age of Empiricism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009).

⁷ Gerard L'Estrange Turner, "Henry Baker, F.R.S.: Founder of the Bakerian Lecture," *Notes and Records of the Royal Society of London* 29 (1974): 53–79.

⁸ Cuff's microscopes were sought, for instance, by the Russian Academy of Sciences and by colonists in the Americas. See Anthony Cross, "By the Banks of the Thames": *Russians in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Newtonville: Oriental Research Partners, 1980), 187; and James Raven, *London Booksellers and American Customers: Transatlantic Literary Community and the Charleston Library Society, 1748–1811* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press,

But while history has smiled on Cuff as an influential and skilled instrument maker, within his own lifetime fate was far from kind. In 1743 his nomination to the Royal Society failed for lack of support, and he never managed to capitalize on his innovations in London's competitive marketplace. In 1750 he was forced to declare bankruptcy, and the following spring newspapers announced the sale of "His entire Stock in Trade."⁹ He managed to return to business, though a 1752 notice from the *London Evening Post* suggests the severity of the challenges he faced: "John Cuff, Optical Instrument Maker, in Fleet-Street, is not dead as reported; but continues in the same Shop as formerly, to supply the Curious with Microscopes, Telescopes, the best of Spectacles and all other kinds of Optical Instruments."¹⁰

It is difficult to determine exactly when Cuff died. He married Polly Goodall in 1761 and remained professionally active throughout the decade.¹¹ In the fall of 1770 he resigned from a position he had long held at the Spectacle Maker's Company, and in 1771 he transferred his final apprentice to another optician. This is currently the last definitive mention of the living John Cuff.¹² Moreover, it is also difficult to know precisely how old he was at his passing since a birth year of 1708 is speculatively derived only from the dates of his own apprenticeship as a youth in 1722 and his admittance into the Spectacle Maker's Company in 1730.

The identification of Cuff as the sitter in Zoffany's painting relies on an inventory of pictures from the Royal Collection at Kew drawn up around 1800–5. The main document describes

2002), 173. For more on the place of the instruments in histories of science, see Reginald Clay and Thomas Court, *The History of the Microscope* (London: Griffin, 1932); and Brian Ford, "The Royal Society and the Microscope," *Notes and Records of the Royal Society of London* 55 (2001): 29–49.

⁹ Cuff's bankruptcy was announced in various papers, including the *Whitehall Evening Post, or London Intelligencer* (27 November 1750) and the *General Advertiser* (28 November 1750). Notice of the sale appeared in the *London Evening Post* (26 March 1751), the *General Advertiser* (2 May 1751), and the *Whitehall Evening Post, or London Intelligencer* (11 May 1751).

¹⁰ *London Evening Post* (3 March 1752).

¹¹ As noted in the *London Evening Post* (5 December 1761) and the *Public Ledger* (7 December 1761).

¹² Giles Hudson, "John Cuff," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), notes that "a John Cuff was a member from December 1768 to March 1772 of masonic lodge 125" in Shoreditch and that "in May 1772 letters of administration were issued for a John Cuff of West Dawlish in Somerset."

the work simply as “A Mathematician. Zoffani”; it is only a text understood as a rough draft for this inventory that describes the figure as “Mr Cuff.”¹³ As for motive in commissioning a portrait of Cuff, George III owned microscopes from Cuff, and in 1770 and 1771 several payments were made to the optician on the king's behalf for tools—including a diamond, grinding instruments, emery, and six chucks for his lathe.¹⁴ Neither the instruments in the collection nor the payments made to Cuff necessarily explain why George III or Queen Charlotte would have been interested in a portrait of an optician whose career had peaked some twenty years earlier. At present, no evidence exists of any personal relationship between Cuff and the painter, and, in contrast to other prominent instrument makers such as Francis Watkins and George Adams, Cuff benefited from no royal appointments.¹⁵ The painting, executed in 1772, may have been a tribute to the man at the time of his death, but again the complete lack of public notices of Cuff's passing complicates such a claim. Giles Hudson in his entry for Cuff in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* is sceptical, stating frankly that “there is little evidence to support this identification.”¹⁶

The Dollonds

The earliest surviving evidence for accepting Peter Dollond (1731–1820) as the sitter comes in 1859, when Richard Redgrave, acting under the directive of Prince Albert, surveyed the entire Royal Collection. On 6 October 1859, Redgrave described Zoffany's painting as *The Lapidaries* and, in the words of Millar, “noted on the stretcher a pencil note (now no longer visible): ‘Dollond the Optician in the Strand London.’”¹⁷ Consequently,

¹³ Millar, *The Later Georgian Pictures*, 152; see also xlix.

¹⁴ At least some of Cuff's instruments in the Royal Collection arrived via Stephen Demainbray, who often found himself quite frustrated with the optician. Instruments by the Dollonds could also be found in the Royal Collection. See Alan Morton and Jane Wess, *Public and Private Science: The King George III Collection* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 86, 100–2, 186, 193, 480, 486, 501. For more on the payments, see Millar, *Treasures from the Royal Collection*, 53. The manuscript source is Royal Archives GEO/MAIN/16826. I am especially grateful to Lucy Whitaker and Allison Derrett for their assistance with the document.

¹⁵ John Millburn, *Adams of Fleet Street, Instrument Makers to King George III* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2000).

¹⁶ Hudson, 567.

¹⁷ Millar, *The Later Georgian Pictures*, 152.

throughout much of the twentieth century, the name of this prominent family of opticians was attached to the picture.

Of Huguenot descent, the Dollonds were silk weavers based in Spitalfields. Peter left the trade in 1750 and with the support of his father, George Dollond (1707–61), became an optician. In 1752, after initial signs of success, George joined his son, and by the end of the decade the two men had opened a shop in the Strand.¹⁸ A friend of the Scottish optician James Short, George himself made improvements on the refracting telescope and in 1758 patented his achromatic telescope, which corrected the spherical aberrations of previous instruments in a manner viable for widespread production. For this work, he received the Royal Society Copley Medal in 1758 and was made a fellow three years later. In 1760 he was appointed royal optician to the newly crowned George III, though he filled the position less than a year, dying of a stroke in November 1761.

Peter was appointed optician to the king the next year and, with his brother George Jr., continued to run a successful business, in part through a fierce defence of the patent on the achromatic telescope, first fighting a petition to the king submitted by other opticians to have it annulled and then pursuing civil lawsuits against rivals who had illegally benefited from the design. The patent expired in 1772, but the Dollond firm had grown wealthy and continued to innovate, including claims to have improved upon the “Cuff-microscope.” The Dollond brothers came up with the idea of a collapsible telescope, and they were the first to use mahogany tubes in place of vellum. Their instruments were to be found at the Greenwich Observatory, and they supplied lenses for James Cook’s 1769 voyage to Australia. Prominent individuals sought their instruments for personal use too. Dr William Small, one of the founding members of the Lunar Society, for example, owned a Dollond solar microscope; Leopold Mozart, father of the composer, purchased two microscopes and one telescope in 1764; and Frederick II of Prussia acquired two telescopes from the firm in 1766.¹⁹ Yet Peter Dollond never earned the respect afforded

¹⁸ For the Dollonds, I rely on Gloria Clifton, “Dollond Family,” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); and Hugh Barty-King, *Eyes Right: The Story of Dollond & Aitchison Opticians, 1750–1985* (London: Quiller Press, 1986), esp. 24–78. Also useful is Richard Sorrenson, “Scientific Instrument Makers at the Royal Society of London, 1720–1780” (PhD dissertation, Princeton University, 1993), chap. 6.

¹⁹ Barty-King, 28–29, 39, 51, 54.

his father. He corresponded with the Royal Society—including a 1772 notice regarding improvements for Hadley's quadrant—but was never admitted as a fellow. The French astronomer Jean Bernoulli, upon meeting the optician, noted with surprise what he took to be Peter's lack of mathematical knowledge. Dollond's tenacious business practices, moreover, hardly endeared him to his peers.

If one were, in light of these circumstances, able to identify conclusively Zoffany's sitter to be Peter Dollond, it would open up intriguing interpretive possibilities. For the painting would emerge as an entirely counter-intuitive instance of self-fashioning, one based on refuting Peter's reputation as a fierce competitor by appearing sympathetic and approachable. Herein he would openly embrace his status as a tradesman, minimizing his position as a man of business with social and intellectual aspirations. As well, the timing would nicely correspond with the lapse of the achromatic telescope patent.

Unfortunately for such a theory, the case for Peter Dollond appears even weaker than that for Cuff. Millar's 1969 dismissal relied solely upon age. Dollond would have been only 42 years old when the painting was executed, and, however indeterminate the age of Zoffany's sitter may be (easily ranging from 55 to 65), one has trouble finding a man in his early forties in this image. Even more telling reasons, however, cast doubt on the Victorian-era identification—all of them probably sufficiently forceful as individual objections. First and most simply, on the basis of a portrait of Peter Dollond by John Hoppner (see Figure 3), the optician in Zoffany's painting bears no significant resemblance. Second and more significantly for the larger purposes at hand, it is difficult to envision the sitter's identity going unremarked in the 1770s if it were Peter Dollond. Judging from a letter Horace Walpole received in 1768 from a French correspondent requesting that he send to him one of Dollond's telescopes, Walpole himself would have likely recognized the man, and yet his comments on the painting quoted earlier fail to tie the optician to any particular individual.²⁰ And no other extant remarks indicate that connection. In contrast to Cuff's business, the Dollond firm prospered, and there were plenty of family members to preserve the founders' images. Third and most importantly, it is difficult to imagine Peter Dollond agreeing to be portrayed in such a manner

²⁰ Cited in Barty-King, 54.

(notwithstanding hypothetical motivations of the sort sketched above); such a casual—even intimate—mode of representation does not conform to Peter’s personality, and it flies in the face of an overwhelming force of expectation around portraiture of the period generally.

A 1790 painting by Robert Home depicting Jesse Ramsden (see Figure 4)—Peter’s brother-in-law and an important instrument maker in his own right—provides a telling counterpoint to Zoffany’s workshop scene.²¹ In this case, Ramsden is shown embracing the mechanical knowledge on which his reputation rests, but the painting also insists upon this knowledge as a function of Ramsden’s mind. His hand may be skilled, but it appears as an instrument in its own right, clearly under the control of his intellect. The visual echo between the wheel in the background and the sitter’s own alert head reinforces the point, for the wheel is part of an astronomical circle devised by Ramsden. Moreover, he appears to gaze through or beyond the viewer, as if absorbed in contemplating the mysteries of the universe. Something of the painting’s character may have not yet been possible in 1772, but the general tone of intellectual mastery certainly was. One has only to observe Benjamin Wilson’s portrait of John Dollond Sr. (see Figure 5) for an older mid-century example. Shown with a copy of Isaac Newton’s *Opticks* and small prisms, Dollond is identified with his profession but, again, in a sober, dignified manner suggesting the accomplishment of his mind.

The Representation of Trades in the Eighteenth Century

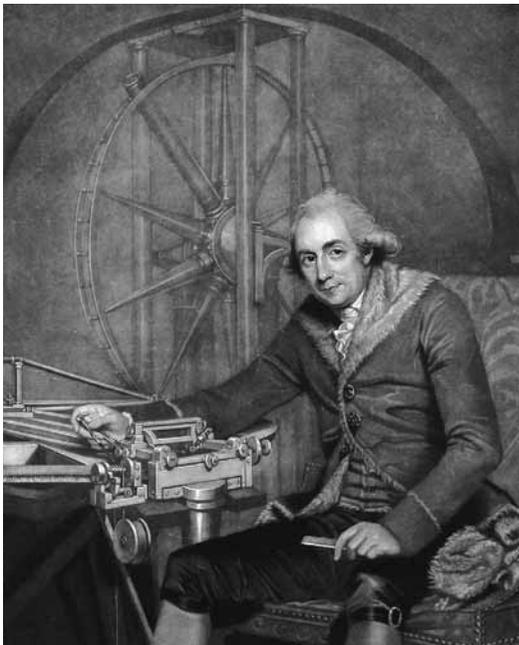
Neither identification for Zoffany’s picture is convincing, and each may have stemmed from nineteenth-century conceptions of the period. It is perhaps overly convenient that the names posited by keepers of the Royal Collection represent two of the best-known opticians of the eighteenth century: one remembered mainly for his microscopes, the other for his telescopes. And in each case, several decades’ distance was required before the identification emerged. For a period often enamoured of a quaint vision of the eighteenth century—one thinks, for instance, of Edward Matthew Ward’s 1863 sentimental reconstruction of *Hogarth’s Studio in 1739* filled with orphans from the Foundling

²¹ For more on Jesse Ramsden, see Anita McConnell, *Jesse Ramsden (1735–1800): London’s Leading Scientific Instrument Maker* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2007).



Figure 3, above. J. Thomson, after John Hoppner, *Portrait of Peter Dollond*, 1820, stipple engraving. Used by permission from Wellcome Library, London.

Figure 4, below. John Jones, after Robert Home, *Portrait of Jesse Ramsden*, 1791, mezzotint. Used by permission from Wellcome Library, London.



Hospital (see Figure 6)—Zoffany's painting must have been fascinating, all the more so if it could be connected to an important historical figure of the previous age. There is, of course, the possibility that new evidence will surface, perhaps confirming the painting as a representation of Cuff or linking it to some other lens grinder active in the 1760s. But for now, the question seems best laid aside.

And yet, however unsatisfactory this reception history may be, it underscores a number of crucial themes related to the history of trades. The life stories of Cuff and the Dollonds bear these out. Exemplifying the mobility that existed between trades—particularly in the face of innovation—these people all came to optics from other mechanical backgrounds (Cuff from a line of clockmakers, the Dollonds from Huguenot silk weavers). Their success, or failure, depended upon their abilities to survive in a competitive marketplace. Cuff's bankruptcy highlights the degree to which technical skill and design proficiency, by themselves, hardly guaranteed solvency. By contrast, the foundation of Peter Dollond's capital largely came from revenues earned through the patent on his father's achromatic telescope. Myriad tensions around the protected character of intellectual property and the openness of shared innovation pervade the history of trades in early modern Europe, and the Royal Society tended to be one place where these tensions particularly came to a head. Going back all the way to the Baconian project undertaken in a piecemeal fashion by Society Fellows during the Restoration, one finds ambitious ideals of shared knowledge thwarted by desires to protect workshop secrets. And yet, Cuff and the Dollonds also understood the importance of being recognized by and participating in a learned institution such as the Royal Society. One also gleans from their careers that they maintained a keen appreciation for international recognition. Both shops marketed themselves in French and needed a wider Continental clientele in order to flourish. Still, perhaps the most significant challenge evinced by the examples of Cuff and the Dollonds is the long-standing tension between erudition and labour of the hands. However skilled, manual work—dating back at least to the Renaissance—was cast in a separate category from work understood as essentially mental activity. This well-worn opposition between practice and theory was in many ways complicated by the New Science of the Royal Society, Newtonian models of empiricism, and economic conditions that facilitated entire

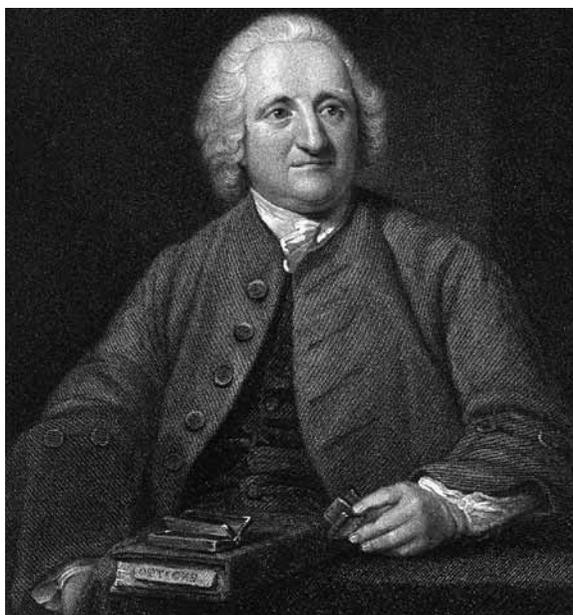


Figure 5, above. James Posselwhite, after Benjamin Wilson, *Portrait of John Dollond*, stipple engraving. Used by permission from Wellcome Library, London.

Figure 6, below. Edward Matthew Ward, *Hogarth's Studio in 1739—Holiday Visit of the Foundlings to View the Portrait of Captain Coram*, 1863, oil on canvas, York Art Gallery. Reproduced by permission.



industries around the production of luxury goods (instruments were sought not only by scientific institutions and learned individuals but also by fashionable men and women as novel accessories and playthings). Throw in the fact that these carefully calibrated devices were also crucial components of global exploration and empire building (Dollond's instruments outfitted Banks's 1769 voyage), and one begins to appreciate the ambiguous position that tradesmen—at least tradesmen at the top of certain industries—occupied in eighteenth-century Britain. On the one hand they were still associated with the work of their hands, and yet, on the other hand, in a very real way other crucial developments, be they advances in theoretical knowledge or mastery of the seas, depended upon them.

Even a modest bit of reflection upon the careers of Cuff and the Dollonds provides valuable ground for viewing anew Zoffany's painting of *An Optician with His Attendant*. One is now struck by the absence of any indication of the challenges just outlined. Notwithstanding its assumed accuracy regarding the details of a mid-century workshop, the picture hints at none of the social, economic, or intellectual difficulties a successful optician would have confronted in the 1760s, which is in no way saying that the painting is somehow dishonest, but only that we must approach it as a work of art requiring a certain critical awareness of the aesthetic choices Zoffany made.²²

Art historians are right in tracing the painting's visual preconditions to seventeenth-century Dutch paintings. Along with the names of Netherlandish artists already mentioned by scholars as possible precedents—Vermeer, De Hooch, Teniers, and Ter Borch—I would add Gerrit Dou, whose *Interior with a Young Violinist* might serve as a representative example.²³ In this work,

²² Zoffany often took liberties in representing actual spaces; in addition to *The Tribuna of the Uffizi*, see the portrait of *Charles Townley and His Friends in the Park Street Gallery*. Colette Crossman, "Priapus in Park Street: Revealing Zoffany's Subtext in *Charles Townley and Friends*," *British Art Journal* 6 (Spring 2005): 71–80.

²³ The painting sold at the sale of James Brydges, first duke of Chandos in 1747 and then again at Christie's in London in 1800 (part of the collection of the National Gallery of Scotland since 1984, the picture is reproduced online at http://www.nationalgalleries.org/index.php/collection/online_az/4:322/results/0/5675/). I am not suggesting that we must find a single source for Zoffany's painting only that within the broad category of Dutch art, Zoffany might have had something like this in mind. I am grateful to Henry Luttikhuisen for his insight on this point. For more on Dou, see Arthur Wheelock, ed., *Gerrit Dou 1613–1675: Master Painter in the Age of*

which was in England in the eighteenth century, a figure sits before a table with a large window to the side and shelves lined with various objects. As if pausing in mid-activity, he returns the viewer's gaze with a direct intimacy. There are, of course, important differences between the two paintings. Most apparent is Zoffany's removal of tonal variation. This was precisely Walpole's criticism of the picture: "the chiaroscuro destroyed by his servility in imitating the reflexions of the glasses."²⁴ The comment indicates that Walpole fully grasped the precedent of Dutch painting and measured the painter accordingly. In accounting for the change, we might attend to a second key difference: whereas Dou (in keeping with Dutch conventions) supplies an entirely "typical" genre scene filled with an assortment of objects that often featured in scenes of learned activity, still lifes, and even parodies of alchemists, Zoffany shows us something quite unusual: a specific sort of tradesman—in this case, a trade that was highly skilled, innovative, and valued by English elite society. Moreover, the optician's trade was inherently bound to matters of clear vision. Zoffany looks to the Dutch example for its high degree of naturalism and its remarkable rendering of objects and the reflection of light on surfaces; and yet, at the same time, Zoffany wants even more: an evenly lit scene in which light—crisp "Newtonian light" induces a remarkable sense of immediacy.²⁵ Any trace of visual mystery is replaced by the promise of ocular clarity. The point is reinforced by the spectacles perched on the optician's forehead as well as by the attention Zoffany pays to the pieces of glass on the shelves behind him (also a source of vexation for Walpole). Perhaps more than representing a particular optician, Zoffany aims to find a new mode for expressing this trade that both he and his audience (including George III) would have recognized as newly vital. Ironically, it is the apparent anonymity of the figure that allows the painting to work in this way without the anxieties that

Rembrandt, exhibition catalogue (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), esp. 78. In addition to the Dutch precedents, we might also add Chardin to the list of relevant pictorial sources.

²⁴ Cited in Millar, *The Later Georgian Pictures*, 152.

²⁵ The theme of the clarity of optics is reinforced by the fact that John Dollond's achromatic lenses were understood as an extension of Newtonianism even as they proved Newton himself to have been mistaken; he was wrong in thinking that chromatic aberration was inevitable. See Sorrenson, 154–67.

would have inevitably attended a widely recognized portrait of a particular practitioner.²⁶

Finally, this reading would also provide for a smooth fit between the painting and Zoffany's other two group portraits that also originate from 1772. After managing so many likenesses into *The Academicians*, it must have come as an enormous relief for the artist to concentrate on just two figures. The theme of looking, which largely organizes the two large canvases, is here explored in much more intimate terms as a focused encounter between the seated figure and the work's viewers. And perhaps most importantly, for the present context, *An Optician with His Attendant* suggests the degree to which the trades were still an important shadow presence for the fine arts. Just as the Royal Society had provided an early platform for the arts in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, this mechanical mode of making continued to matter as an "artisanal epistemology" (here interestingly still tied to the Dutch).²⁷ An optimistic view of the British nation, the sort that would interest the royal family, required not only an Academy of Art and a class of connoisseurs, but also a skilled mechanic class. Zoffany's accomplishment was depicting this last subject as a reliable constant.



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²⁶ The distinction is between a genre picture that depends upon a sitter and a more traditional conception of portraiture in which the picture is understood foremost as a representation of the individual. Even if Cuff is the sitter, there is no evidence to suggest that anyone thought of the picture as a portrait of him in the 1770s. In the 1772 Royal Academy catalogue, the word "portrait" appears nearly 100 times. Almost one-third of the 324 works exhibited were described as such, and other paintings lacking the designation were also understood this way, given that the sitters were identified by name. Even paintings of particular cats and dogs were sometimes referred to as portraits. It is precisely such particularity of identity that is missing with regard to Zoffany's picture of *An Optician with His Attendant*. See *The Exhibition of the Royal Academy* (London: W. Griffin, 1772).

²⁷ The phrase comes from Pamela Smith, to whom I am especially indebted; see her book *The Body of the Artisan: Art and Experience in the Scientific Revolution* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

Reviews/Comptes Rendus

Geraldine Sheridan. *Louder than Words: Ways of Seeing Women Workers in Eighteenth-Century France*. Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press, 2009. xvi+256pp. US\$55. ISBN 978-089672622-2.

In *Louder than Words*, Geraldine Sheridan goes beyond what is revealed by the written word to embark on an exploration of the visual representation of female work in the eighteenth century. Her main sources are *Descriptions des arts et métiers*, published between 1761 and 1788 by the *Académie royale des sciences*, and the well-known volumes of engravings from Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond d'Alembert's *Encyclopédie* (1762–72). To these known sources, she adds twenty engravings produced for *Descriptions*, which her study makes public for the first time.

Sheridan bolsters the arguments of economic historians that women's exclusion from guilds was in no way synonymous with their absence from the workforce. The proportion of engravings representing women at work might have been modest (2.7 per cent in the *Encyclopédie*, 4.8 per cent in the *Descriptions des arts et métiers*), but Sheridan convincingly argues for their significance and subtle complexity. The fact that these plates provide a "stylized" representation of the living conditions of working women does not preclude them from offering a glimpse into what Sheridan calls "the complexity of the social and cultural contexts of work in France in the period" (18). In many cases, the plates confirm the often subaltern position of women workers "across cultures, and indeed across time" (19), a fact that broadens the relevance of this study. Sheridan uses her thorough knowledge of economic history to articulate an array of parameters at work in these engravings (and to occasionally comment on accompanying texts) and to tease out the multifaceted meanings of these visual artifacts.

In addition to an introduction and a conclusion, five chapters represent the major eighteenth-century economic sectors: "The Traditional Economy (Agriculture, Mining, Fishing)," "Artisanal Trades (Ornamental and Luxury Products, Essential Goods)," "Textiles," "Manufactories," and "Commercial Activity." Sheridan opens each part with a well-documented introduction in which the research of economic historians provides the necessary background to her subsequent analysis of the plates. This structure enables her to maintain a balance between a general discussion of economic conditions during the pre-industrial era and her detailed analysis of particular visual artifacts.

This study challenges possible misconceptions attached to female economic activity, misconceptions that can be explained, Sheridan

argues, by the vision of female physiology that gained scientific ground during the Enlightenment period and endured for more than two centuries. In the chapter on the traditional economy, as well as in other parts of her study, Sheridan underscores the necessity of women's work for economic survival as well as the taxing and quite often perilous nature of their assigned roles. That women were involved in agriculture comes as no surprise, but that they worked in mines and participated in fishing activities is less known. They were not only employed in small family businesses, but also were hired in manufactories, which were "large enterprises often supported, and sometimes fully capitalized, by the royal administration" (183), such as the Turkish carpet manufactory in Aubusson. In the chapters on artisanal work and on textiles, in which she describes a wide range of trades, Sheridan discusses the often difficult working conditions (for example, handling molten metals) and outlines how statutes denied women the status of apprentices and the right to pass the trade down to their children. Yet, as the plates make clear, these regulations were not followed scrupulously, and women fully participated in those trades. Although the engravings reveal that they frequently performed highly skilled work, Sheridan found evidence in the texts accompanying the plates that their participation was taken for granted and their skills received little recognition.

While Sheridan highlights the value of these visual artifacts in order to reveal what written texts frequently obscure, she is mindful of the possible pitfalls of such an undertaking, and she carefully contextualizes the engravings. In the book's introduction, she provides an overview of the visual culture in which these engravings found their place. Furthermore, she is aware that "the attention devoted to any one area of the economy reflects primarily the particular agenda of the editors and cannot be supposed to correspond to the importance of that area in terms of the number of people employed or the value of the goods produced" (9). This explains, for example, the absence of servants from this corpus and the limited presence of the Parisian trade guilds that were exclusively in the hands of women. Interestingly, the clothing that women were forced to wear for some activities was also a reason for their virtual absence, as it could easily be deemed indecent (exposing their lower limbs while they fished, for example). As importantly, Sheridan points to the high level of stylization and idealization that characterized the engravings: they certainly suggest the demands that many tasks imposed on women's bodies, but the cleanliness of the work space and the ease with which workers accomplished their work provide no "realistic" representation of the challenging conditions described in other sources.

Finally, in addition to providing visual clues of the active participation of women in the workforce during the eighteenth century and

giving credit where it is due, the iconography of this beautiful book allows modern readers a glimpse into the lives of women who did not belong to the elites and whose role was vital in the material culture of the period. *Louder than Words* makes a substantial contribution to the history of female work, not solely thanks to Sheridan's conclusions, but also because of the questions that she asks throughout her book, suggesting new research pursuits for economic, cultural, and art historians.

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Dena Goodman and Kathryn Norberg, eds. *Furnishing the Eighteenth Century: What Furniture Can Tell Us about the European and American Past*. New York and London: Routledge, 2007. x+246pp. US\$69.95. ISBN 978-0-415-94953-8.

Amanda Vickery. *Behind Closed Doors: At Home in Georgian England*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009. xviii+382pp. US\$45. ISBN 978-0-300-15453-5.

The twelve strong essays collected in *Furnishing the Eighteenth Century* illuminate the circuits of production and consumption that moved furniture and decorative objects from city to countryside, back and forth across the Atlantic, as well as the social pressures that imbued those objects with significance. The first of four thematically organized sections maps the global itinerary of materials and styles. Madeleine Dobie's terrific essay studies the use of luxury woods from French colonies in the West Indies to construct furniture in an Orientalist style. She argues that the exotic guise of the furniture concealed from metropolitan consumers the slave economy that supplied them. Chaela Pastore discusses the vogue for mahogany; though the wood grew in Saint Domingue, Creoles who bought mahogany furniture were criticized for mimicking the elites in France who wanted to monopolize this luxury as a token of national and racial purity. David Porter's chapter returns to the topic of Orientalism by way of a treatise on aesthetics by William Hogarth. Chinoiserie exemplified the features that Hogarth claimed had universal appeal (for example, novelty, asymmetry, and femininity), yet the style repelled him. Porter shows that the Chinese style was often satirized as a source of female pleasure that displaced men; its connotations thus undermined the heterosexual dynamic implicit in Hogarth's theory of beauty.

While Pastore and Porter examine efforts to regulate fashion, the second set of essays profile people who carried fashions across

geographical and social boundaries. Natacha Coquery reconstructs the business of a Parisian upholsterer whose trade in second-hand goods broadened access to high-end fashions. With the help of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Vermont woodworker James Wilson produced the first globes for sale in the new Republic. David Jaffee records Wilson's achievement as an instance of "Village Enlightenment," whereby cosmopolitan knowledge was introduced to the provinces by commerce (81). Jaffee complicates the centre-periphery model of diffusion, though, by showing how American artisans often adapted English styles to local tastes and thereby signalled their nation's independence. Kathryn Norberg analyzes the ways in which courtesans appropriated features from aristocratic interiors in order to create the novel and seductive environments in which they plied their trade. The third section of the volume continues this investigation of the domestic interior with Donna Bohanan's discussion of noble houses in provincial France. The decoration of these homes closely resembled those in Paris and Versailles, a consequence, Bohanan argues, of a change in laws that deepened the division between old and new aristocracy by taxing the latter more heavily. Goaded by this check to their aspirations, parvenus in the provinces embraced the elite style emanating from the court and city to assert the authenticity of their rank.

Anyone who has ploughed straight through the museum galleries devoted to ceramic dinnerware, bored by so much sameness, should definitely read Mimi Hellman's compelling semiotic analysis of the matched set. Hellman argues that seriality would have been alluring prior to industrialization, given the difficulty of manufacturing apparently identical objects by hand. The matched set was priced beyond the reach of most consumers, but for those who could afford them, their multiplicity provided a pleasing sense of continuity and order. The *meuble*, a matched set of furniture, could unite a group of people while signalling differences in status among them, depending on the type of chair one sat on and its position in the room. Mary Salzman suggests that a pair of eighteenth-century paintings taught people to interpret interiors in just this way. Noting a standard reading of the objects in Jean-François de Troy's *The Garter* and *The Declaration of Love* (1724) as clues that reveal to the viewer how the depicted scene will unfold, Salzman instead presents the objects as signs that female figures in the paintings use to express desire non-verbally to male companions. Viewers of the paintings were thus encouraged to speak with things, like the Lagadoans Gulliver encountered on his travels.

The forging of identity and relationships through the use of innovative kinds of furniture is explored in the volume's final section. The tea table as a site of female sociability is Ann Smart Martin's topic, while Dena Goodman situates the origin of the *secrétaire* within a

transformation of writing from a collaborative to a solitary practice. In antiquity and the Middle Ages, people dictated their thoughts to secretaries, but by the eighteenth century people more commonly wrote on their own, and the middleman was replaced by the piece of furniture named after him. Desks stacked high with drawers and cubbyholes were created to facilitate private correspondence; their ornate marquetry and gilded hardware dignified an activity that had become personal. The inner life of furniture is addressed in Carolyn Sargentson's essay on secret compartments in desks. The servants, tradesmen, and nosy visitors circulating through aristocratic households had owners worried about theft and maintaining privacy; their anxiety was allayed by furniture with ingenious locks, false-bottomed drawers, and recesses hidden behind spring-loaded doors. To operate these clandestine workings was to have an intimate relationship with a thing.

I learned much from reading all of these informative essays, but I was most engaged when the authors moved beyond the now familiar link between the commercial revolution, social distinction, and upward mobility, which too often leads to a reductive account of eighteenth-century material culture solely in terms of a competition for status. These essays show that status was just one of many things, and not always the most important, that people sought in consumption. Taken as a whole, the volume reveals how integral furnishing was to modern personhood: decoration and furniture were media of self-expression, tools of affiliation and exclusion, objects of sensuous enjoyment, products of exploitation, and catalysts of social and psychological change.

A central aim of consumption was to create a sense of home. Amanda Vickery's *Behind Closed Doors* provides a rich, wide-ranging history of the English home in the long eighteenth century. To understand the home as a social concept implanted in a physical environment, Vickery crosses disciplinary divisions and pursues her subject through an array of sources, from diaries, letters, and ledgers to novels, pattern books, and advertising, all the while adroitly alternating between different expository scales, from sympathetic sketches of ordinary people, in all their domestic contentment or rancour, to synthetic overviews of changing trends in habitation. Central to her analysis are two intertwined changes commonly associated with the period, though far from completed within it: the rise of the conjugal family and the transformation of the home from a locus of production into one of consumption. The attitudes towards gender that follow from those changes and the influence of these attitudes on everyday living among the genteel and middling classes receive particular attention. Women who were everywhere subservient to men gained through marriage more authority in the home, where they entered significant roles as household

managers, canny consumers, and agents of sociability. Masculinity was also tied to the private realm. With the rise of companionate marriage came an ideal of parity between husband and wife. Men were expected to relinquish their control over certain household matters to women who otherwise remained their legal inferiors. In a revealing phrase, Vickery claims that wives “experienced ownership” in the act of housekeeping, but surely this is not the same as *having* ownership (88). Vickery thus argues that the norm of “marital courtesy” perpetuates the gender hierarchy by ameliorating married women’s subordination within it, though she emphasizes the power this norm confers on women rather than the privilege it preserves for men (198).

Equality at home is evident in the account books of the Cotton, Grimes, and Arderne households studied in chapter 4. According to Vickery, the entries suggest that women paid tutors and bought linen and decorative objects, while men handled payments for major renovations, coaches, and wool. If there was a gendered division of responsibilities, then, it was not an uneven one. Education is no less important an expenditure than construction, and in Vickery’s assessment, interior decoration was not a frivolous matter. Over the course of the century, a tradition of paternalistic hospitality gave way to modern practices of civility that sought to mitigate differences in wealth and rank. Women presided over this new form of social organization, in rooms that they designed for entertaining visitors. The right decoration also signified gentility, and by having command of it women took charge of the image the family projected to others. The emerging discourse of taste, which required no formal training, permitted this ascendancy of women at home. Vickery’s examination of the ledgers also disproves the stereotype of the materialistic female shopper, showing instead that the majority of women’s purchases were for other family members. Men were just as likely to indulge in luxury, and not just with foppish canes and peacock jackets. Barometers, Vickery observes, were essentially wall ornaments that worked better as props of enlightened masculinity than as tools of scientific investigation. Her chapter on the gendering of commodities shows that the relation was not always fixed between the gender attributed to things and the gender of their typical buyer. Men collected porcelain, for example, but this preference was still considered by many to be effeminate. Usually such associations were customary, but in some cases the gendering of furniture was deliberate, such as when distinctly shaped desks began to be created for and marketed separately to male and female users late in the century. Vickery concludes that gender difference, as well as equality in marriage, was entrenched through consumption for the home.

Other chapters examine the growing desire for privacy as revealed by the proliferation of locks on interior doors; the symbolism of design

schemes in aristocratic homes; and the living arrangements of single men and women, which are here usually set in dismal contrast to wedlock. These chapters exhibit the same scrupulous use of evidence and a keen sense of the most telling anecdotes, absorbingly narrated. As the details accumulate, they tend to confirm and nuance—rather than alter significantly—our understanding of the private realm in this period. A notable exception is her pugnacious critique of a “founding legend of women’s history ... the withdrawal of middling and privileged women from productive work and their relegation to a separate sphere of home as a consequence of industrial capitalism” (232). Vickery rejects this “tale of female incarceration in the domestic sphere,” preferring “newer interpretations of the affluent home as a site of administrative expertise rather than a cage” (308, 232). “Virtuous domesticity ... was more a self-conscious performance than an inescapable oppression,” she insists, and sociologists are “too pessimistic” about the possibility of female agency “within a framework of masculinist control” (160, 112). Whether or not you accept Vickery’s revisionist claims about the empowerment that eighteenth-century women experienced through domestication will depend on how plausible you find her premise that the authority husbands granted wives over some areas of home management amounted to something more than a weak surrogate for the opportunities women were routinely denied. Women (or men for that matter) may not have been imprisoned in the home, but it would be hard to know this from reading Vickery’s book, which tells us very little about their existence in public, their role in the economy other than as consumers, their legal rights, or their political capacities, and yet all those factors certainly shaped their lives at home and what home meant to them too. Vickery proceeds as if the meaning of home was determined primarily by the actions and beliefs of the people living there, as if what happened in the home was disconnected from what happened elsewhere, and finally as if the definition of home was not endlessly, publicly contested. It would have been beneficial therefore if, in addition to taking us “behind closed doors” as Vickery does with such acuity and sympathy for her subjects, she also opened those doors to let more of the outer world into her analysis.

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Mary Helen McMurrin. *The Spread of Novels: Translation and Prose Fiction in the Eighteenth Century*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009. x+252pp. US\$27.95. ISBN 978-0-691-14153-4.

This innovative study holds that translation practices “changed drastically in the eighteenth century,” increased fiction’s “mobility,” and fostered a cosmopolitan sensibility that led the novel to operate self-consciously within and beyond national boundaries. While early eighteenth-century practices would not distinguish between source and target texts, this resistance was normal, partly because prose fiction aimed traditionally to transmit classical stories in vernacular languages. As this aim became less of a priority, translation became a cultural project that sped the emergence of the novel. Mary Helen McMurrin’s larger claim is that translation was “endemic” to literary culture and correlated with Enlightenment humanism and progress. At this point in the exposition, readers familiar with discourse analysis will wonder at the privileging of literariness since fiction bulked so small in the book trade output and since the classical languages remained prominent in science, medicine, the professions, and pedagogy. Another problem for literary history arises from tautological applications of literary categories. McMurrin often speaks of novels and emerging novels before *the* novel is given either *a priori* or *a posteriori* definition. However, setting aside circularities in cause-and-effect analysis, it is an absorbing proposal that the novel grew out of a “changing mode of transmissibility,” moving “from a nation-blind transfer to a transnationalized exchange.”

McMurrin keenly observes definitional problems, as her critique of Ian Watt’s view of realism moving from English novels to “the novel form” and a universalized modernity attests. To McMurrin, Watt’s focus on secular clock time, which places national and novelistic identity in one conceptual field, too easily detaches the novel from earlier prose fiction and distracts attention from the plural and mixed provenance of English and French fictions. In dismissing French novels as too stylish, while maintaining that narrative authenticity depends on exhaustive representation of daily life, Watt turned his back on fiction’s multilingual, protean nature. After reminding us that translation was the common denominator of earlier histories of the novel, McMurrin details the conditions under which translators worked from the late seventeenth century onward: there was no standard of linguistic or stylistic fidelity; translators were independent authors; and there was systematic collusion to hide sources. The book trade circulated prose fiction without much regard to authorial and national identity. The French press mediated English fictions to Europe. The London industry, including foreign booksellers, produced

foreign-language books. Exiled communities and language learners motivated publishers to exchange books across national borders. However, if translators were not hacks working on an industrial basis, conditions evolved to their disadvantage. Frances Brooke's career is illustrative: an author and book-trade agent as well as translator, she did not fit into the social networks that capital investment in the trade fostered. Competition among translators reduced their autonomy and increased their contractual responsibilities. Copyright law protected English but not foreign writers. These limitations on translators coincided with the novel's evolving procedures.

The mid-eighteenth-century textual procedures of prose fiction derive from the conflation of the tropes of amplification and abbreviation habitual to translators with the sentimental codes that led novelists across Europe to make the transmittal of feeling their chief task. Since translators treated source texts as amalgamations of elements rather than as fixed objects to be copied, they did not impose organic unity on the novel; they wanted to be free to attach readers sentimentally to characters. To McMurrin, Eliza Haywood's translations with their heightened declamation and emotionalism typify the newly feminized literary production of France and England. In a fine account of La Place's translation of Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko* that puts Imoinda at the centre of the plot, McMurrin shows how the French author softens the original novel's feelings and uses him to argue that the new novel's liberal translation procedures herald desire for its own sake and make pathos an affective agenda. This argument is nicely extended by consideration of dialectical tensions between nationalism and cosmopolitanism in translation's cultural work, which holds that nation-based cosmopolitanism was unique to "the mid-eighteenth-century cross-Channel arena." In a compelling account of how authors accepted and resisted extranational aspects of translation, McMurrin examines Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* and *Clarissa* in terms of conflicted intentions and divergent European responses to the novels. If Richardson thought, while composing *Pamela*, that translation might harm national identity, he realized that it could be culturally enriching when he wrote *Clarissa*. While he associated Pamela's virtue with textual autonomy, the notion that an English novel could sever itself from Continental influences was derided and satirized on both sides of the Channel. Clarissa's virtues enabled him to put national identification in cosmopolitan terms of order, manners, and moral purpose. In praising Richardson as poet and moralist, Denis Diderot elevated secular sentimentalism over traditional spiritual reading, saw *Clarissa* as the new universal novel, and helped institute the founding contradiction that the novel must be no more than its particulars and simultaneously universal.

McMurrans final chapter broadens the field of translation perhaps too much by seeing transatlantic settings that perform an imperial “interculturality” as a powerful strain in the emergent novel. The link between multilingual communities in the new world and linguistic and cultural translations in texts is not well theorized. Note is made of Robinson Crusoe’s learning of Portuguese, but attention is not paid to his analogies to England, ignorance of marine terms, and categorical dullness to natural history. Nor is the contextualization of *The History of Emily Montague* persuasive. It is a very optimistic reading that sees this novel’s bilingual and translational texture correcting nationalisms with sympathy and wit, for its georgic and pastoral imagery stems primarily from canonical English poetry. This is not to belittle this study’s dialectical stance, the subtle flexibility of which is not captured in this short review. This volume has been well edited, and there are few printing errors. However, for my taste there are too many neologisms and mixed metaphors (for example, fuel that is titillating, a backlash that heats up). Some readers will be disappointed to see no references to “polysystem theory.” Others may wonder that Enlightenment progress passes unchallenged.

Robert James Merrett, professor of English at the University of Alberta, is writing a book on *British Communities in Eighteenth-Century French Cities*, a demographic, economic, and cross-cultural study based on archival research.

Leslie Ritchie. *Women Writing Music in Late Eighteenth-Century England: Social Harmony in Literature and Performance*. Burlington: Ashgate Publishing, 2008. 280pp. US\$99.95. ISBN 978-0-7546-6333-1.

Very little is known about women’s musical composition in eighteenth-century England, and this excellent book makes a solid foundation for the subject. Leslie Ritchie’s argument, in a nutshell, is that “women composed, performed, and wrote about music in nearly every imaginable place, and in every available genre” (219). She pulls together information on many lesser known women composers, and makes the startling revelation that far from publishing anonymously, as many as 75 per cent of the women who registered musical compositions at Stationer’s Hall did so under their own names. She reproduces quite a number of musical texts here—for those who read music—with title pages bearing women’s names. The book also covers well-known women performers and their influence; Ritchie observes that “in Britain, the eighteenth century was the century of the performer. Broadly stated, it was the era of Garrick, not Shakespeare” (15). She treats songs and

song collections, reminding us that music is not defined by “great works” alone. She has amassed information about where the songs came from, that young ladies played and sang for the entertainment of others, how many were written by women (either music or words), and what were their subjects and accompanying instruments. In doing so, she has uncovered proof of women’s musical talent that does not show up any other way, for there are no records of royalties for women nor commissions nor bills for lessons. She also documents women’s authorship of words for songs, as lyricists and librettists, and analyzes the kinds of songs women wrote and the themes they favoured.

Ritchie’s informative, highly intelligent sentences are a pleasure to read, and the book is beautifully researched, with an extensive bibliography separated usefully into three listings: musical sources, eighteenth-century sources, and other “critical, historical, and bibliographical sources.” But Ashgate has not edited this text adequately (and who among us does not need editing?) for a typo appears on the first page, and solecisms remain such as “infers” for “implies” (20, 160) and “empirical” for “imperial” (177).

After the introductory chapters about problematic issues for women in music—its sensual power as well as its discipline, public performance, class (music requires literacy and leisure)—the organization of the book reverts to the thematics of women’s musical compositions, with a chapter on songs of charity, pity, and love, another chapter on pastoral subjects, and the last chapter on songs celebrating Britishness, either with patriotic sentiment or invoking the empire. Women were drawn to compose pastorals, for example, those “comic afterpiece[s] concerning country life, presented in spoken dialogue interspersed with airs” (159). The most famous of these was Frances Moore Brooke’s *Rosina*, music by William Shield, first performed in 1782 and played 201 more times before the end of the century. Ritchie does not mention Charlotte Lennox’s pastoral *Philander*, with music by James Oswald, chamber musician to George III, but it is another bit of evidence for her thesis that pastoral was a genre hospitable to women.

There is another important theme in this book, to be gleaned here and there although never pulled together thoroughly, about the affinity between women and song in the eighteenth century. Women wrote music as well as words for a great many of the songs that accomplished young ladies sang for their families and friends. Ritchie has found many examples of women songwriters throughout the second half of the century, such as Elizabeth Turner, whose *A Collection of Songs with Symphonies and a Thorough Bass With Six Lessons for the Harpsichord* sold by subscription in 1756; 21 per cent of her subscribers were women, and many professional musicians were on her list as well as professors of music from Oxford and Cambridge, Master of the Boys of the Cathedral

of St. Paul's, not to mention Garrick and Handel. Turner was a singer, who performed at public concerts for which tickets were sold, and she appeared at concerts benefitting others as well. Her book of songs and compositions sold in Barbados, Gloucester, Dublin, Winchester, Hull, Oxford, and Cambridge.

Harriet Abrams was another composer and singer, admired by Charles Burney and David Garrick. After a five-year career singing at Drury Lane, Abrams began singing in prestigious subscription concerts; she organized a series of private "Ladies Concerts" from 1791–92, and at her annual benefit concert "she was accompanied by Haydn" (103). She wrote many songs, including the musical setting for Matthew Gregory Lewis's *The Orphan's Prayer, A Pathetic Ballad*, and for his *Crazy Jane*, which was Lewis's favourite setting. Ritchie includes a reproduction of the sheet music for *Crazy Jane*, with the name of Miss Abrams prominently displayed. Pathetic songs about beggar girls and madwomen were favoured themes for songs written by women in the late eighteenth century.

Ritchie treats too many women composers to list here, many of them songwriters, including Maria Barthélemon, Elizabeth Billington, Anna Phillips Crouch, Ann Marie Hodges, Caroline Poole, and Mary Wogan; and, as she points out, "the number of surviving songs composed and published by women increased dramatically in the last decade of the eighteenth century" (5). She also gives the titles of song collections intended for women and points out that circulating libraries provided instruments as well as music for women subscribers. Many women, of course, kept music books into which they copied songs and pieces that they wanted to play, and song lyrics they wanted to remember, but also where they may well have copied their own compositions. Books of paper ruled for music could be purchased for such purposes.

Ritchie never asks why women were drawn to song, nor why the culture privileged women's singing over instrumental prowess, although clearly it did. German Gertrud Elizabeth Schmeling (later known as Mara) had been in England as a child, "where she played the violin, but she quitted that instrument, and became a singer, by the advice of English ladies, who disliked a *female fidler*" (181). Songs for women were invariably scored for pianoforte or harp, instruments that permitted a woman to accompany her own singing. "Singers were the most highly paid, most visible, most collaborative and most influential workers of any participants in the cultural field of musical production" (220), according to Ritchie. This emphasis on singing is one of the reasons, no doubt, that she argues for "an expanded view of the cultural importance of performance," insisting that singers are "co-creators" of the music they perform (220).

Despite its title, much of this book is about literary rather than musical composition. Ritchie's excellent analysis of the chordal changes

in Margaret Essex's "The Olive Branch," celebrating the Peace of Amiens in 1802, makes one realize that such musical analysis has been quite rare. Many pages are given over to women's words to songs; Ann Radcliffe's novel *Romance of the Forest* (1792) is examined for how music functions in it. In the last chapter, especially, Ritchie wanders away from writing about music created by women to looking at how women and gender are treated in music by men. It is somewhat disappointing to find women's actual musical composition scanted, although it is a largely unknown subject with the research in this book breaking hard new ground.

One extremely important observation that comes out of Ritchie's emphasis on song lyrics is her realization that women's writing circulated more widely as the words to songs than has been previously assessed. Settings for the poems of Aphra Behn, Katherine Phillips, Mary Wortley Montagu, Mary Barber, Amelia Opie, and Hannah Cowley "[suggest] that songs can manifest a writer's continuing influence in ways that may not appear from canonical literary sources" (86). Surely more work is needed in examining song lyrics and women's poetry in order to learn more about the extent of this method of circulation.

Ritchie is also wonderfully informative on the issue of women and music in the public and private spheres. Contrary to received wisdom, she asserts that "female performers were [not] consigned to the private sphere or punished with tarnished reputations for venturing into public venues" (57). They played and sang in all of the following places and occasions: "casual family gatherings; impromptu parties amongst friends, visitors, and neighbors; musical societies' meetings; concerts featuring a combination of amateur and professional musicians; so-called private concerts featuring a combination of amateur and professional music; festivals or other occasional performances ... subscription-only concerts in public venues; ticketed performances in ecclesiastical, recreational, and theatrical spaces; regular religious services; and, finally, the circulation and/or publications of musical compositions, often printed with references to their original performance occasion, for further performance in any of these situations" (57). Moreover, the so-called private concerts they played at may have been held in private homes but tickets were sold, and often as many as 400 or 500 people attended (68–71). The concert in Bath attended by Anne Elliot, her cousin Mr Elliot, and Captain Wentworth in Jane Austen's *Persuasion* is a crowded affair, and the heroine hardly knows everyone at it. When, in 1773, Richard Brinsley Sheridan married the glorious singer, Elizabeth Linley, daughter of Thomas Linley, music master in Bath, she stopped performing publically although her performances had been entirely respectable and extremely lucrative (the money went to her father). Sheridan did, however, allow her to give private ticketed concerts at their

home to nobility, which preserved his social ambitions and enabled her to continue to earn money for the household. Meanwhile, Elizabeth kept editing and copying music for her father and “composing, copying, and arranging music for the theatre” (71).

But Ritchie’s most trenchant remark on the subject of music in public and private realms is simply “there is no such thing as private music. To create, describe, or theorize music is to correspond with an immense harmonic and aesthetic vocabulary that has been defined over time by an international community” (19). In other words, the vocabulary of music, its sweep and range, carried the public sphere with it no matter where it was learned or performed. Nonetheless, it is also important to emphasize that “private” concerts were neither small nor necessarily amateurish, and that women performing musically outside the home were neither morally cheapened nor declassed for doing so.

Anyone interested in the history of music, or in women’s cultural production in eighteenth-century England, will want to read this book.

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Miriam L. Wallace. *Revolutionary Subjects in the English “Jacobin” Novel, 1790–1805*. Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2009. 314pp. US\$65. ISBN 978-0-8387-57050-5.

In recent years, an increasing number of critical studies have dealt with the intersection of politics and literature in Britain during the 1790s and the first years of the nineteenth century. Examining in particular the literary engagement with the upheavals brought about by the French Revolution, these studies often focus on texts that had in their own time contributed to the “Revolution debate” from both sides of the political spectrum but were later marginalized or neglected. Miriam L. Wallace’s book is an important contribution to this work of cultural recovery, including insightful and probing analyses both of understudied literary texts and more familiar ones, as well as a sophisticated theoretical framework in which to view them together. Building on the foundational work of Gary Kelly, Marilyn Butler, and those who followed in their footsteps, Wallace’s book provides a unique and compelling perspective on the cultural landscape of the period.

As acknowledged in the title, Wallace situates the idea of subjectivity as an organizing theme for her discussion. She argues that the “dual status [of political subjects] as entities made through subjection to ideology and state power and as linguistic subjects, self-constituted through representational activity [is] particularly pertinent for this founding literary moment” (17) of the emergence of the British reformist novel. She lucidly unpacks the various ways in which subjectivity is articulated;

by the concluding chapter we can see not only how the 1790s was a historical moment conducive to its emergence as a politically freighted category but also how this recognition of a dual subjectivity is highly relevant to our own time. Among the many strengths of this book is Wallace's repeated emphasis on the relevance of eighteenth-century reformist discourse to the issues of human rights, agency, and political action that continue to preoccupy us today. For example, her discussion of Mary Hays's 1799 novel *The Victim of Prejudice* examines rape and trauma narratives from both historical and contemporary theoretical perspectives in order to show not only the limited possibilities for the articulation of female trauma—and female subjectivity—within the novel's own purview, but also the ways in which trauma can be rewritten and given expression through an “active witnessing by a future, unnamed sympathetic reader” (146).

Central to Wallace's argument is the rejection of the divisions that underpin many current studies of late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century literature, divisions that enforce binary oppositions and an exclusivity of focus in regard to gender as well as politics, and which “leave out the complex relations among radical and more conservative writers and between female- and male-authored texts” (19). The works under consideration in *Revolutionary Subjects* reflect the diversity and complexity of the writing of this period. While substantial attention is given to texts that fit seamlessly into a study of the progressive, reformist novel—William Godwin's *Caleb Williams*, Mary Wollstonecraft's *Maria, or the Wrongs of Woman*, Robert Bage's *Hermesprung*, Eliza Fenwick's *Secresy*, Thomas Holcroft's *Anna St. Ives* and *The Memoirs of Bryan Perdue*, and Mary Hays's *Emma Courtney* and *The Victim of Prejudice*—Wallace also examines more ideologically nuanced works, including Charles Lloyd's *Edmund Oliver*, Amelia Opie's *Adeline Mowbray*, and, in a particularly bold move, Elizabeth Hamilton's *Memoirs of Modern Philosophers*. The chapter discussing Lloyd and Opie, to my mind the strongest chapter in the book, convincingly locates these writers' works as “conservative reformist novels” (187) whose political positioning includes criticism of some of the more overt reformist principles and the support of others. Wallace's application throughout her study of the Godwinian distinction between “moral” and “tendency”—that is, a work's overt aim as opposed to the availability of possible alternative readings—is especially useful for identifying this ideological ambivalence. Thus, *Edmund Oliver* and *Adeline Mowbray* can be viewed as novels whose “moral” lies in the critique of excessive sensibility and the “new philosophy” that was associated with Godwin's *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice*. Yet the “experimental and ideal” (201) homosocial community envisioned at the conclusion of Lloyd's novel and the female-centred social alignment pointedly dissociated

from concerns of property that appears at the end of Opie's text also exhibit reformist "tendencies" in their rejection of inherited privilege based on blood and land and in their reworking of traditional notions of conjugality. And while *Memoirs of Modern Philosophers* is a novel more consistently anti-reformist than those of Lloyd and Opie, Wallace succeeds nonetheless in illuminating moments in the text that question the adherence to a strictly loyalist narrative, particularly in Hamilton's portrayal of an unconventional "positive and powerful ... aging spinster" (248) and in other approved characters' arguments for a more equal redistribution of wealth.

Wallace's argument for the elimination of binary oppositions and exclusive categories, is, however, slightly undermined in my opinion by her repeated use of the terminology "Jacobin" and "anti-Jacobin." Wallace herself qualifies this usage of these terms by the placement of quotation marks in the title and elsewhere in the text and in her own acknowledgement of the problematic nature of these words, admitting that "English Jacobins' is a misnomer" (184). The revolutionary subjects who are at the centre of this study would surely have agreed: Charlotte Smith, an author associated with reformist circles, who is occasionally mentioned in Wallace's book, alludes to her frustration with the appellation in volume 4 of *The Letters of a Solitary Wanderer* (London, 1802) by having her eponymous protagonist claim: "To wish for peace, to desire that the waste of life may cease, and suffering humanity feel no longer the scourge of war ... is to be an *Atheist*; a *Jacobin*, I know not what!" (9).

That said, Wallace's book is an indispensable contribution to the study of the revolutionary era and will be welcomed by scholars of the period for its cogent literary analyses as well as for its carefully wrought depiction of a culture whose concerns, vibrantly and forcefully articulated in their own time, continue to be so strikingly relevant today.

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