

## The Eighteenth Century

### 3. Britain

## Contents

<b>Beginnings</b> .....	3
James Thornhill (1675/76 – 1734) .....	3
William Hogarth (1697 – 1764) .....	5
<i>A Harlot's Progress</i> .....	7
<i>A Rake's Progress</i> .....	10
<i>Marriage a la Mode</i> (National Gallery).....	15
<i>The Humours of an Election</i> .....	21
<b>Thomas Gainsborough (1727 – 1788)</b> .....	25
<b>Portraits</b> .....	42
Sir Joshua Reynolds (1723 – 1792).....	43
<b>George Stubbs (1724 – 1806)</b> .....	46
<b>Joseph Wright of Derby (1734 – 1797)</b> .....	54
<b>Landscapes</b> .....	64
Richard Wilson (1714 – 1782) .....	65
Watercolours.....	67
George Morland (1763 – 1804) .....	69
<b>References</b> .....	71

## Beginnings

The 18<sup>th</sup> century witnessed the beginning of British art. For over two centuries, native artists had been overshadowed by the masters of Europe. A few English portrait painters managed a living. The English aristocracy sated its large appetite for art with paintings from Italy and France. English painters had very limited opportunities for training: the higher genres were considered by patrons to be a mystery to them. As Williams puts it in the *Oxford History of England*, “in painting we were barren indeed.”

### James Thornhill (1675/76 – 1734)

A breakthrough was made by James Thornhill. The fashion for Baroque wall and ceiling decorations had started when the English ambassador in Paris brought Antonio Verrio to England in 1672. From 1675 to 1684 Verrio decorated Windsor Castle. Louis Laguerre arrived in 1684 to assist Verrio and over the next 20 years “between them they covered enormous acres of wall and ceiling in Windsor and Hampton Court and many country houses [including Burghley, Chatsworth, Blenheim, Marlborough, Petworth] (Bindman).” The British ambassador to Venice brought Marco Ricci to England in 1708 and in the same year the Earl of Manchester brought over Giovanni Pellegrini. These two decorated country retreats and London townhouses for the next five years. Thornhill broke this foreign monopoly. In 1707 he was given the commission to decorate 40,000 square feet of Old Royal Naval College at Greenwich.



James Thornhill, *George I and his Family*, West Wall of Painted Hall, Greenwich, 1714-1720s

Protestant monarchs were celebrated along with national achievements. On the West Wall, Thornhill includes himself, next to the column on the right at the bottom of the steps, gesturing towards (or perhaps asking for long-overdue payments from) the Hanoverian king who receives the sceptre under the inscription *Now a New Generation Descends from Heaven*. By this time, Thornhill had been appointed Sergeant-Painter to George I and on 2 May 1720 became the first British artist to be knighted. Sir Christopher Wren designed the Naval College and his St Paul's appears in the background.



The main scene shows William and Mary surrounded by the attributes of good government. Having ended Louis XIV's dream of expansion, William accepts an olive branch of peace, while giving the red cap of liberty to Europe.



James Thornhill, *William and Mary*, Centre of ceiling of Painted Hall, Greenwich, 1707-1710s



In June 1715 Thornhill was given the commission to decorate the dome of St Paul's. He painted eight grisaille scenes of the life of the saint.



Both these large commissions had been expected to go to an Italian. How did Thornhill manage to get the Greenwich project? He had until then done only some murals at Chatsworth. By the time the St Paul's commission was granted he had finished Greenwich, so that would have qualified him. The reasons Thornhill was favoured for St Paul's might also be why he received the Greenwich work. According to *the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Tenison, is said to have remarked: "I am no judge of painting, but on two articles I think I may insist: first that the painter employed [at St Paul's] be a Protestant; and secondly that he be an Englishman." At the time *The Weekly Packet* noted that awarding Thornhill the commission would "put to silence all the loud applauses hitherto given to foreign artists." This was very much the view of the man who revolutionised English art, William Hogarth.

#### William Hogarth (1697 – 1764)

Richard Hogarth, a non-conformist and teacher in the Lake District, settled in London in 1689 hoping to earn a living as an author of Greek and Latin textbooks and dictionaries. The family lived in a poor part of London which had escaped the Great Fire. Richard struggled to support his family of two girls and William. He tried opening a coffee house in 1703 where only classical languages were to be spoken but that soon failed. In 1707 Richard's debts meant the family were confined in Fleet Prison. Richard spent the first few months in a cell, then joined his family who lived in a room or two in a house within the precincts of the prison, in which they remained until 1712. William's young life among the common folk of London shaped his art. Indeed, Paulson (Hogarth) notes that, "*Prison is never far away in his paintings and prints.*" Hogarth's earliest known oil is *The Beggar's Opera* (1728), a depiction of a prison in Act 3 of John Gay's play on the stage of Lincoln's Inn Fields Theatre, with some of the audience to the sides.

The highwayman, Captain Macheath with his legs fettered, is hemmed in by Lucy Lockit and Polly Peachum, each believing herself to be Macheath's wife, pleading with their fathers (the gaoler and a prosperous gang leader who has informed on the highwayman) for mercy. A year later, the cruelty and corruption of Fleet's warden and his persecution of helpless debtors became so blatant that a committee of the House of Commons was formed to investigate and found shocking incidents. Hogarth accompanied the MPs to the prison and made a sketch from life.





William Hogarth, *The Beggar's Opera*, 1731 version

*The Beggar's Opera* is an early example of Hogarth's awareness of the importance of publicity. John Rich's production of Gay's play was enormously popular, sold-out for 62 consecutive nights from the 29<sup>th</sup> January 1728. This first comic opera marked the start of rapid growth in theatre. Drury Lane was expanded three times and new theatres opened. Theatre managers realised there was a market for plays among lower-paid workers, so they put on 'after-hour' performances at cheaper rates: Covent Garden was very successful here. In *Beggar's Opera* Polly was played by Lavinia Fenton, whose performance enraptured London. Songs and verses were written about her, pictures of her were in huge demand and the Duke of Bolton took her as a mistress after the play's first run. Rich bought Hogarth's original 1728 painting, others wanted one (Hogarth obliging with four copies) and Rich also asked for a larger and more elaborate version to be displayed in the theatre. This last (above) includes the Duke of Bolton with a satyr pointing down to him, marking him as the lover. The painting made Hogarth's name as an artist and prevented a vicious family row. In 1729 Hogarth eloped with James Thornhill's daughter, Jane, provoking an altercation. When Thornhill saw *The Beggar's Opera* paintings, he was won round; "if he can do things like that, he can earn enough to keep my daughter."

How did Hogarth get here from his teenage years in Fleet Prison? In 1714, he began an apprenticeship with a silver engraver but left in 1720 with only one more year to serve. Aside from tiring of "the mere barren study of making fine lines", Hogarth didn't want to be a tradesman and an opportunity arose that year when painters John Vanderbank and Louis Cheron opened *The Academy for the Improvement of Painters and Sculptors by drawing from the Naked* in St Martin's Lane. Their premises were open five evenings a week over its annual winter season and offered a formal artistic training. Hogarth paid two guineas to be among the first subscribers; there were 35 in all. As well as learning techniques of drawing and painting, Hogarth met other artists. Despite being popular, the Academy was forced to close in 1724 as Vanderbank, who kept a mistress in a country house, embezzled all the funds and fled to France to avoid arrest. James Thornhill then started free life-classes at his house. Hogarth attended, so meeting his future wife.



The success of *The Beggar's Opera* attracted work and Hogarth received dozens of commissions for *conversation pieces*. These were created by French artist Philippe Mercier who arrived in England in 1719 and adapted Antoine Watteau's *fetes galante* to family members enjoying an activity in the countryside. Hogarth objected to foreign artists taking money from English patrons. Levey describes him as "a little swaggering man with a snub nose and protruding under-lip, in character he was vain, pugnacious and narrow in his hatred of foreigners". Hogarth painted many conversation pieces in competition with Mercier, set outdoors *The Fountaine Family* (1730) as well as indoors, *The Wollaston Family* (1730), and even one for the royal family in 1732. Hogarth had success with these pieces, but was dissatisfied with the income they brought.

As Hogarth explained in his *Autobiographical Notes* (quoted in Bindman) he conceived "a new way of proceeding, viz. painting and engraving modern moral subjects, a field unbroke up in any country or any age." Jan Steen had produced morality paintings but they depicted several proverbs in one scene, rather than a narrative across a series. So was born *A Harlot's Progress*.

### *A Harlot's Progress*



Scene 1. Moll Hackabout has come to London from York to visit her loving cousin, bringing a goose as a present. She is intercepted off the coach by the famous procuress Mother Needham, spots of syphilis marking MN's face. Lurking in the doorway is Colonel Francis Charteris and his pimp John Gourlay, notorious for lurking around inns and corrupting young girls. Behind her a clergyman is ignorant of her moral peril, entranced by a letter calling him to see the Bishop of London who, as everyone knew, dispensed church livings in England.

In these scenes Hogarth exploited the ready availability of news to ordinary people. Coffee houses and taverns kept racks of newspapers and pamphlets. There were 2,000 coffee houses in London in Queen Anne's time and even more in Hogarth's as coffee became cheaper (McKendrick). Scandals were well covered. Mother Needham was arrested by Sir John Gonson, Justice of the Peace, and convicted in April 1731. She was sentenced to be pilloried twice. So many people pelted her with stones at her first pillory session on the 30<sup>th</sup> April that she died two days later. Hogarth started on *A Harlot's Progress* soon afterwards. In 1730 Charteris was tried for the rape of a servant at the Old Bailey. The trial was a sensation in the London press and avidly followed. He was convicted and sentenced to death, but he was saved from the gallows by his wealth and powerful connections (rings a bell??). That outraged London – just as Hogarth began his work. Charteris died in Edinburgh in 1732, Alexander Pope described him as "a man infamous for all manner of vices [at whose funeral] the populace ... raised a great riot, almost tore the body out of the coffin and cast dead dogs etc. into the grave along with it."





Scene 2. Moll is a kept woman – one of a wealthy Jew's fashionable collection, which includes a monkey, a black page and many paintings. His arrival has interrupted a liaison with a young man. Moll creates a distraction by baring her breast and knocking over the table, so allowing a maid to escort the young man out. The paintings on the wall, Jonah on the left and Uzah reaching for the Ark of the Covenant, deal with severe divine justice, suggesting that when Moll's duplicity is discovered, her keeper will not be lenient.



Scene 3. Having been thrown out by the rich Jew, Moll is forced to make her own way. She works in a single room with an older maid whose nose displays the ravages of syphilis. Sir John Gonson, legendary whore-hunter, has just arrived to arrest them. The wrapping of butter in a pastoral letter from the Bishop of London suggests again her downfall might have been averted if the church had been paying more attention. The portrait of Macheath on the left wall and James Dalton's wig box on the canopy of the bed refer to fictitious and real highwaymen.





Scene 4. Gonson commits Moll to Bridewell to beat hemp. The other women are common street prostitutes who mock Moll's finery. The man to her left is a card sharp. Moll is being told to work harder. Punishments for laziness were the stocks behind her ("Better to Work than Stand this") or the whipping post ("The Wages of Idleness.") In Henry Fielding's first successful play *Author's Farce* (1730) a constable sings to Mrs Novel; "I fancy you'll better know how to speak/By the time you've been in Bridewell a week/have beaten good hemp and been whipped at the post."



Scene 5. Moll is dying from syphilis. The two real-life quacks on the left are Dr Richard Rock and Dr Jean Misauvin, too busy arguing over their cures to pay any attention to the patient who is undergoing a sweating treatment under the care of her old servant. The child must belong to Moll so the servant has been loyal for many years; a member of the criminal class showing virtue. Moll still has her trunk, being rifled by her landlady. Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* (1740) was in stark contrast to Hogarth's Moll. Pamela kept her virtue tenaciously and was rewarded by marriage well above her station.

Hogarth's exploitation of contemporary popular subjects continues. Moll is named partly for Moll Flanders (Defoe, 1722) and partly for Kate Hackabout, a notorious prostitute who was arrested by Gonson soon before Hogarth started work on the series. Kate was the sister of highwayman Francis who was hanged on 17<sup>th</sup> April 1730. As Plumb notes (*The First Four Georges*) many "found satisfaction in the hero-worship of highwaymen and criminals." Hogarth's London was a grim place; "violence, crime, cruelty, dirt, disease, these were an indelible part of the Georgian scene (Plumb)" which he captured in later print series.





Scene 6. Moll has died aged 23 (plaque on coffin) on 2 Sep 1731. The old servant adopts Mary Magdalen's pose but with jar of brandy instead of ointment. A young whore looking at Moll perhaps sees her own future. Hogarth's low opinion of the church has a parson's right hand hidden by the hat fondling the woman next to him and he is so excited he is spilling his brandy. The undertaker opposite is more concerned with seducing a woman than looking after his duties. Other whores busy themselves with their own petty affairs. Just as in the first scene, Moll is surrounded by people filled only with self-interest.

Hogarth designed *Harlot* and the following two series to appeal to two audiences, the 'ordinary reader' and 'men of greater penetration'. Paulson (Emblem & Expression) describes the complex allusions and puns aimed at the latter. As an example, Moll is bracketed between clergyman and procurer in Scene 1, mirroring paintings of the *Choice of Hercules* when the hero is shown between Virtue and Vice. Moll chooses vice – she looks far too happy in the next two scenes to have been coerced. In *Choice of Hercules* paintings, Virtue always has an arm raised gesturing to the hard rocky road ahead. Here the clergyman lifts his arm, but only to brandish a letter which promises him a new post and financial gain.

Hogarth publicised his first venture into "modern moral subjects" masterfully. Engravings and woodcuts were popular in taverns and shops, cheap prints were carried round the city by hawkers and coffee-houses held frequent print sales. Hogarth placed advertisements in the London press in 1731 announcing his series and inviting people to subscribe at a cost of a guinea for a collection of the six prints. He made the engravings himself from his paintings (which were lost in a fire in 1755). Prints were delivered to subscribers from April 1732. The sales brought Hogarth £50 - £100 per week over the next several months. This was a notable income - the annual wage of a London labourer averaged £28 – which allowed Hogarth and his family to move into an elegant house in Leicester Square. The square had been developed in the 17<sup>th</sup> century as residents for aristocrats; houses on the north side hosted a succession of English princes and European ambassadors during Hogarth's lifetime. He lived in the south-east corner. Hogarth's arrogance led him to place a gold painted bust of Van Dyck over the doorway of his new home, which served as his studio. The Golden Head, as it was known, touted Hogarth as a fine artist.

### *A Rake's Progress*

This new form of art was much more lucrative than conversation pieces. Straight after the *Harlot's* prints were issued Hogarth began work on a new series, for which he advertised the subscription in 1733. The paintings and engravings were finished in 1734, but Hogarth delayed the print run. Hogarth's profit on *A Harlot's Progress* was reduced heavily by a vast number of cheaper pirated versions. Hogarth sponsored a copyright bill in Parliament and waited to issue prints of *Rake* until after 21st June 1735 when the Engraver's Copyright Act was passed, giving authors 14 years exclusive copyright over their productions.



*Rake* was even more popular, Rosenthal notes that it sold in the provinces too, to squires, clergymen and the yeomanry through booksellers who Hogarth had selected to advertise the subscription. The paintings are in Sir John Soane's Museum in London, but only poor copies are available; the prints give much more detail.



1. *The Young Heir Taking Possession*. When he gets his inheritance Tom immediately sets up as a rake. He pays off the mother of pregnant Sarah Young, a poor seamstress whom he was due to marry. She holds the wedding ring and will appear throughout as a (spurned) source of redemption. The miserliness of Tom's late father, portrait above the fire, is underlined by the ill-repair and dirtiness of the house. A workman fixing a cornice dislodges a secret hoard of coins. Tom's gullibility is already evident as the clerk steals behind his back.



2. *Surrounded by Artists and Sycophants*. Tom is mobbed by folk vying for his money; landscape gardener, pugilist, sword master, violin teacher, dancing instructor. The rake is posed under a picture of Paris and like him chooses pleasure (Venus) over Wisdom (Juno and Minerva). The paintings in Hogarth's scenes are relevant and aimed at the learned spectator.





3. *The Tavern*. Tom has been out fighting a nightwatchman (stolen lantern beside him), and is having fun with whores, made oblivious by caresses to his watch being stolen. The 'posture woman' in the foreground is preparing for an obscene dance on a silver plate which will culminate in her extinguishing a candle in her vagina (both objects are being brought in at the door). Pills by Tom's feet suggest he may already have contracted syphilis. Of the portraits of Roman emperors on the wall, only Nero's is not defaced.



4. *Arrested for Debt*. It is Queen Caroline's birthday (1<sup>st</sup> of March – St David's Day, signified by the leeks in hats) and Tom is off to St James' Palace to seek patronage at her birthday levee. His journey is stopped by bailiffs. Sarah has appeared just in time to pay his debts and save him from prison. Queen Caroline was very intelligent, and was close friends with Walpole. She managed George II, who hated Walpole. Walpole and Caroline made policies, then she talked to George, leading him to believe they were his own. Walpole's position at court was impregnable until her death in 1737. Then Walpole struggled to guide George, "a conceited little man who liked to think that decisions rested with himself (Williams)."









7. *Fleet Prison*. Tom's old wife harangues him for ruining her. Sarah Young and her child (now a tot, so a few years have passed) are on the left. Sarah has fainted at the sight of the long list of debts, and is being treated with smelling salts after her bodice has been loosened. Paulson notes that Hogarth depicts the rake in a series of prisons even before Tom is committed to Fleet: the mean family home, hemmed in by sycophants, whores, a beadle and bailiffs, the attentions of an old crone (the dogs show this; the old ugly one attempting to lick the young puppy) and the press of gamblers.



8. *Bedlam*. Tom's pose echoes that of Caius Gabriel Cibber's sculpture *Raving Madness* which, with the companion piece *Melancholy Madness*, was at the entrance to Bedlam from 1676 to 1815. A distraught Sarah cradles Tom. In the print (but not the original painting) are two cells; one with man who thinks he is king, the other God. Two ladies remind us that visits to the lunatic asylum were a fashionable form of amusement in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and continued to be so deep into the Victorian age. One lady points to a man urinating and whispers in her companion's ear.



*Rake* was very successful. During the 1730s Hogarth was pre-occupied with the shabby treatment of his father-in-law James Thornhill and his grudge against foreign artists. Hogarth learned that Thornhill's fine canvases at Moor Park were to be replaced by works by Giacomo Amiconi. Salt was added by the news that Amiconi was to be paid for two history paintings for the staircase of the new wing of St Bartholomew's Hospital in London. Hogarth offered to do them for free. The results were rather hotch-potch and did not bring him any commissions for history paintings. Jean-Baptiste van Loo cornering the portrait market in London provoked Hogarth into an attempt at a Grand Manner portrait with *Captain Coram* (1740) but he received few commissions after that.

### *Marriage a la Mode* (National Gallery)

*Marriage a la Mode* is the best and most elaborate of Hogarth's series. His allusions and puns for the educated reader reach "a climax of intricacy (Paulson (*Emblem & Expression*))". The title and themes of the series draw on John Dryden's play, first performed in 1673. In 1743 Hogarth took out a newspaper advertisement to announce the series and invite subscriptions for the prints. The ad stressed that none of the characters were real people. The details of the six scenes were chosen to appeal to the educated, while the unwashed would enjoy the surface.



1. *Marriage Contract*. Hogarth ridicules the taste for Palladian architecture with the house seen through the window. This incomplete monstrosity has contributed to the long list of the Earl's debts, which he is shown by a lawyer, forcing him to marry off his son for money to the daughter of a merchant, who holds a paper entitled "Marriage Settlement of the Rt Honourable Lord Viscount Squanderfield". The Earl (who points to the broken branch on his family tree to signify the marriage to a commoner) has gout, from excessive eating and drinking, while his son, seated left engrossed with his reflection in a mirror, already needs a beauty spot on his neck to hide a syphilis sore. The merchant is driven into an unsound deal by his daughter's social aspirations. The scene foretells the progression of the series. She is being wooed by the Earl's lawyer, Silvertongue, whose fine dress contrasts with that of his colleague. The quill pointing to his heart augurs his future death for love, emphasised by the paintings above him on the wall: Prometheus, his insides being eaten up for his ambition; Holofernes laid low by his weakness for women.



Domenichino's *Martyrdom of St Agnes*, showing her arms outstretched in prayer, is on the wall above the daughter. Agnes was a beautiful girl who rejected her noble suiters because she was a Christian. The governor of Rome punished her by sending her to a house of prostitution, but she remained pure there. Those who came to her were either struck by awe or if filled with lust were blinded, only regaining sight by her prayers. The governor ordered her throat cut (as shown by Domenichino) and her body was burned on a pyre. Agnes received an immortal crown for refusing to marry a noble and refusing to sleep with low born men. The merchant's daughter does both and her punishment will also be death, but without the crown.



2. *Shortly after the Marriage*. Soon after one in the afternoon and the wife has just finished breakfast. The scattered cards and yawning servant suggest she has hosted an all-night gambling session. The upturned chair with music score and exposed instrument point to the rapid exit of her music teacher (a constant butt of innuendo in the 18<sup>th</sup> century) when her husband returned home from his night of fighting, drinking and sleeping with his mistress – her bonnet protrudes from his pocket. A steward leaves with unpaid bills. Questionable art appears in the background – one painting of a nude scene needs a curtain. The jumbled bric-a-brac on mantelpiece (which includes pieces of Chinese art, then considered bad taste) is topped by a portrait of Cupid, who plays bagpipes instead of the usual lyre. These are symbols of the cacophony and wreck of the marriage.

3. *Visit to the Quack Doctor*. The husband takes his under-aged mistress to show that the cure for syphilis has not worked. He attempts to return the pills and gain a refund. On the right Hogarth includes a cluster of pharmacy equipment, demonstrating his skill with still life.







4. *Countess's Morning Levee*. Meanwhile, she is having her hair done after buying the sundry rubbish on the floor at an art sale. She is surrounded by examples of upper-class fashion; the castrato singer, the black servants, fop with dainty hair. Silvertongue continues his wooing of the countess and points to a depiction of a masquerade as a possible adventure. Masquerades were wildly popular in 18th century London. Hidden behind masks and disguised in costumes, people from varying social classes freely intermingled and indulged in licentious behaviour. The paintings above the countess, one the *Rapes of Jupiter* and *Lot's Daughters*, signify what is to come. Indeed, the book at the feet of Silvertongue – the erotic novel *Le Sopha*, published in England in 1742 – rather suggests the pair will have sex on the couch. Evidently, by the title of the work, the old Earl has died, so she is now a countess and the son is the Earl, though not for long ...



5. *Killing of the Earl*. The countess and Silvertongue, having been to a masquerade (their masks on the floor), retire for sex to a bagnio. Bagnios began in London as coffee houses with Turkish baths attached but by the 1740s were generally brothels where rooms for lovers could be rented. The husband has found out about the adultery and arrives keen to duel. He is killed. Silvertongue is escaping through the window but the countess, rather than following her lover, is aghast at her husband's death. On the wall is a painting of a prostitute dressed as shepherdess with, curiously, the hefty legs of soldier appearing on the wall beneath the frame. Hogarth depicts the drooping Earl in the pose of Christ in *The Deposition* and the countess in the pose of *Mary Magdalen*. These poses betray Hogarth's sympathy for the couple – caught in machinations beyond their control. The Earl dies with his head framed by a mirror, an echo of the first scene where he prefers to preen at himself instead of admiring his bride.

Scene 6: *Suicide of the Countess*. The paper on floor reports that Silvertongue has been hanged for murder and next to it lies the bottle of laudanum the countess has used to kill herself. The ignorant servant is being berated for delivering the laudanum. She, with a horrible green face, dies in her father's quarters decorated with low-life Dutch pictures. Through the window Hogarth shows the old London Bridge, exaggerating the ruin of the ramshackle houses (which were demolished in 1757), a contrast to the unfinished mansion in the first scene. The father, with a merchant's venality, saves the wedding ring from being buried with his daughter's body; something has to be salvaged from the disastrous transaction. The child of the marriage shows the family traits; the father's beauty patch and grand-father's brace on the leg. The series depicts the destructive power of money and ambition, and the influence of the past on future generations.





The prints were successful, although less so than *Harlot* and *Rake*. Hogarth had high hopes for the original paintings, and later in 1745 advertised an auction. However, there was little interest and he cancelled the auction. Trying again in 1751 his original defeat was repeated. According to Vertue: "*he puffed this in newspapers for a long time before hand but alas when the time came ... he found himself neglected for instead of the 500 or 600 pounds he expected there was but one person he had got to bid ... a sum of 126 pounds.*" Hogarth flew into a rage, cursed and damned the public, swore they had combined against him and in a pet the next day took down the Golden Head that stood over the door of his house (Rosenthal).

The lack of interest in the paintings in 1745 had important consequences. From now on Hogarth's works were designed for the cheap print market, using simple forms and popular sayings, and would be based on drawings not paintings. Hogarth advertised his next popular prints *Beer Street*, *Gin Lane* and *The Four Stages of Cruelty* (1751) with "... *the Subjects of these Prints are calculated to reform some reigning Vices peculiar to the lower Class of People. In hopes to render them of more extensive Use, the Author has published them in the cheapest Manner possible ...*" One can imagine how *Daily Mail* readers would react to that! These prints were bought by working folk. An unmarried clerk living in Grub Street in 1767 had a Hogarth print, but at a price of one shilling for each engraving the poor could not afford them.

The subjects chosen by Hogarth reflect concern over the rise in urban criminality. Henry Fielding, London's chief magistrate, wrote in his *Enquiry into the Causes of the Late Increase of Robberies* (1751) of his anxiety about being '*assaulted, and pillaged, and plundered ... I can neither sleep in my own house, nor walk the streets, nor travel in safety.*' Fielding attributed the blame for crime to "*a new kind of drunkenness ... that acquired by the strongest intoxicating liquor and particularly by that poison called Gin.*" Women were the main culprits, or slighted as such. Eliza Fowler Haywood, actress and author wrote in the pamphlet *A Present for Women Addicted to Drinking* (1750), "*I take this pernicious custom of drinking, which prevails amongst women at present, to be the great source of that Corruption and Degeneracy which all the world must allow to be the subject of just and general censure.*"

Hogarth contrasts the fine qualities of English beer, "*that patriotic elixir that fuelled the nation's workforce (Hallett)*" with the ravages caused by gin; babies killed, young women dead, suicides and decline in trade and industry, even buildings collapsing.



BEER STREET.



Beer, happy Product of our Isle,  
 Convinces Strength to impart,  
 And renews with Falchus and Hail,  
 Can cheer each wretched Heart.

Labour and Art upheld by Thee  
 Successfully advance,  
 We quaff Thy balmy Juice with Glee,  
 And Water scarce to France.

Genius of Health, thy grateful Taste  
 Reveals the Cup of Joy,  
 And warms each English generous Brest  
 With Liberty and Love.

GIN LANE.



Gin cruel Fiend, with fiery strength,  
 Makes human flesh a prey,  
 It enters by a deadly draught,  
 And steals our Life away.

Virtue and Truth, down to Despair,  
 Its force compels to fly,  
 But, ah! how with sadful Care,  
 Theft, Murder, Perjury.

Domin'd Cup! that on the Victim press,  
 That signal Fire contains  
 Whose Madness to the Heart conveys,  
 And rolls it thro' the Veins.

Very few acts of Parliament were passed during the reigns of the first two Georges from 1714 to 1760, but excessive gin drinking provoked one of them. "One of the worst curses of London was drunkenness but the devastation caused by excessive beer-drinking was as nothing compared with the sudden epidemic of gin-drinking especially notable in London during the first half of the century (Williams)." The tax on French brandy made it too expensive for the poor, but English gin distillers paid very little duty.



By 1736 there were nearly 7,000 small unlicensed gin shops in London. Sales of cheap gin rose from 4.95 million gallons in 1734 to 7.16 million in 1742. *“At last, however in 1751 the public conscience was thoroughly aroused, partly by Fielding’s Inquiry, still more by Hogarth’s Gin Lane, which gave ocular and in no way exaggerated demonstration of the ravages of this horrible gin traffic (Williams).”* The 1751 Gin Act stopped distillers from selling to unlicensed merchants and increased the fees for legal merchants. That closed the gin shops and by 1758 gin consumption had fallen to 1.85 million gallons.

### *The Humours of an Election*

Another rare Act of Parliament features in Hogarth’s return to complex compositions in his depiction of the election of an MP for Oxfordshire in the 1754 General Election. Whigs and Tories were polarised by the Jewish Naturalisation Act of 1753, allowing Jews resident in England to become naturalised. The Whig Duke of Newcastle, the expert on patronage and fixing elections, introduced the bill as a small token of appreciation of the help given by Sampson Gideon on financial policy to Robert Walpole. City merchants and Tories led a wildly anti-Semitic campaign which frightened the government to repeal the Act in the autumn of 1753. Yet Tory attacks against Jews continued up to the election day.



Each county had two MPs, voted for by forty-shilling freeholders, many of them tenants. Open polls meant their votes could be checked to ensure they had followed the instructions of their squire or stuck to the terms of the bribe they received. Voters would be wooed in county towns, and on election day they had to be transported to the single polling booth and entertained lavishly. Hence elections were expensive and often an agreement was reached between the largest landowners to avoid an election. Contested elections might cost £100,000 or more (Plumb, 1990). Oxfordshire had been uncontested for 40 years, but 1754 saw the Duke of Marlborough challenge the Tories. He had been campaigning, that is to say bribing squires and small landowners, for two years. There were 4,000 voters to be bribed across the county.



1. *An Election Entertainment*. Hogarth's first scene shows Whig voters (who wear orange) being entertained in an inn in the fictional town of Guzzledown. Tories had used the room the day before – the portrait of William III on the back wall has been slashed. They parade outside with their effigy of a Jew and throw bricks into the room, one of which has hit the Whig secretary in the right foreground while he was recording 'Sure' and 'Doubtful' votes in his ledger. To the left of the victim, a thug hired to harass Tories gets his head wound treated with a splash of gin. Bribes are being offered to small businessmen around the room. An honest tailor, his hands clasped in prayer, standing on the right is being berated for not taking the money. The young Whig candidate manages a smile as an old matron kisses him. Hogarth's talent for painting still life is once more evident.

2. *Canvassing for Votes*. Prominent is the Tory stronghold, the Royal Oak with its sign showing the escape of Charles II after the Battle of Worcester and a huge poster labelled '*Punch Candidate for Guzzledown*' on which Punch is bribing voters and the Treasury's money is spent on electioneering instead of the Navy. The Tory candidate stands under the poster and, despite his anti-Semitism, buys trinkets from a Jewish pedlar with which to bribe the young ladies on the balcony. The Whig pub in the background, The Excise Office, is being besieged by a Tory mob. The central trio shows reps from each inn, attempting to bribe a voter.



The third inn on the right, Portobello (name on the tankard), is named after the famous naval victory of 1739 against France. The lion eating the fleur-de-lis opposite refers to this too. Two men are re-enacting the battle with coins and broken pipe stem. Hogarth suggests that virtue lies with these ordinary honest patriotic people. Corruption in county elections had long been lampooned. The caption to a 1727 print, *Ready Money the Prevailing Candidate or the Humours of an Election*, ridiculed the newly-bribed country voter who;

*“Struts with the Gold newly put in his britches  
And dreams of vast Favours & mountains of Riches  
But as soon as the day of the Election is over  
His woeful mistake he begins to discover  
The Squire is a Member – the Rustick who chose him  
Is now quite neglected – he no longer knows him.”*





3. *The Polling*. The polling booth on the right is filled with corrupt election clerks and arguing lawyers. At the Whig is mopping his brow and the Tory is being ridiculed by a sketching caricaturist. The lame and the blind are dragged to the poll, wearing blue or orange cockades. The limless old soldier in red is intending to vote Whig. Two lawyers argue over whether he is allowed to make his mark with the hook on his left wrist. Poor Britannia sits in a collapsed coach (signifying England). Disaster has struck because the coachmen are gambling instead of concentrating on their duties. A mob rages over the bridge. “No nation rioted more easily or more savagely – from 1714 to 1830 angry mobs, burning and looting, were as prevalent as disease, and as frequent in the countryside as in the great towns (Plumb, 1972).”

Hogarth includes in the background of this scene and of the previous one a more positive image of the countryside – the church, bastion of traditional values and Christian virtue in contrast to the nasty inhabitants presently taking centre stage. Thomas Gainsborough’s *Conard Wood* (see below), painted six years before *Election*, has in the distance an open landscape dominated by the steeple of a village church. Hogarth’s churches look similar, so he has used Gainsborough’s device to suggest that England has not yet lost her way completely.

4: *Chairing the Member*. Hogarth got the idea for this scene from *The Humours of a Country Election* (1734). One of the successful Tory candidates is chaired by mob of blues, while the oranges aim to unseat him. The other winner is being chaired in the background, his shadow falling on the house. This is one of Hogarth’s best compositions. A large twist is the basic structure – the candidate projecting one way and the swine the other, hinged on the twisted body of the bruiser in the white shirt in foreground, mirrored by his opponent in the blue jacket, and continued in the reverse twist of the bear-keeping bruiser. Bear-baiting was a common Georgian pastime along with bull-baiting and cock-fighting (which appears in another Hogarth print): “Blood sports were popular ... and some containing far more blood than sport” (Plumb, 1972).

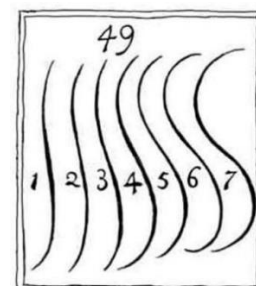




The member is the focus. His wig in shape and colour parallels the goose flying above him and his light tones are bracketed between the white of the goose and the white shirt of the bruiser. The red of his cushion contrasts beautifully with the green foliage and blue sky. The body and legs and colour of the member's body link him with the large sow and her piglets beneath him. The goose above alludes to the warning of the Romans of approaching barbarians, and the swine below to the Gadarene swine. *"The only individual to be untouched by all this chaos is the blind Jewish fiddler, perhaps showing that politics need not be taken seriously by the sane and that even intended victims can often emerge unharmed (Rosenthal)."*

The member is falling because in the Oxfordshire election the two Tories initially won, but were denied their seats. Viscount Wenman (2,033 votes) prevailed over Sir Edward Turner (1,890) and Sir James Dashwood (2,014) over Viscount Parker (1,919). The returning officer, possibly bribed by the Whigs, made an error in his declaration of 17<sup>th</sup> April, so leaving the House of Commons to decide who had won. The decision was a foregone conclusion because the Whigs had a majority in the House, but it took them over a year to announce (on 23<sup>rd</sup> April 1755) that the Whigs had won both seats in Oxfordshire. The election was so expensive and ultimately arbitrary in result that it was decided in future that the Duke of Marlborough would choose one MP and the Tories the other. So it was for the next 13 elections: Oxfordshire voters weren't required until the contested election of 1826.

Hogarth's last notable work was the *Analysis of Beauty* (1752). He argued that the aesthetic values of art, rather than the nobility of the subject, determined a picture's worth. He also suggested that S-shaped curved lines were the most beautiful. Hogarth considered seven curves and selected one (No. 4) as the most perfect, as it duplicates the line of a woman's back. Later artists agreed; Maillol joining Ingres, Renoir and Degas (and many others) in using this line, which also can be seen in some modern landscapes.





*Analysis of Beauty* drew a favourable response, although not from Joshua Reynolds who pointed out that works of art could be successful without any sign of the 'line of beauty'. Hogarth detested Reynolds and opposed Reynolds' plan to open the formal Royal Academy (RA) with a hierarchy of ranks and set instruction for artists. He believed, like Voltaire, that this would stifle genius. Hogarth's final years are marked by disagreements. His public row in 1763 with John Wilkes caused Hogarth to suffer a severe physical relapse, from which he never really recovered, dying in October 1764.

Rosenthal names Hogarth as one of the greatest English artists. Yet, there is a conception against him as a painter that limits Hogarth which originated with Horace Walpole's contemporary summary of him; "*having despatched the herd of our painters in oil, I reserve to a class by himself that great and original genius, Hogarth ... rather as a writer of comedy with a pencil, than as a painter*" and continues with Levey's 20<sup>th</sup> century appraisal, "*the sketches Hogarth left behind often show him at his best.*"



Aristide Maillol, *Torso of Ile de France*, 1910-23

### Thomas Gainsborough (1727 – 1788)



Thomas Gainsborough, *Cornard Wood*, 1746-8

Thomas Gainsborough's first love was landscape. From boyhood he drew from nature and copied Dutch works, being drawn to the style of Jacob van Ruisdael. *Cornard Wood* is his most celebrated early landscape. Roger Fry, not much enamoured with English art, praised the "*transposition of a Dutch landscape into an English mood (Vaughan).*" Part of the transposition was Gainsborough's inclusion of forest commoners whose rights to wood, game and turf were being denied by the onset of Enclosures. The taste for landscapes like *Cornard Wood* would not develop until the close of the century.



Gainsborough was the youngest of nine children (Rosenthal; Vaughan says ten). His father was a wool merchant whose business failed when Thomas was a toddler and the family remained in their house, now the Gainsborough Museum in Sudbury, only because of the generosity of the father's prosperous nephew. Thomas was trained by Hubert Gravelot at Hogarth's St Martin's Lane Academy. Gravelot taught portraiture using dressed-up dolls. The bottle-like bodies and repetitive oval faces this produced in figures stayed with Gainsborough. *The Gravenor Family* of 1754 is a startling example and the ladies in *The Mall* of 1783 were drawn from the same doll and have eerily identical faces. The effect can be seen in *Mr and Mrs Andrews*, Gainsborough's first noted painting.



Thomas Gainsborough, *Mr and Mrs Andrews*, c 1750



Robert Andrews and Gainsborough were classmates at Sudbury grammar school. From there their paths diverged, Robert going to Oxford University and Thomas's father going bankrupt. Robert inherited half of his estate in Essex from his father in 1735 and the other half from his wife's father William Carter in 1750. William Carter had been one of those who helped pay the debts of Gainsborough's father, so to Mrs Andrews the artist was the son of a charity case. The couple accepted the painting unfinished: who knows what Mrs Andrews was to have on her lap?

The marriage portrait also marks Mr Andrews as a serious farmer, depicting the innovations he introduced to his estate. The stubble in straight lines is a result of Jethro Tull's advanced seed drill-plough of the 1740s, and the large field of sizable sheep marks the use of Robert Bakewell's selective breeding techniques which together with new grasses and the introduction of turnips (in a new crop rotation) as food for livestock in winter "*changed sheep from a resemblance of a cross between a dog and a goat to the plump fleece-covered animal we know today (Plumb, 1990).*" The average weight of sheep sold at Smithfield rose from 38lbs in 1710 to 80lbs in 1795. These advances in crops and breeding accelerated the enclosure of fields and common land, which had a disastrous effect on the lives of country folk (Bell), impoverishing twenty small farmers to enrich one and depopulating hundreds of villages (Neeson). The number of Enclosure Acts rose from around 35 in each of the three decades preceding Gainsborough's painting of *Mr and Mrs Andrews* to 156 in the 1750s, 424 in the 1760s and 642 in the 1770s. The aim of enclosures in Tudor times was to secure large pasture lands, wool being England's great trade then. Eighteenth century enclosures sought to increase the size of arable farms to produce more corn for export.



Thomas Gainsborough, *William Wollaston*, c 1759

Gainsborough moved to Ipswich in 1752, hoping for more work. Philip Thicknesse, the Governor of Landguard Fort there, recognised the artist's talent but thought Gainsborough's portraits "*had very little to recommend them, being stiffly painted*" (Waterhouse). Gainsborough's breakthrough was his portrait of William Wollaston of Finborough Hall, later an MP. Gainsborough probably knew William as both were keen amateur musicians. The work is novel, showing the man in an informal pose, yet still with the grace which was so important to genteel society which emphasised good personal deportment.



Ipswich could not support Gainsborough, so he moved to one of the most expensive residences in Abbey Street in Bath at a rent of £150 a year, signing a 7-year lease in May 1760. The house had a big room which Gainsborough could use as a studio and work on large canvases. Bath, second only to London for music and theatre, attracted fashionable society. Gainsborough had worked mainly for male sitters but in Bath portraits of ladies were his best works. He set out his stall with his flamboyant debut of *Ann Ford*.



Thomas Gainsborough, *Ann Ford*, 1760

Ann, a virtuoso on guitar and viola, was a sensation in the amateur music scene in Bath in 1758. She advertised subscription concerts in London in March and April 1760 which was very daring; women were admired in private recitals, but to perform on the public stage drew scandal. Ann made the large sum of £1500 from her 1760 public concert. Her father was so outraged he had her arrested to prevent her giving a second concert. A later attempted arrest was thwarted when a friend, a regimental colonel, threatened to set troops on the Bow Street runners sent to apprehend her. Music blossomed in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Primers for teaching instruments were published and concerts became an important entertainment with works from the greatest Italian, German and English composers as well as popular music of traditional kinds.



Gainsborough marks Ann's success in the male world of music through her pose with crossed legs – a very unfeminine posture. The pose mirrored that of Handel in Louis-Francois Roubiliac's marble statue created in 1738 for Vauxhall Gardens to which all of London apparently flocked. The '*line of grace*' (as Hogarth referred to a three-dimensional line to distinguish it from the two-dimensional '*line of beauty*') running from ear to toe in Ann's figure betrays Gainsborough's training at St Martin's Lane Academy. Upward diagonals (her right side and curtain, right shoulder crossed by those of her arms and thigh, and left shoulder) form triangles, the apex emphasising Ann's head.

Gainsborough captured Ann's character and her ease with music. The portrait was too much for the prim Mrs Delaney, friend of the royal family and best known for her flower collages who said, "*a most extra-ordinary figure, handsome and bold; but I should be very sorry to have any one I loved set forth in such a manner.*" Nevertheless, Delaney's aristocratic friends were drawn to Gainsborough's combination of stylishness and decorum. "*Mary Countess Howe sets a new standard of 'hauteur and sensual delight (Vaughan)*". The shimmering dress and shawl, the pearls of the necklace and earrings are fashionable and stylish but are outshone by Mary's serene and confident gaze. Gainsborough cunningly uses the hat to highlight her handsome face.



Thomas Gainsborough, *Mary Countess Howe*, 1763-4

Ladies were more independent and had greater influence than when Van Dyck painted them a century earlier. In Bath they essentially ran society, determining who was 'in' and who was 'out.' Word-of-female-mouth brought Gainsborough more commissions, so many that he had to let his landscape work lapse. However, he kept his hand in by portraying his female sitters outside in untamed nature. This was an innovative break from the usual format which showed sitters in a manicured garden or an orderly terrace.

By breaking with tradition, Gainsborough was reflecting the growth among high society of *Sensibility*. This was not the hysteria of Marianne Dashwood. Sensibility was a lively and delicate feeling, a quick sense of right and wrong, the basis of the moral regulation of society. Nature formed a standard of morality. Newton's work and ideas were important here; the universe and untended nature were regulated by natural forces. One of the hallmarks, then, of a person of sensibility was an affinity with nature. We'll explore this and then return to the narrative of Gainsborough's life.

Countess Howe is a little apart, decorous and calm, from the slightly stormy scene in which she stands. Hester Countess of Sussex and her daughter (below) are better integrated. However, they are aristocracy and, while comfortable and relaxed, are not really the '*children of nature*' (Rosenthal) which the Linley sisters clearly are: Mary, in particular, with her brown dress seems a natural extension of the foliage and tree branches. Elizabeth's blue dress gels with the water in the background but she seems keen to get away – for reasons soon to be explained.





Thomas Gainsborough, *Hester Countess of Sussex and her Daughter, Lady Barbara Yelverton*, 1771



Thomas Gainsborough, *The Linley Sisters*, 1771



Going off on a tangent from sensibility for a moment: these portraits feature people whose futures would be blighted. In hindsight many of his sitters may have thought Gainsborough had jinxed them, so often did this happen. Hester had served as Lady of Bedchamber to the three eldest daughters of George II, so Barbara (here aged 10 or 11) had a wonderful life ahead. However, at 15, she eloped with a soldier and was disinherited. Hester died soon afterwards and Barbara fared little better, dying when she was 20. Elizabeth Linley (17 here) would suffer in a tempestuous relationship with Sheridan, with whom she is about to elope to France. Her gaze suggests she was looking forward to the journey. Gainsborough may have posed her this way as he expected the elopement, commenting on the 31<sup>st</sup> of March, *“Miss Linley is walk’d off sure enough with young Sheridan ... I was just finishing her Picture for the Exhibition [at the RA] (Rosenthal).”*

Gainsborough was particularly close to the Linley family. The father was a highly successful singing teacher and composer who was Director of the Assembly Room concerts in Bath. Elizabeth and Mary were highly accomplished singers. Mary (aged 14 when the portrait was done) had just joined Elizabeth as a professional. They were for successive years the leading sopranos at the annual Three Choirs Festival, inaugurated in 1713, which featured the choirs from Hereford, Gloucester and Worcester Cathedrals. Gainsborough had a soft spot for Elizabeth. He portrayed her with her brother, Thomas (named for his father) in 1768, the year after both performed in Covent Garden in front of the Prince of Wales. The painting is the first to show Gainsborough’s brilliant brushwork, which is evident in many late portraits.



Thomas Gainsborough, *Elizabeth and Thomas Linley*, 1768

His brisk and abbreviated style is clear on Elizabeth’s dress and shawl. Although the faces appear solidly modelled, close-up one can see the brief daubs that prompted Reynolds to marvel: *“all those odd marks, which on close examination, are so observable in Gainsborough’s pictures, and which even to experienced painters appear rather after the effect of accident than design; this chaos, this uncouth and shapeless appearance, by a kind of magick [sic], at a certain distance assumes form, and all the parts seem to drop into their proper places.”*

Gainsborough’s obituarist in *The Gentleman’s Magazine* (volume 58, July-December 1788) wrote: *“his portraits are calculated to give effect at a distance; and that effect in so eminent a degree, that the picture may almost be mistaken for the original: but closely inspected, we wonder at the delusion, and find scumbling scratches that have no appearance of eye-brows or nostrils.”*

Thomas Linley was also doomed for tragedy. He was a talented musician - one of the best violinists in Britain and an excellent composer - destined to eclipse his father. At the age of 19 he wrote most of the music for the opera *The Duenna* with which he and his father had a noted success in London in 1775; the first season had 75 performances. Thomas seemed set fair, but drowned three years later in a tragic boating accident.

Elizabeth’s elopement caused a rift with her father. The year before in 1770 she (then 16) had pulled out of a marriage he had arranged to Sir Walter Long, a very wealthy man who was old enough to be her grandfather, just before the wedding ceremony. Her father’s mood was not improved when Samuel Foote’s comedy *The Maid of Bath* mocking her situation, ran for 24 nights at the Haymarket Theatre later in 1771.



The play ridicules Kitty Linnet (geddit??) a beautiful young woman whose parents insist she marry the decrepit but rich Solomon Flint. All London knew the play was about Elizabeth and its success was due to the scandal rather than the quality of the play. Her disgusted father had no time at all for the penniless actor Sheridan then was. However, after *The Rivals*' great success in 1775 there was a reconciliation, to the extent that the father went into partnership with Sheridan to stage *The Duenna* at Drury Lane.



Thomas Gainsborough, *Mrs Richard Brinsley Sheridan*, 1785-7 (National Gallery of Art, Washington DC)

While all might be sweetness and light between father and son-in-law, Elizabeth suffered. Sheridan would not let her sing, ending her professional career, was repeatedly unfaithful and his gambling and loose living drove the couple deep into debt. She yearned for the countryside, but Sheridan loved the hectic London scene. She pleaded for him to allow her to return to a simple life. Gainsborough depicts her as a woman of sensibility, she is not just attuned to nature but integral; her hair like the foliage, her dress like the rock. Gainsborough's 'magick' brushwork is evident again. If Elizabeth looks abandoned, she must have felt that way. Gainsborough shows her as she is, her melancholy is evident but there is also grace and charm. By 1790, she was showing signs of poor health from the strain of living with Sheridan in London. She met Lord Edward FitzGerald at Devonshire House in London and began an affair, becoming pregnant in 1791. The childbirth in March 1792 was difficult and her health suffered mortally. She died from tuberculosis two months later. Gainsborough's jinx continued with *Mr & Mrs Hallett in the Morning Walk* (1785): Mr Hallett gambled away both their fortunes in a few years after the painting was done.



Back to the narrative. London artists realised they should exhibit their works to attract clients and engage the public. In 1760 the Society of Artists (SoA) held an exhibition in the Strand. It was free and attracted 6,582 visitors. The SoA announced a free show would be held annually. Gainsborough exhibited there over the ensuing years, but sent only three landscapes (as against 16 portraits). His most famous, *The Harvest Wagon*, did not attract a buyer. Horace Walpole was enthusiastic it, “*this landscape is very rich, the group of figures delightfully managed and the horses well drawn ...*”. The figures on the cart are thought to have been copied from an engraving of Rubens’ *Descent from the Cross*. However, Gainsborough shows emphatic upward movement through the girl being lifted on the cart and a man reaching up to snatch the beer from his fellow. Having subdued most of the horses in the same tones of the landscape, Gainsborough highlights the leader, balancing the light on the rear of the cart.



Thomas Gainsborough, *The Harvest Wagon*, 1767 (Barber, Birmingham)

Gainsborough’s prominence meant he was asked to be a founder member of the RA. He had to accept, even though that upset his old friend Joshua Kirby, the president of the SoA, from whom many of the new Academicians had seceded. Gainsborough was never comfortable with Reynolds’ ideals but exhibited at the RA in 1769 and for the next three years (sending *Hester* and *The Linley Sisters*). He found the conditions unfavourable. In 1771 commenting on how easy it was for paintings to be “*overlook’d in such a Monstrous large Room and at a Miles Distance*”, he stopped exhibiting at the RA but soon realised he had to return.

Gainsborough moved from Bath to London in 1774 renting Schomberg House in Pall Mall, away from other artists who lived mainly around Leicester Square and Soho. Pall Mall was a mark of social ascendancy, close to the court at St James’s Palace and West End fashion. Having set himself above the common horse Gainsborough realised that must exhibit at the RA and do so impressively. He managed his re-appearance very carefully. First, he chose three spectacular works that showed his strengths: an informal male portrait, a formal female portrait set in nature and a landscape. Second, he made sure of fulsome advertising and advance praise through his friend Reverend Henry Bate, editor of the *Morning Post*. Co-opting the press in this way was common: Hogarth had been a master and Reynolds was apparently an expert.



Gainsborough's return to the RA was a triumph. As well as a favourable press from Bate the *Morning Chronicle* wrote of the portraits; "Gainsborough treads so close upon the heels of [Reynolds] that it is not always evident Sir Joshua has a superiority". Carl Abel, a close friend from Bath, was a composer who settled in England in 1759. Abel's formal dress and easy pose with expressive gaze and gentle smile illustrating a moment of inspiration prompted the highest praise at the exhibition.

Gainsborough's love of dogs produces an amusing parallel: the angle of Abel's face and the rolls on his wig are mirrored by the dog's face and ears, and his hands by the dog's paws. Gainsborough provided decorations for the Hanover Square Hall where Abel and Johann Christian Bach ran a series of subscription concerts (Mozart and Haydn had made their English debuts there too). Abel was a grand master on the viola da gamba, and asked for instrument to be buried with him when he died.



Thomas Gainsborough, *Carl Friedrich Abel*, 1777



Thomas Gainsborough, *Mary, the Hon Mrs Graham*, 1777



The “*astonishing*” Mrs Graham proved a great hit. Mary was the daughter of Lord Cathcart, and an honourable. Her husband, Thomas Graham, was a new agriculturalist who reformed animal husbandry and improved crops at the family’s Perthshire estate. Sadly, Gainsborough’s jinx struck again. Soon after this painting was finished, Mary fell ill with tuberculosis. Seeking a kinder climate, the Grahams went to Portugal and Spain. After returning to Scotland and Mary being no better, they went to the Mediterranean, but in June 1792 Mary died. Thomas brought her back to Scotland. On the way through revolutionary France, her coffin was broken open and her body disturbed by officials looking for contraband. This turned Thomas against the French even though he had favoured their revolutionary ideas. After Mary’s death he committed himself to a military career. He eventually gained his revenge when, as second-in-command to Wellington, he beat Napoleon’s armies in the Peninsular War.

Gainsborough’s success with portraits at the RA in 1777 prompted the aggrieved Reynolds to exhibit his huge and ambitious *Marlborough Family* the following year. To add to Reynolds’ discomfort, Gainsborough drew still more praise for *The Watering Place*. *The Public Advertiser* wrote; ‘*Tis hard to say in which Branch of the Art Mr Gainsborough most excels: let the Connoisseurs carefully examine the Portrait of Mr Abel and the large landscape [Watering Place] and determine – if they can*’; Horace Walpole, considered the work “*by far the finest landscape ever painted in England & equal to the great Masters.*”



Thomas Gainsborough, *The Watering Place*, before 1777

Gainsborough happily exhibited at the RA for the next six years. Henry Bate continued his rhapsodic advance press, starting the *Morning Herald* in 1780 after his employer, the *Morning Post*, dared to publish articles criticising Gainsborough (his colouring in 1777 and a ‘cadaverous female’ in 1778). Gainsborough wowed the critics anyway as he produced inventive works. In the 1781 RA exhibition, Gainsborough showed the first of his dramatic coastal scenes, which generated more coverage in the press than any other work in the show. Earl Grosvenor purchased the seascape there and then. Gainsborough’s depiction of rough sea conditions in stormy weather anticipates the later Romantic movement. Walpole was a fan of them, saying in 1781, “*one steps back for fear of being splashed*”.





Thomas Gainsborough, *Seashore with Fishermen*, 1781-2

Gainsborough also exhibited in 1781 his first 'fancy picture', *A Shepherd Boy*, which has not survived. These pictures generally feature poor rural children. His *Girl with Pigs* [only poor copy available] was exhibited at the 1782 RA show; a critic (not Bate) called it the best picture in the exhibition. Reynolds bought it for 100 guineas which filled Gainsborough with glee, "*I think myself highly honor'd, & much Obliged to you for this singular mark of your favour; I may truly say that I have brought my Piggs to a fine market.*" These fancy pictures proved very popular. *Cottage Girl with Dog and Pitcher* was purchased immediately for 200g.

Exhibiting at the RA enhanced Gainsborough's fame. By 1785 he was selling landscapes for prices between 75 and 100g. In the late 1770s, Gainsborough began to receive commissions regularly from the Royal Family and "*this royal patronage effectively established his position as a portrait painter in London (Waterhouse)*". The royals "*were temperamentally averse to the grandiose manner of Reynolds (Waterhouse) and George III 'could not stand Reynolds's artistic pretensions, and found repulsive Reynolds' great care in trying to ingratiate himself (Vaughan)*". George III, tediously moral but well-intentioned and good fun, enjoyed Gainsborough who was straightforward and amusing.



Thomas Gainsborough, *Cottage Girl with Dog and Pitcher*, 1785



Apparently, Gainsborough was playful and witty with the King and Queen (he painted portraits of them both in 1780 which were greatly admired). Gainsborough said he “*talked bawdy to the king & morality to the Prince of Wales [the future wastrel George IV]*”. By 1783 Gainsborough was seen as de facto court painter. All this upset Reynolds. He spitefully refused to hang properly at the 1784 RA show Gainsborough’s portrait of the three eldest princesses because the commission had come from Prince of Wales, who could safely be ignored as he was detested by his father. Gainsborough stopped exhibiting at the RA: showing his paintings in his studio and holding open days to coincide with those of the RA show. Reynolds prevailed with the king in the end. In 1784 Ramsay, the King’s Painter, died and Reynolds moved heaven and earth to get the post (Rosenthal). As he was president of the RA, George III felt obliged to appoint him.

Gainsborough had some fun with Reynolds. From 1769, Reynolds gave lectures at the RA on his theory of art, published as his fifteen *Discourses*. In 1777 Reynolds lectured that a central mass could not be depicted successfully using a cold colour. This flew in the face of centuries of depictions of the Virgin Mary in a lapis lazuli blue cloak. Reynolds said the centre of a portrait “*should be of a warm mellow colour, yellow, red, or a yellowish white.*”

It is often claimed that Gainsborough’s *Blue Boy* was painted to refute that, but *Blue Boy* was painted in 1770 before Reynolds’ lecture on colouring. In 1777 Gainsborough taunted Reynolds’s theory with *Hon Frances Duncombe*. She wears the same dress as Mrs Graham but here shown blue. Evidently, he had props for his sitters because Frances wears the same pearls and upturned collar. As an aside, his jinx struck again. In 1778 Frances married John Bowater of Woolwich, who frittered away the considerable fortune she brought him and ended up in debtors’ prison.

Frances looks charming – the cool colours of her dress heightening the warmth of her face. Gainsborough’s ‘faulty’ use of blue continued in a portrait which has long been compared favourably with Reynolds’ version of the same sitter.



Thomas Gainsborough, *Hon Frances Duncombe*, 1777

At the 1784 RA show, Reynolds exhibited his ‘bombastic’ portrait of *Mrs Siddons as the Tragic Muse*. “*Mrs Siddons cast as a Michelangelo sybil with a ponderous palette of browns and golds intending to evoke the Old Master tradition (Rosenthal)*”. In response, Gainsborough presents an image of her which caught her personality. Sarah was one of the stars of the London stage, but was scrupulous in avoiding the pitfalls of being an actress, which had a strong association with prostitution. She refused comedic roles and made public virtue of her domesticity. Gainsborough shows her as a respectable contemporary woman, rather than the faintly ridiculous figure painted by Reynolds, which was open to ridicule.





Sir Joshua Reynolds, *Mrs Siddons as the Tragic Muse*, 1783 – 84



Thomas Gainsborough, *Sarah Siddons*, 1785 (National Gallery)



Thore-Burger in 1857 at the Manchester Exhibition said of Gainsborough's picture; "*The great tragic actress, who interpreted the passions with such energy and such feeling, and who felt them so strongly herself, is better portrayed in this simple half-length, in her day dress, than in allegorical portraits as the Tragic Muse ... This portrait is so original, so individual, as a poetic expression of character, as a deliberate selection of pose, as bold colour and free handling, that it is like the work of no other painter. It is useless to search for parallels, for there are none. Veronese a little – but no, it is a quite personal creation. This is genius*".

Paulson (Emblem & Expression) compares the painters' approaches. Reynolds fawned to Sarah when she arrived to pose, '*ascend your undisputed throne, and graciously bestow upon me some good idea of the Tragic Muse*'. Gainsborough, though lively and amusing, could be impatient with his sitters and at times severe and sarcastic. His impatience with Sarah was with her most prominent feature which gave him a good deal of trouble: '*Damn the nose – there's no end to it*'. Once again, he uses serpentine lines of grace but his portrait reflects his playfulness: the shape of her nose is repeated in the brim of her hat, the locks of hair either side of her neck, the area of neck and chest bounded by black ribbon and scarves, the shape of her arms and area of dress beneath left arm. "*To get Mrs Siddons' nose into a formal scheme, Gainsborough simply made her all noses (Paulson, Emblem & Expression)*". Sarah wears a choker, an item we've not seen in Gainsborough's other portraits.

He depicted Grace Dalrymple wearing one too (twice in fact, as Grace sports one in a head portrait). She was a celebrated courtesan and is ravishing in gold dress under fashionably piled hair with enticing décolletage. Among her many paramours was the Prince of Wales who introduced her to the Duke of Orleans. She became the Duke's mistress and moved to Paris in 1786. During the revolution, she wrote one of the best accounts in English of The Terror: *Journal of my life during the French Revolution (published posthumously in 1859)*. She risked her life many times hiding aristocrats and arranging false papers for them to travel. While in Paris she served as a spy for the British government. In 1793 Grace was arrested and imprisoned. Her journal details the violence and deprivation endured by inmates. She survived and lived until 1823.

Aside from an exception to Gainsborough's jinx, the point of this tangent is the choker. Gainsborough seems to have used it as an emblem for actresses and courtesans. He did the same in his portrait of Mrs Mary Robinson, the actress with whom the Prince of Wales fell madly in love after seeing her in the role of Perdita in *The Winter's Tale* in 1779. HRH bowed to her at the theatre and gave her his miniature (she is shown holding it). Throughout 1780 he wrote violent love letters to her. When his passion died (George IV was notoriously fickle – *Blackadder* is accurate!) it became imperative to get back the letters. George III had to pay Mary the enormous sum of £5000 for them, calling it a "*shameful scrape*".



Thomas Gainsborough, *Grace Dalrymple*, 1778



Curiously, Reynolds also painted Mary wearing a choker in his straight portrait of 1782 (but not for Sarah Siddons who was posing as the muse Melpomene). So perhaps the choker was a symbol of actresses and courtesans? By the time Mary was portrayed by Gainsborough she had had a book of poems published. From the late 1780s, after a series of scandals, Mary devoted herself to writing and became known during her life as “*the English Sappho*”. Although not as well-known as Mary Wollstonecraft, whom she admired, Mary was an ardent feminist, arguing that women were rational and had the right to a proper education.

The point of this diversion (entertaining though these tangents may be) is Gainsborough’s *Woman in Blue*. Her identity is not known. Some art historians claim she is the Duchess of Beaufort. As she is depicted wearing a choker this must be doubtful – none of Gainsborough’s society women and aristocrats sport one. She must surely be an actress or courtesan. One hopes so anyway, as they seem to be immune from Gainsborough’s jinx: Sarah, Grace and Mary going on to have long and eventful lives.



Thomas Gainsborough, *Mrs Mary Robinson*, 1781



Thomas Gainsborough, *Woman in Blue*, 1780s



Aside from showing his sitters as they were, Gainsborough's portraits demonstrate his brilliant technique. *Woman in Blue* has the dashing brushwork admired by later 19<sup>th</sup> century artists. Gainsborough suffered from his success. He said that he painted landscapes for love and portraits for money. His portraits caught the imagination of friends, society figures, nobles and royals and commissions flowed in. His portraits, "*splendid and breath-taking*" (Waterhouse), merely kindled demand for more so he must have had little time for his first love. Gainsborough wrote to his friend the Exeter musician William Jackson,

*"I'm sick of Portraits and wish very much to take my Viol da Gam and walk off to some sweet Village where I can paint Landskips and enjoy the fag End of Life in quietness and ease."*

In May 1788 Gainsborough wrote complaining of his "*Swelled Neck*" but hoped that it "*is near coming to a cure*". This turned out to be the cancer that killed him in July 1788. The year before he had painted a self-portrait. Gainsborough didn't paint many of them, having a down-to-earth self-opinion, describing himself to a patron as "*but a wild goose at best*" conscious of being the odd man out in ordinary society. Carl Friedrich Abel was to get the work, but died suddenly before it was finished. Gainsborough kept the painting and it was by this image that he wished to be remembered; "*it is my strict charge that after my decease no plaster cast, model or likeness whatever be permitted to be taken: But, if Mr Sharp who engraved Mr Hunter's print, should chose to make a print from the  $\frac{3}{4}$  sketch, which I intended for Mr Abel, painted for myself, I give free consent*".



Thomas Gainsborough, *Self-Portrait*, 1787

Gainsborough was "*a great 'natural' painter, someone who did not think or worry too much; abstract ideas did not exist for Gainsborough; he loved the particular and loved others to share his pleasure*" (John Piper 'British Romantic Artists' in Turner). "*In natural gifts, in artistic intuitions and in sustained lyrical feeling, it might be reasonably contended that Gainsborough surpassed any other British painter ... the lack of a strong Academic tradition helped, it is the freshness of Gainsborough's perception of form, of colour, of character and of the rhythms of landscape make his pictures, when they have not been overcleaned, a constant delight today. His excellences lie entirely in the realm of feeling rather than reason*" (Waterhouse).



His landscapes were largely overlooked in his lifetime, but in the 19<sup>th</sup> century they were famous. Constable gave lectures in the 1830s on landscape painting and his notes include a paragraph:

*“The landscapes of Gainsborough are soothing, tender and affecting. The stillness of noon, the depths of twilight, and the dews and pearls of the morning, are all to be found on the canvases of this most benevolent and kind-hearted man. On looking at them we find tears in our eyes and know not what brings them. The lonely haunts of the solitary shepherd – the return of the rustic with his bill and bundle of wood – the darksome lane or dell – the sweet little cottage girl at the spring with her pitcher – were the things he delighted to paint, and which he painted with an exquisite refinement”*

There are not many British artists who can claim an international standing. Gainsborough is one of that select company – along with JMW Turner, John Constable and William Hogarth. Roger Fry singled out Gainsborough along with Constable as one of the few examples of true painting in British art.

## Portraits

Gainsborough’s personal style of portraiture contrasts with that of Allan Ramsay and of Reynolds, both of whom were heavily influenced by what they experienced on their trips to Europe. Whereas Reynolds was struck by old masters and the new trend in Italy, Ramsay was keen on contemporary French art.

**Allan Ramsay (1713 – 1784)** was born in Edinburgh but was trained in London, first by a Swedish portrait painter, then at the St Martin’s Lane Academy. In 1736 he left to work in Naples under Francesco Solimena [see 18<sup>th</sup> century Italy] for three years. On his return he quickly established a profitable portrait practice in Covent Garden – much to the chagrin of Hogarth who was disgusted that the Scot used a drapery painter and dubbed him “Rams-eye”. Ramsay’s Italianate style with a smooth hard finish took over the Van Loo vein of portraiture and was especially successful among Scottish aristocrats. Later in his career Ramsay became fascinated by the pastel portraits of Rosalba Carriera and Jean Etienne Liotard [see 18<sup>th</sup> century France]. His delicate portrait of his second wife is one of the finest pictures of the age (Vaughan).



Allan Ramsay, *Lord Auchinleck*, 1742



Allan Ramsay, *The Artist's Wife*, 1758-60 (pastel)



## Sir Joshua Reynolds (1723 – 1792)

Joshua Reynolds, son of Reverend Samuel master of the grammar school at Plympton in Devon, was sent to London at age 17 to learn painting under Thomas Hudson, who had a collection of Old Master prints. They enthralled Reynolds. He got modest commissions for portraits of naval officers. One of them, Captain Keppel was appointed in 1749 to command the Mediterranean Fleet and invited Reynolds to join him. Reynolds seized the chance and, having painted the first of his six portraits of Keppel at Minorca, left to spend three years in Rome studying paintings and sculptures, reinforcing his taste for classical works. He also experienced the beginning of the neo-classical movement in Italy. Reynolds' art is best understood against this background: sitters had to be portrayed as a classical muse or mythological character, timeless and universal ideals. With an eye to the market, Reynolds realised that Burlington and his mates would like this classicism in portraits. Further, he knew they would not commission history paintings from poorly-trained English artists. That suited Reynolds who knew that his talent for this highest of genres was weak, "*However much Reynolds wrote and spoke in advocacy of the grand style, he knew his own talent to lie in a lower range*" (Paulson, Emblem and Expression) and his efforts in history painting are "*strangely petrified*" (Bazin). Thus, Reynolds' art is a natural product of his training and experience, reflecting the prevailing taste.

Contributing also to his art was Reynolds' vanity, "*he was obsessed by status, personally, professionally and nationally*" (Honour and Fleming). Reynolds was keen that everyone should know just how learned he was and he copied "*arms, legs, attitudes and perhaps whole compositions from artists of the past*". His approach to portraits was made clear when he returned to London. He painted a portrait of Keppel in the pose of *Apollo Belvedere* (but reversed). Keppel's sister, Lady Elizabeth, decorating a stature of Hymen, was later depicted in the *contrapposto* pose of one of Michaelangelo's sybils in the Sistine Chapel, accompanied by a maid-servant from Veronese.



Sir Joshua Reynolds, *Captain Keppel*, 1753



Sir Joshua Reynolds, *Lady Elizabeth Keppel*, 1761

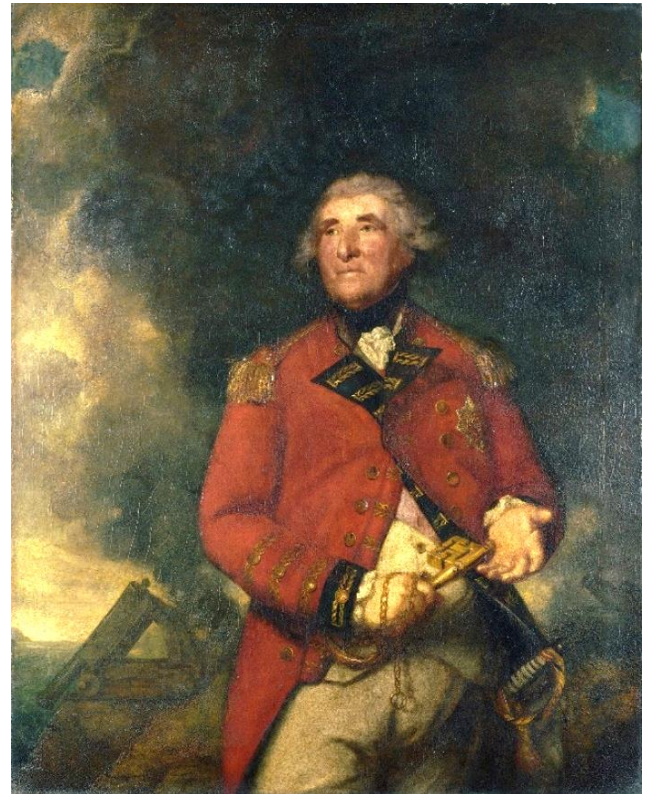


Keppel's portrait "established Reynolds' ascendancy" (Paulson) in London and many commissions followed. Lady Elizabeth is a little unusual for Reynolds as she is wearing 18<sup>th</sup> century clothing. She is shown in the dress she wore as one of the bridesmaids to Queen Charlotte on the latter's marriage to George III (hence Hymen, Greek god of marriage). Usually, Reynolds' ladies, depicted as ideals, appeared in classical drapery. The clothing in Reynolds' works was done either by his pupils or Peter Toms, who was the leading drapery painter in England.

Lady Sarah Bunbury's portrait is more typical of Reynolds. She is shown in a timeless dress as a priestess sacrificing to the Graces. Lady Sarah was one of the great beauties of the day and she had a relationship with George III. He was keen to marry her, but the idea was scotched by his mentor Lord Bute. He had the cheek to invite Sarah to be one of the bridesmaids when he married Charlotte. Sarah married Sir Charles Bunbury soon afterwards. If sacrificing to the Graces brought fertility Sarah was not disappointed. During an affair with Lord William Gordon, she gave birth to a daughter in 1769. After William abandoned her and her divorce was granted in 1774, Sarah married again and had eight children.



Sir Joshua Reynolds, *Lady Sarah Bunbury Sacrificing to the Graces*, 1765



Sir Joshua Reynolds, *Lord Heathfield*, 1787

Reynolds' portraits of men usually have more of a sense of character, which is lacking in his female-as-eternal-ideal paintings. Lord Heathfield had fought in the Seven Years War in Germany, but was famed for defeating France and Spain in the Great Siege of Gibraltar from 1779 to 1783. Reynolds depicts Heathfield as the personification of the Rock of Gibraltar, resolute and immovable.

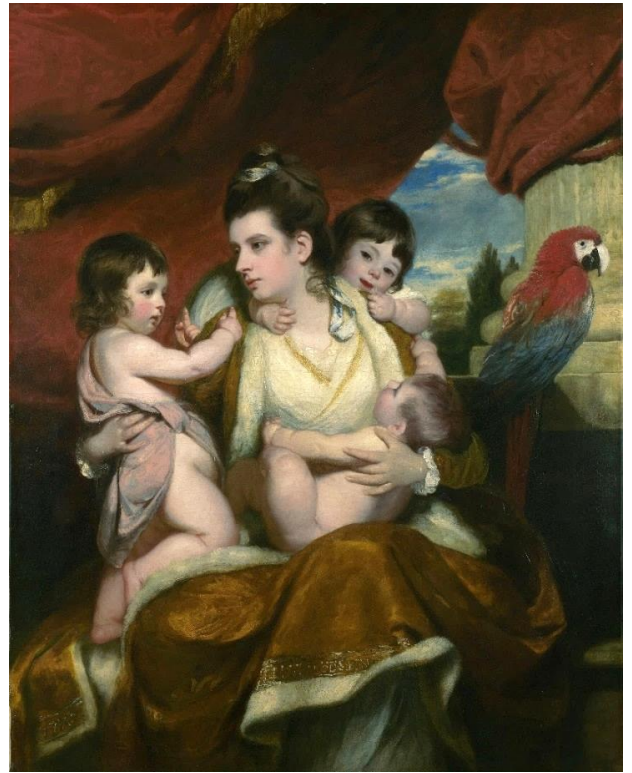
Heathfield was indestructible but his portrait wasn't. Within twenty years it was in terrible condition; heavily cracked because of Reynolds' poor technique. One sitter returned home from a long journey abroad and declared that his portrait by Reynolds had aged faster than he had.

*The Age of Innocence* is one of Reynolds' best-known works. This was not the original title given to the work by Reynolds for whom it was just a fancy picture, following the example of Gainsborough's children in rural settings. He often painted children with their mothers. As Lady Cockburn was an aristocrat, Reynolds reverts to form. The child on the left is modelled on Cupid in Diego Velazquez' *The Rokeby Venus* and the whole composition is copied from Van Dyck's *Charity*, with a parrot borrowed from Veronese.





Sir Joshua Reynolds, *The Age of Innocence*, 1785 or 88



Sir Joshua Reynolds, *Lady Cockburn and Her Three Eldest Sons*, 1775

Reynolds was criticised for plagiarism in Nathaniel Hone's *Pictorial Conjurer* submitted for exhibition at the RA, causing an outcry. Reynolds, surrounded by prints from which he steals, has a young girl resting on his leg. She represents the artist Angelica Kauffman whom Reynolds took under his wing when she arrived in London. He referred to her as "Miss Angel", painted portraits of her often and made sure she was one of the founding members of the RA. Rumour had them as lovers. Angelica admitted to her friends that she thought Reynolds would propose marriage to her.



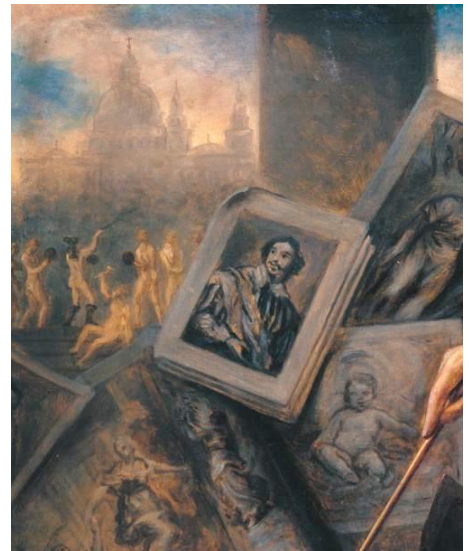
Nathaniel Hone, *The Pictorial Conjurer, Displaying the Whole Art of Optical Deception*, 1775 (final version)



Hone's original version provoked more rage by including a portrait of Kauffman dancing naked in black stockings with a group of artists. This referred to her inclusion in a project started by Reynolds in 1773 (later abandoned) to decorate St Paul's Cathedral. Hone was pressured into over-painting the naked dancing group.

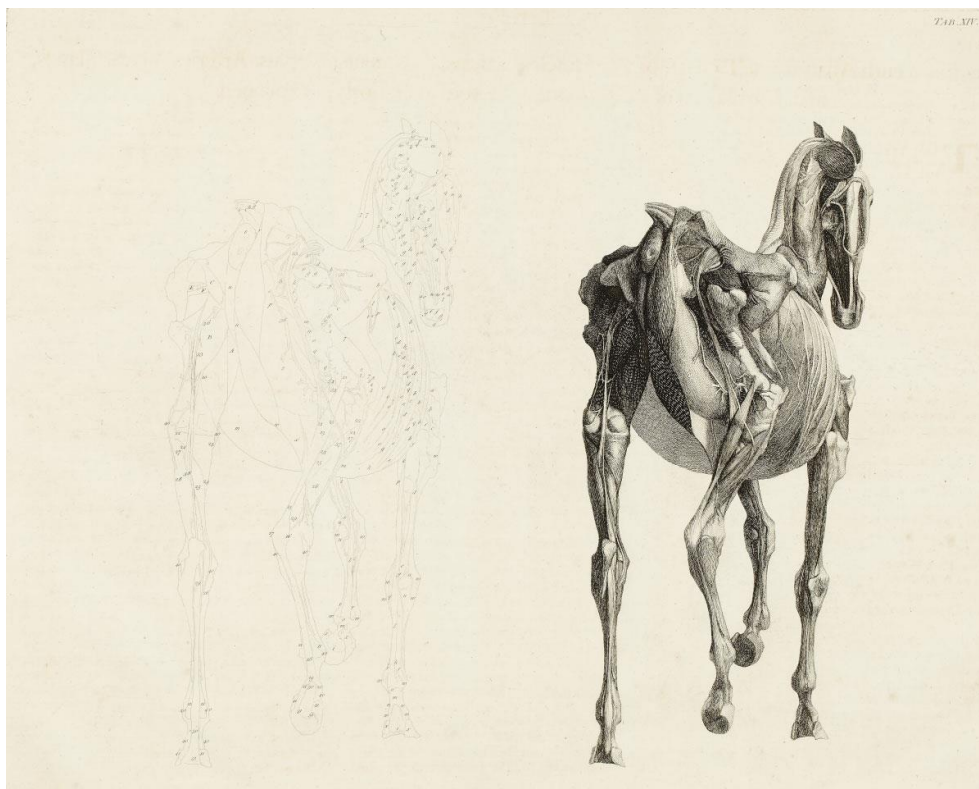
As Reynolds was president of the RA, George III had no choice but to appoint him Principal Painter when Ramsay died in 1784. Reynolds enjoyed the title. A measure of his vanity is given by Baldry noting (in an otherwise sycophantic essay accompanying a catalogue of works) that "*there are about 45 portraits of himself, by Reynolds*".

Reynolds' ambitions for the RA to promote a British School of Art to rival Renaissance Italy and 17<sup>th</sup> century France failed. The British School focussed on lower genres; landscapes and country life. There were, however, strikingly new paintings from two artists whose reputations were relatively low compared with their contemporaries but who have weathered the judgements of history much better.



### George Stubbs (1724 – 1806)

Known during his life as "Mr Stubbs the Horse Painter", George Stubbs refuted Reynolds' idea that the aesthetic value of a painting depended on the genre or subject. There "*was a tradition of animal, hunt, racing pictures for gentlemen – respectable if not quite art – but Stubbs made this kind of picture into high art*" (Paulson) partly because of a scientific interest in the animal. Michelangelo wanted to convey movement convincingly, so he studied anatomy and worked with nudes. Stubbs did the same with horses. His studies resulted in *The Anatomy of the Horse* (1766) with 18 tables, each with a drawing and a numbered key.



George Stubbs, *The Anatomy of the Horse*, Table 14, 1766

George Stubbs was born in Liverpool. His father had a business producing dressed leather from animal hides. As a child George was interested in anatomy: a neighbour, Dr Ralph Holt, was showing him dissected subjects when he was 10 or 11. Stubbs was a self-taught artist, working directly from nature. His portraits attracted clients from Liverpool then Leeds and finally York, the capital of the north. His interest in anatomy was revived when he met Charles Atkinson, the resident surgeon at York's Hospital for the Diseased Poor of the County. Atkinson opened a private anatomy school, which Stubbs joined and proved so adept that he was soon giving lessons there. Atkinson revived Stubbs' interest in horse anatomy.



When his mother died in 1755, Stubbs rented a farmhouse in Lincolnshire and spent 16 months dissecting horses. He would bleed them from the jugular before pumping wax into the arteries and main veins to retain the physical form. In 1758 he took his finished drawings and text to London, seeking a publisher. None would take on such a complex work, so Stubbs did the engravings himself. He did not finish them until 1766, when he advertised the book in the London press for 4g for subscribers and 5g otherwise. *The Anatomy of the Horse* was bought by gentlemen who bred or kept horses. It was too expensive for farriers and horse doctors, though they probably consulted copies belonging to patrons. Artists bought the book; Gainsborough had a copy. The work drew high praise in the *Medical Review* of 1767.



George Stubbs, *The Charlton Hunt*, c 1759



Stubbs began to paint horses when the horse had become a major status and cultural symbol for upper-class Englishmen. He arrived in London just after Domenico Angelo opened his School of Arms teaching fencing and riding to young aristocrats and royal princes. Angelo's School was soon famous. Stubbs went there to study horse's dressage steps, and met the young Duke of Richmond, owner of Goodwood, and Lord Grosvenor. He painted hunting scenes for them both, but these were very different to the usual painting of triumph in the field against a generic background. The preparatory sketch of *The Charlton Hunt* above shows Stubbs' "linking arrangements" in an elliptical composition. Gestures and dogs lead us around. These are not entirely successful. The brown dog's position looks artificial and (to the left) one dog appears to be standing on the back of another. The Duke and his brothers wear the blue livery with gold buttons of the hunt originally based at the village of Charlton, the first fox hunt established in England. The hunt staff wear the brilliant yellow and scarlet Goodwood uniform. The landscape is part of Charlton.

The horses have a variety of postures, and one is reminded of Pollaiuolo using the *Martyrdom of St Sebastian* as an excuse for demonstrating his skill in different poses of the human body. Stubbs is weak in one area – the rendering of horses at the gallop. This was a weakness shared by everyone until 1878 when Eadweard Muybridge's photographic experiments showed how horses really ran at full speed. Until then the convention was to show galloping horses in a rocking-horse pose. Stubbs adopts this convention in *The Charlton Hunt* and more strikingly in the painting below showing the Prince of Wales's two chestnuts. The one cantering is convincing, we can almost feel the light spring of the movement through the upward flicker of the hooves, the galloping one is (appropriately) wooden.



George Stubbs, *William Anderson with Two Saddle-Horses*, 1793

Conventional horse portraits such as those by John Wootton or James Seymour were set against a classical background or with racing in the distance and almost always the horse was standing side on held by characterless groom. Stubbs instead produced works of art, showing the character of horse as well as realistic movement through his rendering of convincing anatomy. *Whistlejacket* is one of his most memorable works.





George Stubbs, *Whistlejacket*, 1762 (National Gallery)

Whistlejacket was tempestuous. Stubbs captures the wildness through the ears, eyes and stress in the face. The horse's physiology is portrayed with varying rich golden colours so the detailed anatomy never intrudes. Stubbs breathes life into the horse. We can also understand, as Stubbs did, why the horse was the only animal whose anatomy Leonardo and Durer studied as a symbol of perfect beauty. Stubbs knew of treatises in which the horse's head is related to the ideal beauty of a Greek bust.

The work was commissioned by Rockingham, who inherited Wentworth Woodhouse from his father and was expanding it vastly (it still boasts the longest façade of any private home in England) when he put Stubbs to work on *Whistlejacket*. Rockingham intended the painting to be an equestrian portrait of George III, whom he served as minister, and planned to have other artists add the king and fill in the background. He owned David Morier's equestrian portrait of George II (*Whistlejacket* has the same dimensions). However, when Rockingham saw Stubbs' finished horse he decided to keep it for himself.

Figures and dogs were important in Stubbs' group scenes and he didn't just gloss over servants, but rendered their character accurately. Those setting out on Lord Torrington's hunt are an example, in another novel depiction. The older groom leading the train looks comfortable and relaxed, the loose rein showing his confidence in his ability. The young boy groom is apprehensive as he takes the reins of master's horse (the double bridle shows it will be ridden by a gentleman) whose ears suggest trouble. The coachman in the middle simply sees all this as mundane work, as does his dog. Stubbs' linking arrangements are now much more convincing. The heads of the horses create the movement, which is contained by the white dog and the tree.





George Stubbs, *Lord Torrington's Hunt Servants Setting Out from Southill*, 1765-8

Edmund Burke published in 1757 his treatise *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*. Burke wrote, "the passions which belong to self-preservation, turn on pain and danger, they are simply painful when their causes immediately affect us; they are delightful when we have an idea of pain and danger, without being actually in such circumstances ... whatever excites this delight, I call sublime". Stubbs adopted this idea for his many lion and horse paintings. The powerful thrust through the lion's tail, legs and claws is opposed by the horse's legs. The movement is contained by the turn of the horse's head, underpinned by the raised knee. The creamy white mane and tail strengthen the curved sections and helps separate the animals from the background.



George Stubbs, *A Lion Attacking a Horse*, 1762

Exotic animals, especially from India, sparked the development of zoology as a science and prompted amateurs to create menageries. The 13th century royal menagerie in the Tower of London was still going in Stubbs' day. Visitors either paid an entrance fee or brought a cat or a dog to feed to the lions. There were new menageries at Buckingham Gate, Kew and Richmond in London. The Duke of Cumberland (2<sup>nd</sup> son of George II) formed a menagerie at Sandpit Gate in Windsor Park where he amused himself by setting different animals against each other in fights to the death. Stubbs' most famous painting of an exotic animal was done for him. Sir George Pigot had for nine years enriched himself shamelessly as Governor-General of Madras. He presented George III with a "hunting tiger" (as the cheetah was called then) used by the moguls of India for coursing game. George gave the animal to his brother, who arranged a fight with a stag. The antlers were a threat and the cheetah backed off. She was found later in the woods, peaceably licking blood from the neck of a deer she had caught. Pigot commissioned Stubbs to commemorate the event.



Stubbs shows the cheetah just after the hood has been raised, and conveys the electric tension of the animal scenting a prey. The colour and texture of the fur must have been entrancing and Stubbs renders it beautifully. The stag is in an artificial position and a later owner had it painted over. The work is notable for the sensitivity of the Indian portraits, one man calm as would be necessary when handling the cheetah, the other more assertive trying to incite blood-lust. Both have great dignity and presence. They are considered the finest representation in British painting (Blake), and Queen Victoria had lots of portraits of Indians done as she couldn't be bothered to leave Osborne House to go to India.



George Stubbs, *Cheetah and Stag with two Indians*, 1765



Stubbs painted scenes of agricultural workers, the first for Lord Torrington, *Labourers* (1781). George Morland (below) and Gainsborough had exhibited similar subjects with success and that prompted Stubbs to paint some more. *Haymakers* and *Reapers* were Stubbs' only exhibited pictures at the RA in 1786. They show no sweat or dirt, but the dignity of the harvest workers is striking. The paintings are assembled with Stubbs' usual precision and complement each other if shown side by side.



George Stubbs, *Haymakers*, 1785



George Stubbs, *Reapers*, 1785

In *Haymakers*, the feet form a base from which the rake handles pull the focus upwards through a triangle to an apex emphasised by the hand on the rake against the blue sky. That lifted hand creates a downward line from the shoulders which is emphasised by the tilt of the hat, so leading us down to the horses whose feet complete the pyramid. The right-hand horse is silhouetted against the sky, highlighting the curve of the back which is carried on by the haystack and the back of the man atop. Paulson notes that the end of the haystack divides the work through the golden section. *Haymakers* tails off and *Reapers* picks this up and builds up to tops of trees on right. This time the figures form a frieze with clever linking arrangements. The golden section is marked by the overseer and his horse. With so many figures, Stubbs keeps the background landscape simple.

Stubbs, together with Gainsborough and Moreland, found there was a lack of demand for un-commissioned rural paintings; most of his were listed in a posthumous sale. Stubbs returned to animals, but finding that the horse portrait market had dried up, took to painting dogs. Thirty dog portraits survive.



"If a single painting were to be selected to represent the totality of Stubbs' work *Hambletonian, Rubbing Down* would be the one" (Morrison). I prefer *Whistlejacket*, but who am I? Sir Henry Vane-Tempest commissioned the work to commemorate the epic match race between his horse and Diamond, ran at Newmarket in spring 1799 over almost 4 miles, which Hambletonian won by half a neck. Although run at public meetings, match races were private wagers between gentlemen horse owners. Hambletonian, based in the north of England, was a difficult ride but had never been beaten. There were doubts about his fitness for this race against Diamond, the best of the south at Newmarket. The stakes between the two owners were 3,000g plus a side bet of 800g on the day. The greatest crowd ever seen at Newmarket assembled for the race; thousands from the north, who celebrated wildly. The *Sporting Magazine* reported that "*Hambletonian appeared to be more spurred than Diamond but not at all whipped*". Stubbs omits the blood from the spurring, but conveys Hambletonian's utter weariness and tired irritation.



George Stubbs, *Hambletonian, Rubbing Down*, 1800

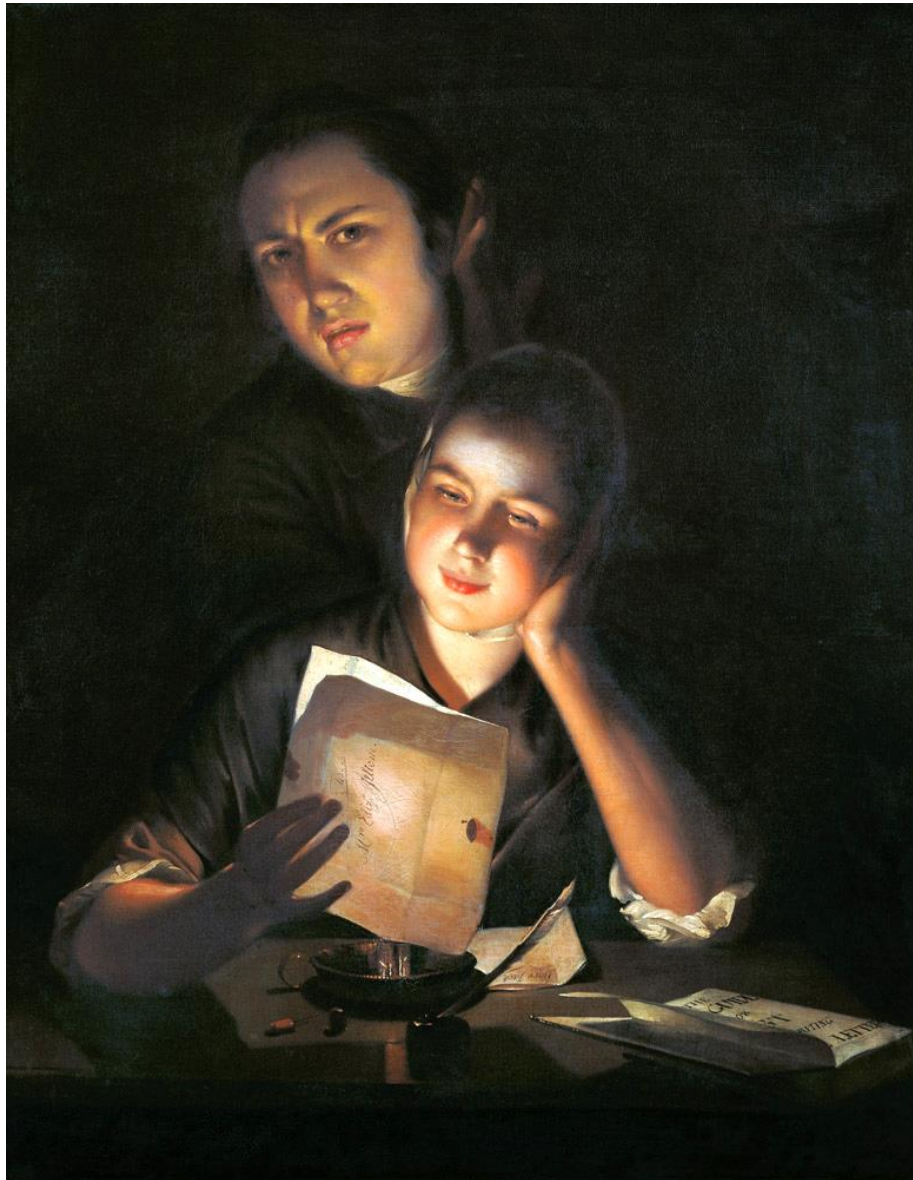
Vane-Tempest commissioned two paintings from Stubbs and advertised them in advance. Stubbs exhibited *Hambletonian* at the RA in 1800 together with the preparatory sketch (now lost) for the second which showed the race's exciting climax. The painting at the RA was not particularly well received and Vane-Tempest didn't like it. The work was far too sombre for the rich young man who wanted to see the win celebrated in grand style. He objected too to the horse's mouth which suggested pain. When he received bill for 300g he refused to pay. Stubbs stopped work on the second canvas and sued. The judge ruled in Stubbs' favour.

George Stubbs did not have pupils or assistants. His heyday was the 1760s. Forty years later at his death the taste for horse painting had virtually disappeared and Stubbs was not highly regarded. His conviction was that "*nature was and always is superior to Art, whether Greek or Roman ...*" The RA and its worthies would have sneered at that attitude. Stubbs' reputation was rescued by exhibitions at the Walker Art Gallery in 1951 in his birthplace of Liverpool and at the Whitechapel Art Gallery in 1957. The latter was organised by Basil Taylor, the art historian who did most to revive interest in George Stubbs.



## Joseph Wright of Derby (1734 – 1797)

Stubbs used the income from his portraits to fund his studies of horses. Joseph Wright followed his example, but Joseph's fascination was with the effect of light. He was born in Derby to a professional family. His father was an attorney and Town Clerk of Derby for ten years, his two brothers became an attorney and a doctor. After Derby Grammar, Wright was a pupil in Thomas Hudson's studio in London from 1751 to 1753. Returning to Derby, commissions for portraits came in from Newark, Lincoln, Boston, Retford and Doncaster, as well as his hometown. He was charging around 7g for the head of a child, 12g for a half-length and 24g for conversation pieces in the early 1760s. His first candlelight picture was painted then, and shows astonishing skill in rendering the different effects of light.



Joseph Wright of Derby, *A Girl reading a letter by Candlelight*, 1760-2

The painting conveys the feelings of the participants. The girl's face is lit much more strongly (by love?) than the boy's. She is in the middle of writing a 'Dear John' letter (hers starts "Dere Jack") helped by a manual *The Art of Writing a Letter* which lies open on the table. She breaks off to re-read the letter, addressed to Eliza, received from her new lover. The rosy glow of contentment is clear on her face. The boy in the background looks as though he knows he is doomed. He is Jack?

Wright's next candlelight picture is a variation of the conversation piece, as are the others in this series. Wright focusses much more closely on the reaction of people looking at the object, just as he does with Eliza and Jack. His first conversation piece, *Three Persons Viewing the Gladiator by Candlelight*, has a piece of art as its focus – common in conversation pieces.



The *Gladiator*, an ancient Greek marble statue sculpted by Agasias of Ephesos around 100 BC, was found in the ruins of Nero's seaside palace near Anzio in 1611. Moved to the Borghese it became the most admired work of antiquity. Plaster casts of it soon littered Europe and were brought to England by countless Grand Tourists. The Duke of Richmond, a patron of Thomas Hudson, had a copy in his sculpture gallery in Whitehall, which was open to students, so Wright may have seen *Gladiator* there during his time in London but, if not, there were plenty of copies in the provinces.



Joseph Wright of Derby, *Three Persons Viewing the Gladiator by Candlelight*, 1765

The man with his back to us is Wright while opposite is his good friend, the cartographer and artist, Peter Perez Burdett who was then working on producing a map of Derbyshire of one inch to one mile (recent surveying instruments having made possible such a venture). The older man is possibly a servant charged with rotating the marble copy for the two students: the drawing has been made from the back. The practice of examining subjects by candlelight was not unusual. The main contours and features were made manifest by shadows. Wright again makes a psychological point. The statue is shown to us in an aspect which makes clear the tremendous energy of the forward thrust and is lit strongly by candlelight. It seems alive and vital. In contrast, those who are actually alive are inanimate, stilled by their intense study.

This was Wright's first exhibited painting in the SoA show of 1765. The reviewers of the show called Joseph 'Wright of Derby' to distinguish him from Richard Wright from Liverpool (whose son was dubbed 'Wright of Pimlico' when he began exhibiting works). Wright never seems to have minded. At the exhibition *Gladiator* was bought for 40g by Dr Benjamin Bates, a physician and socialite. He was member of the Hellfire Club founded by Sir Francis Dashwood for whom he served as personal physician. That such a prominent society man bought the painting indicates the approval the work attracted. That turned out to be nothing compared to the opprobrium provoked by the painting Wright exhibited at the SoA the following year.





Joseph Wright of Derby, *A Philosopher giving that Lecture on the Orrery in which a lamp is put in place of the Sun*, 1766

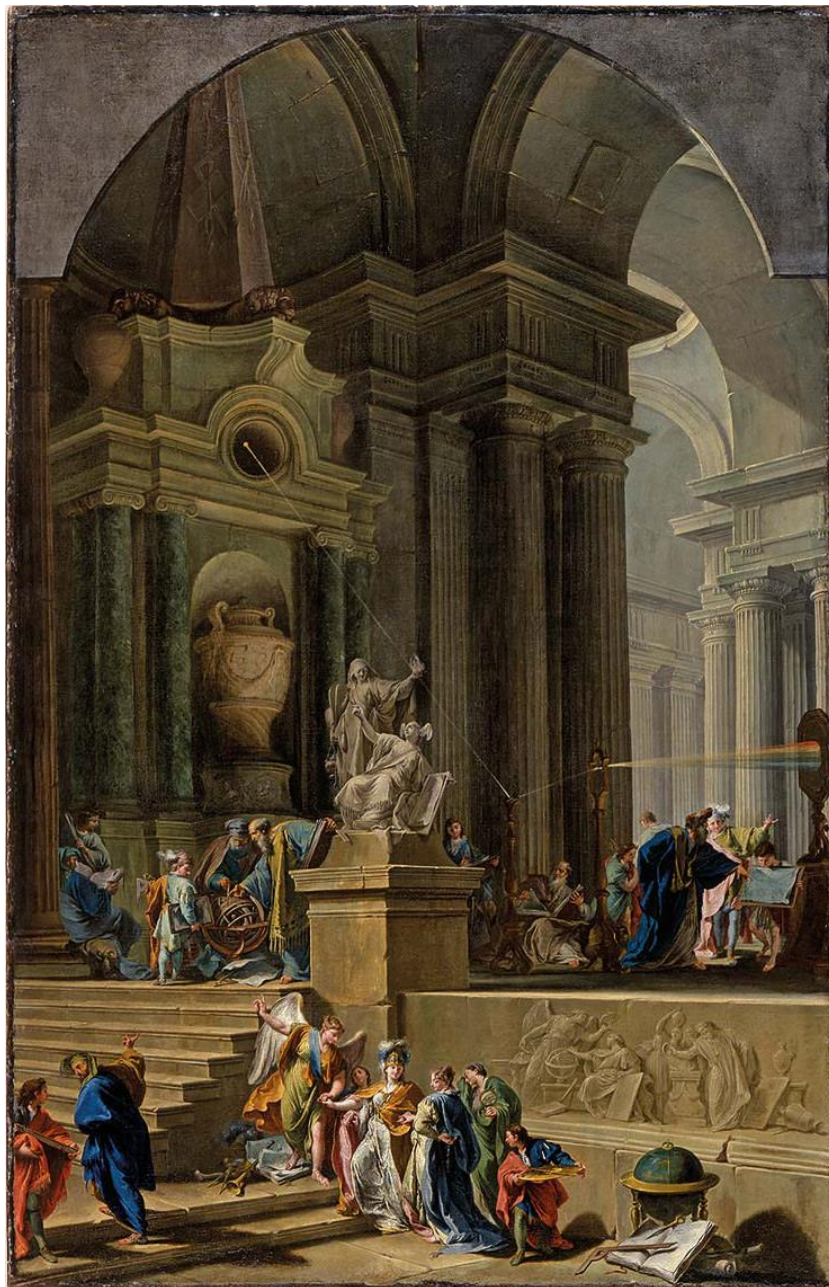


The Solar System Model was first created by clockmaker George Graham in 1713 and named after the Earl of Orrery who paid for the work. A handle on the base set planets in motion around a brass ball on a stem representing sun. Naturally, Wright replaced the ball with a lamp. Earth and Moon can be seen just to left of the elbow of the person facing away from us with Saturn and rings beyond by the hands of the boy. The lamp allowed an eclipse to be demonstrated. The motion of planets demonstrated by the orrery was established by Sir Isaac Newton. Wright paints the lecturer with a resemblance to the great man. Kneller's 1689 portrait, Newton a youthful 46 at the time, was widely copied and Vanderbank's depiction was engraved for the frontispiece of *Mathematica Principia* (1726). Wright's lecturer is the older of these two; the hair, the shape of the face and the large nose all repeated.

Newton's fame in the 18<sup>th</sup> century cannot be over-estimated. Alexander Pope's lines suggest Newton was regarded as a Messiah: "*Nature and nature's laws lay hid in night/God said, "Let Newton be", and all was light*" and Voltaire later remarked, "*we are all now disciples of Newton*".

Underpinning this image of Newton as a deity was *An Allegorical Monument to Isaac Newton* painted just after his death and showing his discovery of the refraction of light into different wavelengths. Pittoni shows an angel (closely resembling Gabriel from an *Annunciation* scene) leading Minerva (goddess of wisdom in her plumed helmet) up the steps to pay homage to Newton's remains in an urn, beneath which an orrery is being examined. Elsewhere, much like the groups in Raphael's *School of Athens*, folk examine other aspects of Newton's work.

In his grand work Wright shows a range of reactions. The children think the orrery is a toy. The young lady and young man bracketing the device seem lost in contemplation, perhaps far away from any thoughts of planetary orbits. Perez Burdett takes notes. The man watching the lecturer closely is Lord Ferrers of Staunton Harold with whom Burdett stayed during his time in Derbyshire. Ferrers was a keen scientist whose observations on the transit of Venus led to his election as FRS in 1761. Possibly, he is checking that the lecturer and orrery are accurate! Ferrers bought the painting for 200g after the SoA exhibition.



Giambattista Pittoni, *An Allegorical Monument to Isaac Newton*, 1727

Earlier in the 1760s (possibly in the 1750s) the Lunar Society of Birmingham was founded. The group met monthly on the Monday nearest the full moon to conduct experiments and discuss developments in science and industry. Founding members were engineers Matthew Boulton and James Watt, chemist Joseph Priestley, Josiah Wedgwood, inventor Dr Erasmus Darwin (grandfather-to-be of Charles) and geologist John Whitehurst (who also made clocks, barometers and other instruments). Wright went to meetings and was close friends with Darwin and Whitehurst. Darwin's long poem, *The Botanic Garden*, covered many scientific inventions, including the instrument which appeared in Wright's next large work – the air pump.





Joseph Wright of Derby, *An Experiment on a Bird in the Air Pump*, 1768 (National Gallery)



Whitehurst's friend, Scottish astronomer James Ferguson, travelled the country giving lectures using scientific instruments made in his London workshop. They included an orrery and an air pump. The air pump was invented by Otto von Guericke at Magdeburg in 1650 and required two strong men to work it for several hours. Robert Boyle (of the eponymous Law) and Robert Hooke made a much-improved version in 1659, which could be used with little effort on a desk. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century an air pump became a common item in cabinets – Shelley had one at Oxford. They were the *piece de resistance* of travelling scientific lecturers. The usual demonstration used a bird, mouse, frog or kitten. As air was pumped out the animal's reactions to deprivation was observed - panting, keeling over, becoming stiller and stiller. Then air was re-admitted by the stop-cock at the top of the glass (the lecturer has his left hand on it in Wright's painting) to revive the animal. Ill-timing resulted in death. Ferguson, who gave a lecture in Derby in 1762 which Wright could well have attended, considered that using a living animal was "*too shocking to any spectator who has the least degree of Humanity*".

Wright uses a bird so he can show the reactions to the threat of death among the observers, who this time represent the Ages of Man. Children fear for the bird, although one is fascinated and cannot turn away – the embodiment of Burke's feeling for the sublime. A student watches closely. Young lovers, believing death is irrelevant to them, are yearning to be away to more exciting activities. A parent re-assures the child by pointing to the stop-cock. The impressive old man is still and miles away, as he contemplates the moment when he will expire his last breath. The white cockatoo, which Wright had depicted as the centre of attention in an early 1760s conversation piece was much too rare a bird to risk in this experiment. The ability to create a vacuum would prove vital in science. Two Magdeburg hemispheres, also of Von Guericke's invention are on the table. Various messages have been drawn from the work: one being 'machines are harmful to nature' (as workers in large mechanised mills would subsequently discover and we know from climate change). But to the Lunar Society, engineering inventions were to be celebrated, even marvelled. Wright certainly shared this view. One of his 'Forge' paintings, painted between 1771 and 1773, shows the happy effects of the invention of the tilt hammer whose large drum (seen in the painting) is turned by a water-wheel.



Joseph Wright of Derby, *Iron Forge*, 1772



The blacksmith, now freed from labour by a machine, gazes happily at his wife and children (one with the older man on left). He is fit and heroic. The *Morning Chronicle* (29 May 1772) reviewing the work, wrote, "the face of the principal figure in the Iron Forge has Apollo and Hercules as truly blended as we have seen". He wears a "faintly dandyish striped waistcoat" (Egerton) a mark of the increased prosperity brought by the device. Investing in technologies was popular among aristocrats, seeking more revenue from their land. An earlier Wright 'Forge' painting was sold to Lord Melbourne for 150g. Lord Palmerston bought this for 200g.

*Air Pump* drew much praise at the 1768 SoA Exhibition. The *Gazetteer* wrote (23<sup>rd</sup> May): "Mr Wright, of Derby, is a very great and uncommon genius, in a peculiar way". The qualification was provoked by the novelty: *Air Pump* is "one of the wholly original masterpieces of British Art" (Waterhouse). The aforementioned Dr Bates was undeterred, buying the painting for 200g soon after the exhibition. The final 'candlelight' piece by Wright, exhibited at the 1769 show was *An Academy by Lamplight* through which we are reminded of the power of art to enthrall.



Joseph Wright of Derby, *An Academy by Lamplight*, 1768-9



Perez Burdett finished his map of Derbyshire in 1767. The following year he moved to Liverpool to begin mapping Lancashire, and invited his friend Wright to join him. Wright's three years there were successful, bringing many portrait commissions. Perez Burdett formed a society of artists in Liverpool in 1769. Wright's painting is thought to depict the academy attached to the society. The statue *Nymph with a Shell*, the original marble then in Villa Borghese and now in Louvre, is animated while the boys are stilled in their absorption in her (although Wright has one boy staring out at us, as in *Air Pump*). The distinction between stone and flesh is lost just as in Bernini's sculptures [see 17<sup>th</sup> century Italy], and the message of the story of Pygmalion and Galatea springs to mind: Love brings life.



Joseph Wright of Derby, *Vesuvius in Eruption, with a View over the Islands in the Bay of Naples*, 1776

Wright visited Italy in 1774 for two years. He was attracted by Virgil's Tomb, an obligatory stop on the Grand Tour – the Duchess of Devonshire buried a beloved lap-dog there – and painted the scene six times, but his imagination was fired by Vesuvius: more than 30 paintings ensued. There were six eruptions of the volcano in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, but Wright probably didn't see one. The contrast between hot lava and cool moon naturally enticed this master of light.

The other large series of paintings from the Italy trip are fireworks (of course!). Rockets were fired from a revolving wheel, called a girandole, near to Castel Sant' Angelo on Easter Monday and on the Feast Day of SS Peter and Paul, the 29<sup>th</sup> of June. The same firework display honoured the inauguration of a new pope. Wright was in Rome in mid-February 1775 and saw the one put on for Pius VI. Wright regarded Vesuvius and Girandola as a matched pair. These two were exhibited at the SoA exhibition in London in 1776 (they were spurned by Reynolds' RA). The pair proved popular. A John Milnes of Wakefield bought the first pair for 200g. A couple of years later, another matched pair was sold to Catherine the Great for 600g – Wright had the nous to charge grand monarchs far more!





Joseph Wright of Derby, *The Annual Girandola at the Castle of St Angelo, Rome, 1776*

The final series we'll cover by Wright is that of women lamenting the loss of their lovers. *Maria* from Sterne, *William and Margaret* from Thomas Percy's *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* (1766) and the *Lost Lady* from John Milton's masque *Comus* (1634) are among them. The pair below were painted as companion pieces for the potter Josiah Wedgwood, Wright's friend from the Lunar Society. Penelope unravels the burial shroud each night to avoid choosing a suitor while her husband is away. Her son Telemachus is the boy sleeping and a statue of her husband is cunningly deployed. Wright wrote in December 1783, "*I wish ... to compose the picture of Penelope in which there is full latitude, with a strong effect of Candle light, I have therefore brought the Statue of Ulysses forward and right before the Lamp for I always conceal the Cause when I can do it naturally, that the effect may be brighter*".

The theme of the second work in the pair, the *Origin of Painting*, dates back to Pliny. The maid of Corinth, knowing her lover was about to leave the country, traced the shadow that his face cast on the wall. Her father, a potter, filled the outline with clay and baked it. That appealed to Wedgwood, who suggested that a potter's oven should be introduced (the glowing kiln on the right). Rosenblum discovered that the sleeping lover is in the pose of Endymion in the bas relief at Museo Capitolino in Rome. Wright and Wedgwood, who paid 200g for the pair, were very pleased. In February 1782 Wright wrote "*it will certainly make the best Candlelight picture I have painted*". The greyhound, a neo-classical symbol of elegance, is similar to the greyhound in Stubbs' *Labourers* (1779), which Wright had reproduced in enamel for Wedgwood to use on earthenware.





Joseph Wright of Derby, *Penelope Unravelling her Web, by Lamplight*, 1785



Joseph Wright of Derby, *The Corinthian Maid*, 1782-5



## Landscapes

*“Landscape parks were perhaps the most important British contribution to the visual arts of the 18<sup>th</sup> century (Honour & Fleming)”*. Inspired by Grand Tourists’ visits to antique sites in Italy, a walk around the lake at Stourhead brings a succession of views of temples, groves and grottos: Claude’s landscapes made manifest. Stowe followed Stourhead and landscape parks in England blossomed (and thankfully remain).



Richard Wilson, *Landscape with Bathers, Cattle and Ruin*, 1770-75



### Richard Wilson (1714 – 1782)

The demand for landscape paintings in Britain was dominated by Italian artists and works by 17<sup>th</sup> century Dutch painters. Brits were largely ignored. The best one, Richard Wilson, sank into gradual poverty. His appointment as librarian at the RA in 1776 on £50 a year saved him from actual starvation (Johnson) and during his last years he asked a member of RA if he knew of “*anyone mad enough to employ a landscape painter.*” Wilson, trained in London, had started on portraits there, but a trip to Italy convinced him to paint classical landscapes, having come under the spell of Claude. In *Landscape with Bathers* Wilson followed Claude in the graded tones of the sky from gold to blue, and in using trees as a frame. Wilson’s figures, fewer and more generalised than Claude’s, work well and don’t detract from the landscape.

A few foreground figures began to be motif of Wilson’s. He painted bathers on the banks of the river in *The Thames near Marble Hill, Twickenham* (c 1762) and in his celebrated landscape, *The White Monk*, two women taking a rest on the way from the market. *The White Monk* became a mark of taste and a version was commissioned from Wilson by many an English Grand Tourist. Wilson painted many. All feature two monks by a cross or chapel on a rocky promontory, a large boulder in the left foreground, sometimes with a small waterfall behind, distant ruins catching the sun, a man on horseback (a neat transition from foreground to middle ground) and usually a couple of figures beneath trees. In Wilson’s first version (1761-2, now in Toledo) these last were lovers sheltering under a parasol.



Richard Wilson, *The White Monk*, before 1765 (Cobbe Collection, Hatchlands Park)

Wilson produced two innovative pointers for the future. The Romantics of the 19<sup>th</sup> century regarded wild scenery as an example of Burke’s *Sublime*. Wilson was one of the first landscapists to recognise this with *Cader Idris*. He increased the height of the precipice to create a better composition. This work prompted many artists to follow Wilson’s lead, including JWT Turner. Wilson also anticipates Turner in *View of Tiber at Sunset* in which colour and atmosphere prevail over form. Johnson believes Wilson is worthy of title ‘*The Father of British Landscapes*’.





Richard Wilson, *Lake Llyn-y-cau on the mountain of Cader Idris*, c 1774 (Tate Britain)



Richard Wilson, *A View of the Tiber with Rome in the Distance*, c 1775



## Watercolours

Watercolours were not used for landscape painting in Britain until the 18<sup>th</sup> century. **Paul Sandby (1730 or 1731 – 1809)** was first a military draughtsman. He settled in Windsor in 1751, but travelled widely in UK. Johnson calls Sandby '*The Father of British Watercolour*' and notes that atmosphere was his greatest gift, "*his work always aerial and luminous*". Sandby used gouache and watercolour over graphite in his works.



Paul Sandby, *A Distant View of Maidstone, from Lower Bell Inn, Boxley Hill*, 1802



John Robert Cozens, *The Bay of Naples from Capodimonte*, 1790 (watercolour and graphite on textured paper)



Works of quiet colours were painted by **John Robert Cozens (1752 – 1797)**, whose father Alexander, also a watercolour artist, was the son of Peter the Great and an Englishwoman. John Robert had a delicate perception of light which anticipates Turner. The mainstream of British landscapes was carried on by **Thomas Girtin (1775 – 1802)** and Turner, who were friends. Girtin's cathedrals and religious buildings seem part of nature. Girtin's health started to decline in 1800 and he died in his painting room aged only 27.



Thomas Girtin, Kirkstall Abbey, Yorkshire: Evening, 1800/1



Thomas Girtin, Lindisfarne Castle, 1796/7



### George Morland (1763 – 1804)

Landscapes with figures attracted higher prices than those without. Richard Wilson sold empty landscapes for 40g, but got twice that if the scene was peopled. Of course, much depended on the figures. George Morland spent his career depicting the activities of rural folk. In a sense, he is a genre painter along Dutch lines. Often George re-assured his patrons that while the rural labourer might live in shabby homes, “*the poor though poor, are still cheerful, and still clean, and that even their [well-fed] pigs are too*” (Barrell). *Higglers* is an example of laudable rural domesticity.



George Morland, *Morning: Higglers preparing for Market*, 1791

George painted loads of pictures of rural scenes, including the activities of children. He did them on spec and accepted almost any price offered to finance his drinking or to pay off his debts. He was forced to move frequently in London to evade bailiffs, and often had to escape into the country. George valued his independence. He turned down a commission from the Prince of Wales to paint a roomful of pictures and refused to join the Romney's studio at an annual salary of £300. Sometimes George was more honest about the plight of the rural poor. *Roadside Inn* shows a homeless family, perhaps ruined by the father's drinking, and ignored by passers-by. Locke's view of poverty largely persisted – the state of the poor was their own fault. Towards the end of the century, as the Industrial Revolution revealed the workings of a market economy, it began to dawn that able-bodied people could be unemployed through no fault of their own.





George Morland, *Roadside Inn*, 1790

Towards the end of the century, the number of rural genre scenes exhibited at the RA increased over threefold and remained high, even increasing, until 1818. Agricultural communities were the only source of soldiers England had. Workers in towns who used machines or worked in sedentary jobs were unfit. Indeed, this was one of the great criticisms of Enclosures made by rich folk: the migration of agricultural labourers to towns meant that Parliament could not man English armies effectively.

In this period George painted *Outside the Ale-House Door*. These two men, clearly decent, well-behaved and in earnest conversation, are very different to the wasters usually depicted in Dutch genre scenes or Teniers' paintings in public inns. They represent the "*bold peasantry from which were recruited the victors of Waterloo – or this was how they were imagined to be by those concerned to persuade the poor of England that the fight with Revolutionary France was a fight for their won liberties*" (Barrell)".



George Morland, *Outside the Ale-house Door*, 1792



## References

- Baldry AL, *Sir Joshua Reynolds*, Newnes' Art Library, 1905.
- Barrell, John, *The Dark Side of the Landscape: The rural poor in English painting 1730 -1840*, Cambridge University Press, 1980.
- Bazin, Germain, *Baroque and Rococo*, Thames and Hudson, 1993.
- Bell, Vicars, *To Meet Mr Ellis, Little Gaddesden in the Eighteenth Century*, Faber and Faber, 1956.
- Bindman, David, *Hogarth*, Thames & Hudson, 2021.
- Blake, Robin, *George Stubbs and the Wide Creation*, Pimlico, 2006.
- Clark, Kenneth, *Landscape into Art*, John Murray Publishers, 1976.
- Egerton, Judy, *Wright of Derby* [Exhibition Catalogue], Tate Gallery, 1990.
- Hallett, Mark, *Hogarth*, Phaidon Press, 2000.
- Honour, Hugh and Fleming John, *A World History of Art (Revised Seventh Edition)*, Laurence King Publishing, 2009.
- Johnson, Charles, *English Painting from the Seventh Century to the Present Day*, G Bell and Sons, 1932.
- Levey, Michael, *Rococo to Revolution: Major Trends in Eighteenth-century Painting*, Thames and Hudson, 1995.
- McKendrick, Neil, Brewer John, Plumb JH, *The Birth of a Consumer Society*, Europa Publications, 1982.
- Morrison Venetia, *The Art of George Stubbs*, Quantum Publishing, 2002.
- Neeson JM, *Commoners: common right, enclosure and social change in England, 1700-1820*, Cambridge University Press, 1993.
- Nicolson, Benedict, *Joseph Wright of Derby: Painter of Light*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1968.
- Paulson, Ronald, *The Art of Hogarth*, Phaidon Press, 1975.
- Paulson, Ronald, *Emblem and Expression: Meaning in English Art of the Eighteenth Century*, Thames and Hudson, 1975.
- Plumb JH, *The First Four Georges*, Fontana 1972.
- Plumb JH, *England in the Eighteenth Century*, Penguin Books, 1990.
- Rosenthal, Michael and Myrone, Martin (ed), *Gainsborough*, Tate 2002.
- Rosenthal, Michael, *Hogarth*, Chaucer Press, 2005.
- Taylor, Basil, *George Stubbs*, Phaison Press, 1971.
- Turner WJ (editor), *Aspects of British Art*, Collins, 1947
- Vaughan, William, *Gainsborough*, Thames & Hudson, 2002.
- Waterhouse, Ellis, *Gainsborough*, Edward Hulton, 1958.
- Williams, Basil, *The Whig Supremacy, 1714-1760 (The Oxford History of England)*, Oxford University Press 1962.