



A GUIDE TO EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY ART

LINDA WALSH



WILEY Blackwell

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Linda Walsh

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Companion Website

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Introduction

Style, Society, Modernity

The Question of Style

This book offers guidance on how to study eighteenth-century art, rather than a survey of the prominent artists of that time. Approaches to this subject have changed radically since the 1970s. Since the Renaissance, favored methods of studying art included biographical surveys of the “complete works” of a recognized canon of artists; a tendency to discuss art-historical periods in terms of stylistic trends and developments; or connoisseurial analysis of the styles of different artists, partially with a view to accurate attribution. Scholarly texts, such as Michael Levey’s 1966 work *From Rococo to Revolution: Major Trends in Eighteenth-Century Painting* (Levey, 1966), or Mary Webster’s 1978 *Hogarth* (Webster, 1978), remain invaluable sources of knowledge and critical discussion; are still extremely useful for beginners; and continue to inform more recent art-historical writing.

A shift in methodologies occurred, however, with the growing significance of new fields of knowledge, including sociology and psychology, that stressed the relationship of artistic production, or of an individual creative mind, to broader social and cultural developments, values and concerns. This has involved a much greater emphasis on the role of audiences and publics in determining the nature of art as well as on the issues of class, economics, institutions and politics that shaped their taste. The 1994 (fifth) edition of Ellis Waterhouse’s *Painting in Britain 1530–1790* includes an Introduction by Michael Kitson (Kitson, 1994, xi–xxvii) that illuminates with great clarity this shift of focus within art history, from the study of the careers and stylistic achievements of individual artists

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(Waterhouse's book, first published in 1953, contains separate chapters on Reynolds, Hogarth, Gainsborough and Wright of Derby, among others); to methods of analysis derived from linguistics and literary theory of the visual language artists deployed; to a focus on the influence of the broader social, political, institutional, educational, cultural and ideological contexts in which they worked. The current book seeks to illuminate eighteenth-century art through the prism of these wider considerations, while remaining indebted to earlier surveys and approaches.

In earlier histories of eighteenth-century art, the most significant narrative concerning style is the rococo's early dominance giving way, from the 1760s, to a preference for neoclassicism. It is now accepted that the style labels often applied to histories of eighteenth-century art did not have currency at the time. "Rococo" (derived from *rocaille*, relating to the shell work found in fantasy grottos) was a late-eighteenth-century term implying excessively convoluted and eye-distracting forms. The tendency to view art history as a sequence of style labels embedded in unifying grand narratives about art, cohesive bodies of works or neat linear, autonomous aesthetic developments, has been exposed as a means of obscuring the more fundamental social and economic causes of cultural change (Rosenblum, 1967, vii–viii, 4; Craske, 1997, 8, 246–247). Such narratives also gloss over the uneven nature of artistic change across different nations. Centralizing powers in Britain, France and Spain (the Georgian and Bourbon monarchies) oversaw relatively unified artistic cultures. However, the more diverse governments of Central and Eastern Europe, including the Habsburg Empire, whose territories were run with varying amounts of autonomy by a range of electors and princes, were associated with more pluralistic patterns of patronage and stylistic development (Kaufman, 1995, 342–379).

The rococo was implicated in its own time in the demise or pollution of grand history painting and in creating tensions between the different orders (classes) of society who vied for the status its affluence conferred (see Chapter 2). Its style and subject matter constituted an assault on the imagination and an explicit evocation of physical sensation. The rococo style was characterized in interior décor by white panels, gilded frames and cartouches, and abundant decorative plaster work; shiny satins, brocades, silks and flocked wallpapers, some imported from China and the Far East; and sparkling mirrors decorated with C-scroll, palm and ribbon motifs. In painting it was characterized by extensive use of pastel shades, flesh tints and "S" shaped curves derived from shells, rocks and plants; and in sculpture by an emphasis on graceful flowing curves, asymmetry and decorative detail, for example, the ribbons and *putti* often embedded in pedestals (Scott, 1995, 1–5). Grandier schemes might involve large-scale

mural *trompe l'oeil* (literally “deceiving the eye” or powerfully illusory) representations of buildings, arches and ruins, such as those for which Italian artists were often commissioned in the first half of the century.

The influence of the style spread across the courts of Europe, and through affluent owners of private mansions. It permeated the stylistic vocabulary of all genres, embracing genre subjects, portraits and even religious paintings (Tarabra, 2006, 328–331), as well as mythological (“history”) subjects. François Boucher (1703–1770) and even the allegedly xenophobic William Hogarth (1697–1764) were among its main practitioners (Simon, 2007, 56, 170). Its influence spread to those nations wishing to emulate the latest French fashions including those, like England, where anti-Gallic feelings existed alongside the desire to keep up with foreign competition (Colley, 1984, 10–17; Victoria and Albert Museum, 1984). In part its influence was so pervasive because it relied, like the fashion for neoclassicism that succeeded it, on a unity of effect throughout all aspects of a room’s décor, even if that “unity” resulted from the complex diversity of a range of commercial, industrial and technological processes used in the production of rococo goods (Scott, 1995, 6). The style was above all an exemplar of the “decorative” defined in the 1762 Dictionary of the French Academy (cited by Scott, 1995, 7) as embellishment arising from the deployment of ornament on and in a building.

According to traditional art-historical narratives, negative reactions to “gallant mythologies” and the dominance of decorative art spread more widely, especially with the unfolding of the historical and cultural movement known as the Enlightenment, which placed emphasis on reason, knowledge, moral and social progress. In the art world this led by the 1750s and 1760s to a revival of interest in classical culture subsequently identified as neoclassicism. The aim in neoclassical art was to reassert the gravitas of antiquity through reference to its themes, narratives, costumes and architectural motifs. Some artists achieved this by returning to a more simplified, austere, linear style derived from ancient friezes; compositional austerity and a minimal use of ornament; and “still” figures in heroic and dignified poses and restrained draperies that hugged the body (Rosenblum, 1967, 5). These tendencies later reached their dramatic and radical conclusion in the art of Jacques-Louis David (1748–1825). The term “neoclassical” was a Victorian invention (Coltman, 2006, 1–2). It was uttered in a derogatory spirit and at time when artists and critics viewed the past with an ill-disguised condescension that served their own claims to a regenerative “modernity.” The retrospective invention of the term was motivated by a critical response to what was perceived as a reactionary “re-warming” of an old aesthetic based on uncritical copying of the styles

and subjects of ancient Greek and Roman art. In the eighteenth century the term “true style” was more common when referring to the neoclassical style of painting later developed by David and his followers. However, neoclassicism was characterized by stylistic pluralism, ranging from the austere to the sensual and the decorative (Coltman, 2006, 7–8). It has been described recently as a “frame of mind” or “style of thought” rather than a specific combination of formal elements (Coltman, 2006, 7, 11) (see Chapter 2). In this respect, it is ill-fitted to sum up a coherent or progressive narrative of style.

Within eighteenth-century art, both “baroque” and “classic” styles gained acceptance throughout the century, the former often “corrupted” into the rococo in the early part of the century and subject to eclectic treatments in the middle decades; the latter common in the late-century, pronounced linear clarity of David’s neoclassicism, the sculptor and draughtsman John Flaxman (1755–1826) and others. The terms “classic” and “baroque” derive from the broad classification of styles as outlined in the *Principles of Art History* (first published in German in 1915) by Heinrich Wölfflin (1864–1945). Each of Wölfflin’s style categories may be applied across a broad chronological range. The style label “baroque” may be applied not only to many works in the “Baroque” period of the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but also to works from other periods. Wölfflin characterized the baroque style as consisting of freer, loose brushwork, contrasts of light and shade, dramatic suggestions of diagonal movement and uncertain arrangements of space. The style often incorporated an exuberant abundance of detail. The art of Rubens offers a common example of such tendencies. Wölfflin characterized the “classic” as a combination of a more stable, planimetric composition (i.e. based on a grid of clearly defined horizontal and vertical planes) and an emphasis on line (e.g. clearly outlined figures and buildings) rather than mass: Raphael and Poussin might serve as examples here (Wölfflin, 1950, 14–16). In reality of course, many paintings of the eighteenth and other centuries were more complex stylistically than this duality suggests.

Modernity and the Public Sphere

Opinions vary on the compliance of eighteenth-century art with our own recent conceptions of “modernity.” Social hierarchies, significant due to the continuing dominance of aristocratic patronage and taste; and hierarchies of artistic genres, which placed grand history painting at the top, landscape and still life at the bottom, are often considered to have inhibited

any impulse toward modernity, since they generally engineered the stabilization, rather than evolution, of cultural life. The European Enlightenment, a cultural movement that began in the seventeenth century but peaked in the middle to late decades of the eighteenth, included a compulsion to construct taxonomies and classifications in all fields of knowledge and creativity, and to create encyclopedias and dictionaries. The latter are often credited with “fixing” culture, although in fact such initiatives were linked at the time with ambitions to disseminate and advance knowledge. The Enlightenment’s preoccupation with ordering and clarifying is seen as “holding back” the dramatic breakthroughs in stylistic innovation and individual creative freedom with which, for example, the Romantics and Modernists of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries have become associated (Wrigley, 1993, 313, 353).

Eighteenth-century artists are often seen as being closely directed by the guilds (in the case of the “mechanical,” industrial or decorative arts) or (in the case of the “high” liberal arts of painting and sculpture) prestigious royal academies concerned with the glory of state or monarch. The continuation of slavery, imperialism, religious persecution, the massive movement in land enclosures, the persistence of absolutist monarchies in many countries and of aristocratic government in all, are among those eighteenth-century phenomena seen to indicate a resistance to liberty or liberation of any kind. Canonical art from the century continued to pay homage to antique Greek and Roman history and mythology, even if the stylistic treatment of these subjects varied.

Seen from other perspectives, the century is viewed as the time when progressive Enlightenment ideals such as liberty, progress and a critical attitude to authority; rapid urbanization (especially in Britain and France and, later, Germany); and cosmopolitanism allowed new markets for art to challenge the power of older hierarchies at court and artistic academies (Craske, 1997, 11). Although classical influences remained central, the Enlightenment’s emphasis on scientific method or direct observation of nature (“empiricism”) was increasingly important, particularly in genres other than history painting. “Modernity” is not after all a “simple, agreed upon” concept (Said, 2003 [1978], xiv). The following outlines some of the varied meanings and complexities of the term as applied to the history of eighteenth-century art.

The Enlightenment is often regarded as a progressive influence in social, educational and political terms. It was subject to national variants. In France, for example, there was a much deeper dissatisfaction with the status quo in institutions of government (the Bourbon monarchy, also powerful in Spain) and religion (the Catholic Church), and a focus on the

formulation by a largely aristocratic class of writers of new, abstract ideals relating to liberty and justice. In Britain, where a more tolerant church and a constitutional (Georgian) monarchy facilitated more open discussion of issues by writers from a broader range of social backgrounds, there was often a marked concern with more practical issues of reform. The term “the Enlightenment” has, nevertheless, a broad currency. It is sometimes defined as a chronological period, but is also used to describe a widespread reaction, in many European countries, against prejudice and ignorance (Porter, 2000, 48), and a belief in progress. Thinkers such as John Locke (1632–1704) and Isaac Newton (1643–1727) stressed the importance of knowledge gained through independent reasoning and direct experience:

...God had surely given men powers sufficient to discharge their earthly offices. Herein lay the enormous appeal of Locke’s image of the philosopher as “an Under-Labourer in clearing Ground a little, and in removing some of the Rubbish, that lies in the way to Knowledge”, so as to beat a path for the true “master-builders”.... (Porter, 2000, 60)

The Enlightenment opened up new ways of seeing and thinking, with many of its faithful consciously seeking their own version of “modernity,” forms of knowledge and creativity that relied less on past models and sources of authority and patronage such as royal courts and the Catholic Church, and sought to emulate rather than copy the art of classical antiquity (Porter, 2000, 3–4, 32–33, 47, 52). Nevertheless, certain ingrained hierarchies of value persisted, with classical civilization in particular providing a constant touchstone of value and achievement.

Another familiar narrative concerning eighteenth-century cultural change is that it represented a shift from Enlightenment rationalism, scientific method, objectivity and classicism to Romanticism, with its greater emphasis on subjectivity, feeling, originality, rule-breaking and fantasy. There is some truth in this (Pagden, 2013, 1–18). By the early nineteenth century “Romantic” values were in the ascendant in much European culture. As with style labels, however, these cultural dualities often disintegrate when faced with actual examples of artistic production. Many “Enlightenment” artists sought to be original, exercise their imagination and express the feelings of those they represented or arouse those of their viewers, while many “Romantics” adhered to the Enlightenment values of empirical research, first-hand observation of nature and classicism (Walsh and Lentin, 2004a and 2004b). There was no style of painting unique to or distinctive of either the Enlightenment (Kaufman, 1995, 455) or of Romanticism; nor any consistent differentiation of the stylistic trends of

each movement, even if certain “family resemblances” may be discerned. Arguably, however, both movements contributed to our own understanding of modernity: the first through its dedication to intellectual critique and reasoned principle; the second in its attention to the less controllable workings of the individual mind.

Much art-historical debate on eighteenth-century art in Europe has focused on British and French art, and this is often the case in the present study. In defense of such a bias it is common to cite the pervasive influence of French language, manners and culture in “cultivated” European courts such as those in Berlin, Madrid, St Petersburg and Sweden (Brewer, 1997, 84; Craske, 1997, 19–21; Tite, 2013a, 5; Tite, 2013b, 36–45; Weichsel, 2013, 70–71). Such developments did not go unchallenged, however. Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803), advocate of a distinctively German Gothic tradition, as opposed to the cosmopolitan classicism that held sway, was among those thinkers who felt that distinctive national languages and cultures were necessary, since they represented a *Zeitgeist* that resisted easy translation (Gaiger, 2002, 4–5; Barnard, 2003, 6, 38–40). Royally sponsored academies of art in Paris (founded in 1648) and London (1768) served as models for academies established in many other European cities, the French Académie royale de peinture et de sculpture (Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture, referred to henceforth as Académie royale) spreading its influence to Rome through its annexe at the French Academy there. Rome also served as a meeting point for artists from all over Europe, thus emphasizing the cosmopolitan nature of many developments in eighteenth-century art, especially neoclassicism. In Italy more broadly, French manners and culture served as a model for those wishing to stake a claim to “modern” sophistication (Pasta, 2005, 209).

Royal courts such as those in Madrid, London and Vienna welcomed artists from other countries, thus helping to disperse trends and influences (Tite, 2013a, 6). The Georgian court in Britain initially favored portrait artists from northern Europe and decorative artists from Italy; the court and Royal Academy in Madrid favored French and Italian artists in the early part of the century. The art of Francisco Goya y Lucientes (1746–1828) was, for example, influenced by the work of other nations’ artists whose work he had seen and by cosmopolitan Enlightenment ideals, to which his art is not, however, reducible (Pérez-Sánchez, 1989, xvii–xxv; Luxenberg, 1997, 39–64). In all European courts open to the influence of Enlightenment writers and thinkers, there was a competitive attitude toward keeping up with the vanguard of knowledge. Joshua Reynolds (1723–1792) was a member of societies that brought him into contact with major writers such as Samuel Johnson (1709–84), and Goya frequented

circles where he met leading financiers, lawyers, collectors and enlightened social and political reformists. At the same time, in the second half of the century, European nations began to aspire to France's achievements by establishing or encouraging their own national schools of artists.

Scholarly assessments of the relative "modernity" of eighteenth-century art have proceeded beyond ill-defined notions of openness to change or the progressive, to consider more historically specific factors. Central to any progression toward modernity in this period was the development of a new bourgeois "public" as theorized and described by Jürgen Habermas (born 1929) in his 1962 work *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (*Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit*). This new social grouping gained in numbers and confidence throughout the eighteenth century so that it generated a corpus of critical opinion in cultural affairs located between previously dominant autocratic royal courts, and the realm of private life, as evident, for example, in family life, sociable discussion and private property ownership. An expanding class of professional people merged with or aspired to the lifestyle of the feudal nobility. Encouraged by greater freedom of the press, increasingly popular urban forms of sociability such as the coffee house, tea drinking, the salon (an informal club or private gathering for the educated and culturally aware), learned societies and art markets that offered alternatives to traditional forms of patronage, this section of society was able to assert its taste and opinions in the name of a new form of "civil," "elegant," "polite" or "good" society (Habermas, 1992 [1962], xi–40). Having rehearsed its cultural expertise in the private domain of the family, it achieved the status of a self-empowered audience:

The bourgeois public sphere may be conceived above all as the sphere of private people come together as a public; they soon claimed the public sphere regulated from above against the public authorities themselves, to engage them in a debate over the general rules governing relations in the basically privatized but publicly relevant sphere of commodity exchange and social labour. (Habermas, 1992, 27)

The role of this new public in facilitating cultural and artistic change has been extensively analyzed in recent decades (Crow, 1985, 1–6; Solkin, 1992, 187, 214; Brewer, 1997, 94–95). It exerted its influence through commerce and trade, helping to create an art market in which culture was consciously transformed into a commodity (Solkin, 1993, 1–2, 30; Bindman, 2008, 16). As an audience it was often self-consciously critical; for example, in requiring (especially from the 1760s) as a "commodity"

representations in art of a more sentimental, affective and essentially moralizing view of the (“private”) family and, through portraiture, new forms of social identity (Pointon, 2001, 105–106; Ogée and Meslay, 2006, 25–26). Material acquisitiveness united this expanding art-buying public with the aspirations of traditional aristocratic patrons. At times, the strong moral and reformist imperatives of enlightened professional classes united with a more conservative, aristocratic elitism to contest the (potentially vulgar) modern taste for “luxury” in, for example, decorative art (Brewer, 1997, xxi; Terjanian, 2013, 32).

This new public enjoyed wider opportunities to encounter art, as exhibitions multiplied in formal academies, less formal street displays, private collections and dealers’ shop windows. The central importance of display and the act of viewing to developments in eighteenth-century art and its reception has recently generated a cluster of art-historical studies that stress the role of exhibition visits in “refining” the sensibilities of eighteenth-century viewers in a way that encouraged further development of the civic humanism inherited from the previous century (Bonehill, 2011, 461–470; Solkin, 1993, 2, 30). As forms of social practice, exhibition visits complemented other forms of sociability, such as conversation, in the formation of “polite” taste. The latter was also nourished by an expanding art press, freely expressing its opinions in those nations, such as Britain, largely unaffected by censorship; and expressing them more covertly but effectively elsewhere (Porter, 2000, 28–31; Selwyn, 2000, 181–184). By such means, there arose discourses of art that validated the opinion of the informed layman and disrupted old continuities of thought. The eighteenth century is often identified with the birth of art criticism as a separate and increasingly professionalized genre of writing (Wrigley, 1993, 1–2).

The concept of “discourse” as theorized by Michel Foucault (1926–1984) may be used to cut across the history of art often conceived in terms of a coherent period, movement or theme, or of the *oeuvre* of an individual artist, in order to highlight the specific historical conditions, rules and strategic options that enabled cultural developments (Foucault, 1969, 317–333; Foucault, 1972 [1969], 3–31). A “discourse” is a signaling system (clusters and repetitions of words or types of vocabulary) in language and communication implicitly encoding power structures in contemporary society and culture. Although Foucault was more concerned with its operations in literature and journalism, in art it may be seen to work through the relations established between the viewer, the objects viewed (visual artifacts, motifs and conventions) and any statements or critical judgments made about them. The systems necessary to disperse discourses (known as “discursive formations”) would have included in the eighteenth

century the functioning of institutional teaching models and regulations, techniques of analysis and interpretation, such as those to be found in the academies and the art press, and the correlations between all of these (Foucault, 1972 [1969], 3–42). Discourses of art and taste, and the ways in which people spoke, wrote about or represented themselves and others, were generated by the newly established viewing public discussed earlier. Habermas also has much to say on the subject, describing the gradual liberation of artists from the religious institutions, guilds and royal courts as proceeding hand in hand with widespread critique of the arts and the democratization of taste, no longer the exclusive domain of elite *amateurs* and increasingly the concern of lay and professional critics (Habermas, 1992, 40).

“Modernity” in art may also be defined on a simpler level as an impulse toward new styles; for example, the rococo, which was sometimes seen as a sweetened form of the baroque, and was referred to in the eighteenth century as “the modern taste.” The rococo style popular in the early part of the century suited the newly rich and their Parisian mansions, while presenting a “modern” alternative to classical austerity (Scott, 1995, 233). German courts acquired a lively taste for this French style, as did the Georgian court in Britain, which was heavily influenced through its Hanoverian origins by German taste (Tite, 2013b, 36; Weichsel, 2013, 55–65). The adoption of new subjects in art, especially where modern or contemporary life is included in these, is also interpreted as the result of a modernizing impulse. The *fêtes galantes* or outdoor party scenes created by Jean-Antoine Watteau (1684–1721) offered new, informal and delicate representations of aristocratic leisure that offered an alternative to more formal royal courtly scenes (Berger, 1999, 206). Closer perhaps to our own more recent conceptions of “modernity” lie Hogarth’s satirical prints and painted narrative series, which referred to figures drawn from less elite groups within society and were consciously defined in his own time as “modern moral subjects,” openly conceived to provide a new source of income for the artist:

... a new way of proceeding, viz painting and Engraving *moder[ly] moral subject[s]* a Field unbroke up in any Country or any age. (From Hogarth’s *Analysis of Beauty*, 1753; cited in Riding, 2006b, 73)

Inspired by empirical observation of modern metropolitan life, series such as *The Rake’s Progress* (1733–1735), a visual account of profligacy and ruin, contrasted with grand Catholic paintings from the continent in their reference to the visually familiar. It is perhaps unsurprising that satirical art

should be regarded as topical or “modern.” But “modern life” also became more prominent through the burgeoning taste for genre painting. Toward the end of the century many history painters tackled more recent or contemporary events and employed more naturalistic, less grandiloquent styles (Solkin, 1993, 223–229). In his portraits Hogarth appealed more directly to an actively engaged public for art by producing more naturalistic representations of sitters than had been common before then and, in his conversation pieces, “natural” family gatherings celebrating their more private relationships (Hallett, 2006a, 16–17, 160, 198; Riding, 2006a, 33; 2006b, 73–75). In a marked inversion of the normal hierarchical order placing the grand classical above the naturalistic, he also applied the moral gravity of history paintings to scenes from everyday life (Webster, 1979, 42–46; Craske, 2000, 30–31).

The work of Hogarth and other innovators might be used to argue that it was only by subverting traditional hierarchies (such as those of genre or class) that modernity could be achieved. In adopting market-responsive practices that undermined from the outside the standards of the Royal Academy of Arts in London (referred to henceforth as the Royal Academy), Hogarth is often cited as an emblem of eighteenth-century modernity. However, much innovation (e.g. relating to genre) occurred within the traditional hierarchies and structures of the artistic establishment:

Art-historical accounts of eighteenth and nineteenth-century European art have been overwhelmingly disposed to seek out and celebrate innovation. In such progressive narratives, longer-term continuities of art practice and their associated habits of thought are included only as necessary but *retardataire* evil. In the history of French art, this is nowhere more the case than in relation to the hierarchy of genres.... In a purely chronological sense, the hierarchy of genres might seem to provide reliable witness to academic conservatism because it survived the institutions [the academies] which put it into practice. Yet it only endured because it was an extremely flexible framework which was capable of diverse applications. (Wrigley, 1993, 285)

For Foucault, one of the problems with the idea of “modernity” lies in its being defined in opposition to “tradition,” since such debates seem to insist on the measuring of innovation against that of continuities, matters of “influence,” “development,” “evolution” or some other ongoing cultural “spirit” (Foucault, 1972 [1969], 23–24). In fact, the narratives of art history contained even within a single century cover much messier ground. Developments in western art from the 1760s onwards, within the history

genre, have been seen as so diverse and transformative that they have been described as “hydra-headed”: irreducible to any simple frameworks such as those provided by style labels or unifying narratives of change (Rosenblum, 1967, viii).

It is the intention to highlight in the following chapters, often through sections headed *Questions of modernity*, both the traditional hierarchies (institutional, social and cultural) within which eighteenth-century art was produced and any innovations that took place within and outside them. It is hoped that this will allow the reader to form a critical response to claims concerning the century’s (proto) modernity, while at the same time remaining wary of any neat chronological narratives.

Tradition and Modernity in Art Outside Europe

Due to issues of space the main focus in this book is on western art and artists, including the work they produced in relation to colonial contexts, particularly India, North America and the South Pacific. Reference to the art of other cultures is brief. Those interested in more detailed discussion of the work of native artists in eighteenth-century China, Japan and India will however find more on this rapidly evolving area of scholarship in the website accompanying the book, at www.wiley.com/go/walsh/guidetoeighteenthcenturyart.

Eighteenth-century art produced outside Europe is often regarded as clinging to old traditions in a way that did not happen in Europe itself, where challenges to “authority” of all kinds (cultural, moral, social and political) created the first steps toward a proto-modern art world. “Non-western” nations are often seen as resistant to cultural evolution due to perceived essentialist characteristics of race and nation, or to environmental or historical conditions (Mitchell, 1989, 409). Increasingly, however, trade routes and colonialism brought with them cultural interactions with the wider world that benefited “east” and “west” equally. Sometimes, as with western imports of Chinese porcelain or tea-wares, and of Indian textiles, the material objects imported into and eventually copied by European countries rose to a highly fashionable status and were considered the epitome of modern taste. It has been argued that the British “Chinese taste” in tea-drinking, established since the seventeenth century, and in interior décor, influenced broader social practices and gender roles in eighteenth-century Britain (see Chapter 3).

China, Japan and India were among those countries that introduced innovations in the paintings, porcelain and other objects they produced

for their own internal markets (Krahl, 2005, 214; Fahr-Becker, 2006, 231–233; Krahl and Harrison-Hall, 2009, 16–17, 80–87). Japanese *ukiyo-e* or “floating world” (a metaphor for “carefree life”) prints representing modern life in Tokyo’s pleasure district appealed to the expanding urban markets in the country (Tinios, 2010, 8–9). The visual cultures of each of these countries accommodated, if to varying degrees, some artistic autonomy (Stanley-Baker, 2000, 173–178; Murck, 2005, 342; Fahr-Becker, 2006, 213–225; Hongxing, 2013, 45–46). In China scholar-artists well versed in traditional native styles and subjects valued studies of the humanities and were committed to individual creativity. “Eccentric” and “Individualist” artists working at some distance from court-based academies produced highly unconventional works. Western artistic styles and techniques such as one-point perspective became more familiar to each of these nations, if not widely practiced (Mitter, 2001, 123–124; Chongzheng, 2005, 81; Waley-Cohen, 2005, 180–182; Losty and Roy, 2012, 15–18, 155, 187–195; Hongxing, 2013, 49, 310–313). This was particularly so in China where the Jesuit missionary artist Giuseppe Castiglione (1688–1766) rose to the position of Chief Minister of Imperial Parks and worked collaboratively with Chinese artists. Hybrid east–west styles such as the “western brush mode” in China brought together western techniques in suggesting depth and recession with Chinese brushwork (McCausland, 2013, 49–50).

Scholars have challenged crude polarizations of artistic and cultural “progress” (or lack of it) within and outside Europe. Edward Said, Timothy Mitchell, Dipesh Chakrabarty, Partha Mitter and David Porter are among those who see the association of “non-western” nations with backwardness or static tradition as a distorting, retrospective projection of the west’s recent political dominance onto an earlier age (Porter, 2010, 4). The common phrase “non-western art” itself may be seen to indicate a tendency to measure all achievement against that of the west and to downplay more positive differences between individual cultures. In such characterizations of the world beyond Europe, all the markers of liberalism and modernity began in the west and spread to other lands: industrialization, capitalism, free-thinking and free-acting citizens, an influential public sphere and the rational, scientific and progressive ways of thinking associated with the European Enlightenment (Mitchell, 1989, 409; Clunas, 1999, 134; Porter, 2010, 4–11). Asian art of the eighteenth century is characterized as “archaic” when it refers back explicitly to its own ancient traditions, or in response to its own cultural and political context (Mitter, 2001, 1), while late-eighteenth-century European neoclassicism, though based on the art of ancient Greece and Rome, is often seen as a force for

modernity, political and cultural regeneration (Clunas, 1999, 134–135). The west's incorporation of elements of Chinese and Japanese visual culture has been seen as innovative, whereas the borrowings those Asian countries made from western art have been located in a narrative of belated progress (Clunas, 1999, 136–137).

Some of those who acknowledge differences in the rates of change in artistic cultures within and outside the west point to the inevitability of this given the very different social, political and economic structures involved: conditions were not ripe for industrialization in eighteenth-century China, for example, but this did not constitute a principled objection to modernity (Rawski, 2005, 39–40). China was unifying as a nation after its recent submission to the Manchurians, thus making cultural and political integration a higher priority than the kind of scientific advances, democratic, social and religious reforms prioritized in the western Enlightenment. Others emphasize that western countries had not always set the pace of change. China had developed a sophisticated tradition of painting during the Song dynasty (960–1279 CE), at a time when the “west” was involved in the violence of the crusades. Well ahead of similar (nineteenth-century) developments in Europe, China produced inventive landscape paintings stimulated and validated by its Buddhist traditions of retreat and contemplation, as well as by Daoist and Confucian ideas of nature as an embodiment of human attributes and affairs. Such insights disrupt conventional narratives of a sluggish culture struggling to keep up with the west. Equally, it might be pointed out that prior to the eighteenth century, Chinese trade and interaction with the rest of the world was prolific, in spite of its failure to modernize its political and economic systems. It was unlikely to measure its “progress” in cultural matters by comparison with Britain, which was on the periphery of its trading empire.

It is not possible, of course, to generalize about these west versus “non-west” perspectives, since much depends on individual nations and the ways in which they were governed during the eighteenth century. China is an interesting example because it was never colonized. Those in the west associated it with Orientalist fantasies and actual experience of the country was rare. Many eighteenth-century writers saw it as an example of a society in which philosophy, poetry and all the arts had thrived; it was therefore, at least until the later eighteenth century, a source of envy as much as an emblem of western superiority. Diderot wrote in the article *China* (*Chine*) in the *Encyclopédie* that it was “the most populous and cultivated country in the world.” The perceived reasons for China's prosperity included its own positive contributions to traditions of thought and creativity (Porter, 2010, 6).

Eurocentric narratives of art history are challenged increasingly by alternative viewpoints that see the west, and not the east, as different or “other.” For example, the tensions arising from the western distinction between fine and mechanical arts (see Chapter 1), have never been of great concern in China. Calligraphy is considered the most important art form there, with painting a close second, in part because the former is seen to share many of the attributes (fine brush work, the study of specific traditions) relevant to the latter. Ceramics, textiles, metalwork, lacquerwork, sculpture, painting and calligraphy are regarded as almost equal in status (Clunas, 1999, 121–122). In western scholarship the discipline of material culture studies has done much to stress the importance of all kinds of artifacts, and not just the fine arts, as agents of social practice and value.

If it remains common in scholarship to judge non-colonized lands on the basis of the relative modernity of their cultures, the main preoccupation with regard to colonized lands and peoples has been with the ways in which the land, peoples and lifestyles of the colonized were represented in western art and (principally) by western artists. It has been stated that the notion of empire (both as political construct and as an ideological framework) is central to any study of art from the middle of the eighteenth century to the middle of the twentieth (Barringer, Quilley and Fordham, 2007, 3, 7). Much post-colonial scholarship has also focused on what colonial art reveals about the anxieties, tensions and evolving identities of the colonizers, since many works of art seem to assume a viewer well acquainted with imperial circumstances and (speculatively) with attitudes shaped by these. There are also increasing attempts to study the indigenous cultures of colonized peoples, as the disciplines of anthropology and art history form creative alliances. There is a greater willingness to consider the artifacts made by native peoples as “art” rather than as “crafts,” something more than specimens of archaeological or anthropological investigation. Nevertheless, our post-colonial era continues to focus on black, American Indian, Pacific and Asian peoples as objects of representation, partly as a means of understanding previous constructions of racial identity and the “western” lens through which they were viewed.

France and Britain were the dominant colonial powers in the eighteenth century, with the latter gaining the leading role throughout the century as France became more absorbed by power struggles within Europe. These two countries, along with the Netherlands, had established many colonies, dominions, protectorates and mandate territories throughout the seventeenth century, in addition to trading posts that focused (initially at least) on commerce rather than conquest or rule. The Dutch presence in South Africa fueled the print production and trade in most of Africa (Bindman,

Ford and Weston, 2011, 213). Portugal and Spain already had well-established colonial territories in South America. Struggles among European nations over political or commercial dominance occurred in North America, the Caribbean, Africa, India and the East Indies, with a view to securing lucrative trade in sugar, coffee and tobacco (the Caribbean), furs (Canada), spices (the East Indies) and, most controversially, through trading posts on the west coast of Africa, the acquisition of slave labor exported to the Caribbean to work the sugar and tobacco plantations. The main struggles occurred between France and Britain, and between France and the Netherlands: the accession to the British throne of the Dutch monarch William of Orange (who reigned in Britain 1689–1702) had put an end to previous Anglo-Dutch conflict. Hostilities and the fight for territories resumed as the Netherlands fell to France in 1795 and Britain took over most Dutch colonies.

The race to establish colonial power was linked with conflicts in Europe seeking to assert economic and political dominance through changing alliances. A series of major wars, the War of the Austrian Succession (1740–1748), the Seven Years War (1756–1763) and the American Revolutionary War (1775–1783) and their ensuing treaties, led to a series of changes to the governorship of many colonized lands. Britain became the dominant power in India and, until the American Revolution, which established American independence, in North America, the Caribbean and Canada. As America receded from its grasp, Britain focused on its colonial presence in India, the Pacific and Africa. In 1788, after the discovery by James Cook (1728–1779) in 1770 of the east coast of Australia, Britain also established a penal colony at Botany Bay, where wool and gold were valuable commodities. Trading companies were set up to regulate and effectively abolish domestic commercial competition in overseas trade. The English East India Company (from 1707, following the union with Scotland, the British East India Company) had been established in 1600 by Queen Elizabeth I (reigned 1558–1603) and granted a British monopoly in trade with the east, woolen and silk textiles and spices being the main imported commodities. The Company also became involved in the slave trade. This was followed in 1602 by the establishment of the Dutch East India Company; in 1621 by the Dutch West India Company; and in 1664 by the French East India Company. In the same year the French West India Company was founded and granted the French monopoly on the slave trade between Africa (mainly Senegal) and the West Indies.

These trading companies were massive organizations, often incorporating military forces and complex, hierarchical and administrative structures, that financed the shipment of goods from established trading posts in the