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IMAGE MATTERS*

Men at work: art and labour in Victorian Britain. By Tim Barringer. New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press, 2005. Pp. xi + 379. ISBN 0-300-10380-8. £40.00.

The sale of the late king's goods: Charles I and his art collection. By Jerry Brotton. London: Macmillan, 2006. Pp. vi + 436. ISBN 13: 978-14050-4152-2 and 10: 1-4050-4152-8. £25.00.

City of laughter: sex and satire in eighteenth-century London. By Vic Gatrell. London: Atlantic Books, 2006. Pp. xxiii + 696. ISBN 10: 1-84354-321-4 and 13: 978-1-84354-321-3 (hbk) £30.00; 10: 1-84354-322-2 and 13: 987-1-84354-322-0 (pbk) £19.99.

Defining John Bull: political caricature and national identity in late Georgian England. By Tamara L. Hunt. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003. Pp. xiii + 452. ISBN 1-84014-268-5. £62.50.

The satirical gaze: prints of women in late eighteenth-century England. By Cindy McCreery. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004. Pp. xviii + 281. ISBN 0-19-926756-1. £61.00.

Pre-modernism: art-world change and American culture from the Civil War to the Armoury Show. By J. M. Mancini. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005. Pp. 256. ISBN 0-691-11813-2. £29.95.

Panorama of the Enlightenment. By Dorinda Outram. London: Thames and Hudson, 2006. Pp. 320. ISBN 13: 978-0-500-25131-7 and 10: 0-500-25131-2. £29.95.

It has become a commonplace to invoke 'the linguistic turn', now followed, it seems, by 'the visual turn' or 'the pictorial turn'. In one sense these phrases that slip so readily off tongue and pen do no more than recognize the indisputable facts that academic styles change, that there is fashion too in the life of the mind. The discipline of history, with all its variety, is no exception. The worlds of visual and material culture, in which many fields are displaying conspicuous interest, are, however, so varied, and may be brought into historical thinking in such diverse ways that a phrase such as 'the visual turn' seems unhelpful and frankly simplistic. The existing scholarship on the vast array of items and issues covered by the terms 'visual culture' and 'material culture' is correspondingly diverse.[1] For many centuries the historically minded have been curious about objects and images, about their capacity to bear witness to times past. Determining what is new in the current enthusiasm for 'illustrated histories' is a considerable challenge.

This review article examines seven books all of which use visual and/or material sources, if with strikingly diversity. All are illustrated. There are a number of different

* I thank Matthew Bailey, Arthur Burns, Michael Bury, David Peters Corbett, Elizabeth Cowling, Kenneth Fincham, Steve Smith, and anonymous referees for their help. I have drawn upon ideas presented to a number of seminars over the last two years – I am grateful to participants for their comments. They are developed at greater length in *The Look of the Past* (Cambridge, forthcoming).

[1] Something of the current interest in these areas may be gauged from recently founded journals such as *Journal of Material Culture*, 1996 on, and *Visual Culture in Britain*, 2000 on.

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ways in which we can conceptualize such use. Pictures in a publication may be primarily decorative, they may be referred to but not analysed in any depth, and they may, more rarely in works of history, lie at the very heart of the work's intellectual project. Readers respond to the text, reproduced images, and captions and the relationships between them. Thus it is necessary to think about these volumes as artefacts and to examine carefully the ways in which they present the sources they deploy since these shape the reading experience. These are, for sure, rhetorical matters, but they are also practical and mundane ones – weight of paper, page size and layout, selection and size of reproduced images, captions and acknowledgements, for example. Behind these issues lie complex relationships between authors, publishers, picture libraries, museums and galleries, collectors and owners of picture rights. Underneath all that is money – profits and the costs of reproducing pictures – a sphere about which it is hard to obtain sound information. My comments are thus based on my own experience, what other authors tell me, and also on discussions with people directly involved with negotiating rights to use and reproduce pictures, and with the publication of illustrated books.

I start by trying to establish what historians are doing in using and writing about visual and material sources or, to be more precise, how what they are doing might be most effectively expressed in published form. I then deal with the books in the chronological order of the materials and historical problems they tackle. Finally, I draw the threads together in a few words. The position underpinning the article is that historians do well to consider and to integrate a wide range of evidence, to present it accurately and scrupulously, to explore the fresh insights that visual and material sources may afford, and to encourage their readers, whether inside or outside scholarly communities, to engage with original objects and images themselves.

It is common for scholars from a number of disciplines to speak of 'reading' images and objects, and to treat them as (sometimes) possessing 'messages', which contemporary audiences and later interpreters can also 'read'. This formulation reveals little of the distinctive types of operation involved in really looking at items of visual and material culture. Most non-textual sources are indeed connected to texts but in diverse and complex ways. Many incorporate words. However, the manner in which they are viewed is not and cannot be identical to the act of reading. Past visual logics need to be given their due. It follows that historians should consider the role of audiences, sometimes generations of diverse audiences, however difficult this is. It also follows that contexts of production and display need to be taken into account, and that includes the theoretical and critical frameworks within which items are made and viewed.

Seeing a reproduction in a publication or on a website is a very, very poor substitute for engaging with the real thing, and distortions of scale, colour, and texture are inevitable. This situation requires historians to provide certain kinds of guidance for their readers. In art-historical publications it is customary to give routinely details such as dimensions, medium, and location if known and in the public domain. Ownership is sometimes kept confidential for security reasons. Because the complete image is such a major component in responses to and interpretations of works of art, it is always necessary to indicate whether the published image is only a detail. When it comes to prints, since woodcuts, etchings, aquatints, lithographs, and so on look different and have distinct modes of production, it is conventional to be explicit about which type of print is at issue. Furthermore, objects gather meanings over their lifetime, a form of value that is frequently translated into money. This is one of many reasons why provenance is such an important matter.

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In addition, few paintings are reproduced in their frames, thereby removing another important material layer.[2] When their setting has dramatically changed – moving an altarpiece to a museum is an obvious example – it is useful to remind non-specialists of the fact. Many two-dimensional works are no longer in their original frames, mounts, or location; just as many have gathered titles long after production. Giving readers information and insights on such matters greatly extends their capacity to appreciate the richness of artefacts. Thus, ideally publications take account of these points; they certainly should indicate how to gain access to the works they discuss, assuming these are available to the public. Technological change has generated a quite false impression that most people are now more adept at visual interpretation than ever before. The reproduced image is, after all, flat, both literally and metaphorically; restoring depth is the primary task of historians who work with images and objects.

We might extend the points already made and say that the infrastructures of art and design are important. The manner in which works are produced, both the techniques and the social relations, are revealing, as are training, education, markets, and institutions. All of these areas offer windows on to the human encounters through which artefacts are made, and then used, exchanged, and displayed; they provide bridges between what are sometimes seen as specialized domains and other arenas with which historians are more familiar. Visual and material culture covers a very great deal. All the books under review, however, deal with items that can come under the more restricted rubric 'art'. The term is hardly unproblematic: I use it here to cover whatever was designated as such in the past and/or subsequently. Yet the term itself has a complex history, as distinctions between fine and decorative arts reveal. For the most part the works discussed here are concerned with paintings and prints, and to a lesser extent with sculpture and architecture. 'Art', in fact, refers to a stunning range of phenomena – collecting as well as making, satires, and celebrations, mass production as well as unique items, routine copying and original conceptions, manual work and imaginative processes. One worthwhile goal is not just a historiography that can deftly integrate items of visual and material culture into larger accounts, but one that brings together all those elements that 'art' evokes. Thus historians can only benefit from closer acquaintance with those fields that place the visual arts and material culture centre stage.

At the beginning of this review I mentioned 'illustrated histories', a type of publication Michael Baxandall was particularly scathing about: 'One will not approach the paintings on the philistine level of the illustrated social history, on the look out for illustrations of "a Renaissance merchant riding to market" and so on.'[3] Just this genre seems to be flourishing at the moment, so it is vital to be clear what it consists of. The very notion of illustration is revealing. It suggests an extension to an already established point. It further suggests decoration and visual pleasure, a kind of delight to be derived from the book in question. It is worth asking a deceptively simple question – what are illustrations for? The

[2] Jacob Simon, *The art of the picture frame: artists, patrons and the framing of portraits in Britain* (London, 1996).

[3] Michael Baxandall, *Painting and experience in fifteenth century Italy* (revised edn, Oxford, 1988), p. 152. Euan Cameron's edited volume, *Early modern Europe an Oxford history* (Oxford, 1999), falls into just this trap, see for example, p. 253, where a picture is captioned 'Peasant market gardeners set off to market … ' with no reference to the artist. The image turns out to be by Gainsborough (p. xi), no date, size, or medium is given. For the complexities of Gainsborough's rural scenes see John Barrell, *The dark side of the landscape: the rural poor in English painting, 1730–1840* (Cambridge, 1980).

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answer must depend on the historical arguments to which they should, ideally, bear an intimate relationship. Such intimacy comes in a number of forms, as indeed do the types of writing about the past that engage with images and objects. I aspire to be precise about the range of historical problems, interpretative strategies, styles of conceptualization, and genres of writing that each book adopts.

The sale of the late king's goods by Jerry Brotton relates the stories of Charles I, of those around him who participated in his art collecting, and of the art works themselves. The narrative begins with the court of James I and continues after Charles's execution, with the sale and then partial reassembly of the collection with the restoration of his son in 1660. One of Brotton's goals is to demonstrate the inter-connections between art and politics. Three distinct types of claims are involved: art was an internationally recognized part of the elaboration of majesty; Charles's own art collecting was inseparable from his political role, aspirations, and activities; others involved in making, giving, and selling art were, in those very acts, being political, hence the diplomatic ventures of figures such as Rubens were all of a piece with a culture in which art and politics were intertwined. Charles I, as collector, patron, and sitter, is a familiar figure both to historians and art historians. Brotton, however, provides a detailed account of the behind the scenes dealings, lies, bluffs, and counterbluffs involved in buying or acquiring specific works. As a result the middle men come into their own, and the range of them is quite striking. It is astonishing the amount of travelling some of the works of art undertook, the number of times they changed hands, the elaborate nature of the bargaining, and the large sums involved.

Thus Brotton conveys something of the texture of the European art worlds of the seventeenth century. But Charles and his collection must be the main attraction. Brotton describes Charles's art education and growing enthusiasm for the fine arts, which inevitably involves a fair amount of speculation. For example, during his visit to Madrid, Charles is described as a rather repressed and sexually immature young man, who is excited by erotic pictures. During his reign he is presented as eager, even a touch desperate for images to shore up his kingship. There can be little doubt that, like other monarchs, he was fully aware of the need for a visual aura. But his character is mostly presented in a fairly simplistic, and unattractive, way. This is in marked contrast to other historians, such as Richard Cust, who are at pains to present a more complex picture of a man whose most appealing side was arguably manifested in his relationships with his wife and children.[4]

Some of the works Charles acquired are illustrated in the book, in three inserts of colour plates. Although these are numbered, the text does not refer to them. Each image has a short caption, generally a brief commentary. For example, '20. Paolo Veronese's *Mars and Venus United by Love*. Veronese was not one of Charles's favourite artists, but the painting was another sexually and politically charged trophy from the Madrid visit.' This sits beside a small colour reproduction 10 centimetres high and just under 8 wide, which gives a fair impression of the canvas. In the list of illustrations at the front, it says simply '20. Paolo Veronese, *Mars and Venus United by Love*'. Under the *Picture Acknowledgements* we read 'National Gallery of Scotland – 20.' This is helpful, since if the image had come from a picture library, a further search might be required. To have dimensions and date of composition would be even better. The picture is mentioned twice in the text. It is described as a 'lush, erotic painting … Just as Mars slips off Venus's dress to reveal her breasts, Cupid interrupts the amorous liaison, toppling backwards against his mother in an

[4] Richard Cust, *Charles I: a political life* (Harlow, 2006), esp. pp. 10–30, 148–71, 466–74.

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attempt to escape from the little dog' (p. 103). Brotton then suggests that as an 'erotically charged classical scene', it 'undoubtedly appealed' to Charles. Later we are given the bare facts about its sale in 1650. I was able to see the picture while writing this review. Just as striking is the way Cupid's pudgy hand grasps his mother's arm, his startled look at the lapdog, and the tender way Venus looks down at him. Might Charles have found these features appealing?

To have more than forty-five images is useful, although it is desirable to tie plates and text together systematically. These really are illustrations, they loosely extend what is written, even if they occasionally do so in ways that go beyond the evidence: '12. Abraham van der Doort, Keeper of the Cabinet Room at St James's. The strain of his position shows in his face, and even anticipates his suicide, which took place after he allegedly lost items from the collection.' While such projection is an integral part of human experience, historians need to keep it in check. In the collections of the National Portrait Gallery, London, the portrait measures 483 by 438 mm, and is according to their website 'possibly after William Dobson'.[5] Brotton omits 'possibly' in the list of illustrations. Some might say that these matters – the wording of captions and providing full information about images – are details that can safely be omitted in a book designed for wide audiences that focuses on collecting and art markets. Since Brotton mentions the places where pictures were hung, when known, their size is certainly important. Furthermore, he wants to link the content of pictures with Charles's preferences, to which they stand as testimony. Thus, even if speculation is inevitably involved, precision about the art works themselves is highly desirable – such precision is simply the equivalent of an accurate footnote. It also enables writers and readers to reflect more effectively upon the significance of the art in question.

In recent times, scholarly interest in collecting has grown markedly, nurtured by the work of figures such as Francis Haskell, who worked on Charles's collections among many other topics.[6] Yet there is still a tendency to explain the activity in terms of pop psychology – according to Brotton, 'Like most monarchs, [Charles] was a deeply insecure ruler, but his particular hopes and fears uniquely predisposed him to invest his time and money in paintings' (p. 10). Brotton discusses the elaborate networks that underpinned the acquisition of art, which included artists, writers, thinkers, courtiers, entrepreneurs, and so on. Relationships between the people involved had many dimensions, as the book suggests, and hence 'insecurity' seems to reduce unnecessarily what such collecting entailed. Details about financial transactions are helpfully included when known. The economics of collecting is a topic of vast importance; it forms one point of entry into a subject that involves people, buildings, and possessions. Yet speaking in detail and convincingly about these matters is hard. In discussing the sale, Brotton tells us that 'ordinary people' saw these objects for the first time. How can this be true when servants and retainers would have been as familiar with them as their owners? Do we really buy into a simple account of Protestant hostility towards the visual arts, when there is so much evidence to the contrary?[7] The history of collections remains an important and difficult field precisely because explaining its social practices demands a sophisticated model of human nature.

[5] Details of all works in the Primary Collection may be found on the website: www.npg.org.uk

[6] *Journal of the History of Collections*, 1989 on; Francis Haskell, *The ephemeral museum: old master paintings and the rise of the art exhibition* (New Haven, CT, and London, 2000).

[7] For example, Brotton makes the 'ordinary people' point on pp. 219, 258, 267; and assumes Protestant hostility to art on pp. 11, 232, 236.

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The sale of the late king's goods ends in the 1660s, by which time a significant number of works from Charles's collection had been returned. In 1660 the Royal Society was founded – the moment marks a major turning point in the pursuit of natural knowledge in Britain. Early Fellows of the Society were also collectors; they collected objects, books and manuscripts, ideas, facts, and sayings, and some of them feature in Brotton's account. Although there is little consensus on when the Enlightenment may be said to begin, some time around the middle of the seventeenth century is as good a time as any. Descartes died in 1650, while exceptional intellects, such as Isaac Newton and John Locke, flowered in the following decades. The Enlightenment has always been notoriously tricky to pin down both temporally and spatially, while precisely what kind of historical phenomenon the Enlightenment was remains not only elusive but fiercely debated. For Jonathan Israel, as the bracing postscript to *Enlightenment contested* makes clear, it is about a set of core claims that combine philosophical premises with political-cum-ethical values.[8] For many commentators ideas lie at the heart of the phenomenon called 'the Enlightenment'; the relationship between ideas and visual culture is at best complicated and at worst entirely problematic. Thus it might seem odd to produce a coffee table book about the Enlightenment, but this is the best term to describe Outram's lavishly illustrated work, which bears some affinities with her earlier book, *The Enlightenment*, designed for students. Similar themes come to the fore in both cases, such as the roles of women, the importance of science and medicine, and an emphasis on the Enlightenment as a global phenomenon. She reuses the brief biographies from the textbook in the later one, adding more names, some of which only feature in this section.

The opening of *Panorama of the Enlightenment* by Dorinda Outram is indeed striking. 'This book', the preface begins, 'aims to create a friendship between its readers and the complex set of ideas and habits which we call the Enlightenment' (p. 7). Ironically, this is one of the least user-friendly books I have ever read and used. Where the responsibility for this lies is unclear, but I suspect the publisher and designer must take much of it. The volume contains many illustrations, with most openings containing between two and four images. As the word 'panorama' implies, the pictures are central, and Outram affirms this in the preface when she suggests, 'every picture may be seen as a commentary on the text'. Indeed, the captions are sometimes unusually long, and could be seen as bridges between the text and its beautiful illustrations. They are beautiful in that they are attractive, of high quality, and depict a wide range of items of considerable interest for those who find the long eighteenth century fascinating. They are also frustrating. Captions frequently fail to mention artists, dates, and media. In some cases it is impossible to know what one is looking at or where the original may be seen. It is hard for an illustration to act as a commentary when readers do not know what they are seeing, its size, maker, materials, or date of composition. Information on artists and materials is given sporadically. Furthermore, the 'sources of illustrations' list on p. 317 offers further problems. To find out anything further about a picture, one notes the page it is on, turns to page 317, and then runs down the list, which is in alphabetical order by place (mostly) and then by institution, in search of that particular page number – a tiresome and irritating procedure, which does not always yield results since some page numbers are simply not there.[9] Many images come

[8] Jonathan Israel, *Enlightenment contested*: *philosophy, modernity, and the emancipation of man* (Oxford, 2006), pp. 863–71; his eight 'cardinal points' that characterize the radical Enlightenment are listed on p. 866.

[9] For example, I was unable to find information for images on the following pages: 132, 184, 238–9, 252.

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from two picture libraries, one of which, mentioned below, is not searchable by private individuals. The other, the Bridgeman Art Library, is but is not straightforward for novices to use. It is perfectly acceptable to use picture libraries, although they generally charge more than the owners. But the credit goes to the picture library rather than to a place where the object in question can be viewed, although there is nothing to stop authors and publishers giving additional information. Thus *Panorama* gives the impression that readers are supposed to revel uncritically in the illustrations rather than engage critically with them on the basis of what they actually represent.

In section 4 on the global Enlightenment, Outram uses a portrait by Sir Joshua Reynolds, although he is nowhere credited, in the City of York Art Gallery, which is not mentioned either. It depicts a man – John Foote, named only as Captain Foote in the caption on page 132 – in exquisite Indian clothes, including a gown of white muslin heavily embroidered in soft greens, browns, reds, and yellows. The most obvious motifs are sprigs of flowers. According to the short caption he 'cuts an imposing figure in a turban and Indian clothing'. He is also the occasion for viewers to marvel at the beauty of Indian handiwork. Since the image comes from the Bridgeman, and the artist is not given, it would require some research to track it down. This portrait is significant because it complicates so effectively easy assumptions about both masculinity and 'otherness' in the period. It was painted in 1761, and measures 122·2 × 99 cm.[10]

The difficulty of following up illustrations in the book is not confined to this example. Nearly thirty images come from a source – Archiv für Kunst und Geschichte, London – to which private individuals may not gain access. Other captions are misleading. Consider, for instance, an illustration on page 17, which forms part of a picture essay, 'Archetypes of the Enlightenment'. There are a number of such essays, which, in the author's words, 'come in a rather random way within the chapters' (p. 7). One of the archetypes, the Bluestocking, is illustrated by an oval portrait, clearly a miniature, since it is set in a metal frame with a small hanging loop.[11] According to the extended caption this is Lady Mary Wortley Montagu by Godfrey Kneller. But according to the authoritative work on Kneller his portrait of her, executed 1715–20, measures 36 inches by 26 and is at Yale.[12] This image too comes from the Bridgeman, but did not appear when a search was conducted using Kneller as a keyword, although other portraits by him did. There is a much later miniature of her by Christian Zincke, based on the Kneller and perhaps this is what is illustrated.[13] Without more research I cannot be sure. The design of *Panorama* is fussy, especially on openings where text, captions, and images compete for attention. A book that purports to take its own visual dimensions, as well as objects and images from the past, seriously should be able to do a lot better than this.

I indicated earlier that rendering the Enlightenment visual was a huge challenge. Outram does this in part by including a lot of portraits, although these are rather less transparent than she indicates. As in many illustrated books the entire way portraits are used implies that they give access to the people they depict. Outram suggests that 'portraits

[10] David Mannings, *Sir Joshua Reynolds: a complete catalogue of his paintings* (New Haven, CT, and London, 2000), I, text, p. 198.

[11] On bluestockings see Elizabeth Eger and Lucy Peltz, *Brilliant women: eighteenth-century bluestockings* (London, 2007).

[12] J. Douglas Stewart, *Sir Godfrey Kneller and the English baroque portrait* (Oxford, 1983), p. 141.

[13] Isobel Grundy, *Lady Mary Wortley Montagu* (Oxford, 1999), pp. 365 and 381; unfortunately the miniature is not illustrated.

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allow the reader to guess at the character of the main personalities' (p. 15). In fact, by virtue of the artist's input and negotiations between those involved in the production of the likeness, they invite viewers to respond in certain ways. They shape but never fully determine such reactions. The mediations are elaborate. Outram goes further, however: 'each figure in a portrait represented not only a figure for emulation, but also a potential answer to a particular predicament' (p. 16). Surely not. Some portraits could be turned into objects for emulation for some viewers in particular circumstances – cultural effort was necessarily involved – but how they could answer specific questions remains unclear. Portraits are complex fabrications, and it is because artists play such a central role that it is unforgivable not to name them if known. There are also prints, books, pieces of porcelain, theatre designs, wax models, buildings, and much more from all over Europe and North America in *Panorama*. If it were easier to follow up such items, this work would provide a useful point of entry into an historical phenomenon of huge significance. Since the visual and material aspects of the Enlightenment have been relatively neglected, there are great opportunities here.

Outram's book invites comparison with the Enlightenment Gallery in the King's Library at the British Museum, opened in 2003, which, curiously, is omitted from 'Enlightenment Places' (pp. 313–14), and with the volumes published to celebrate its opening.[14] Her project starts not with objects and images collected at the time, as the Museum does, but with the phenomenon of the Enlightenment itself and the challenge of making that accessible to a wide readership. She responds to that challenge with the text as well as the illustrations, but it is difficult to infer the level and type of audience the book is aimed at. On the one hand it explains that David was 'the famous French artist', and on the other uses words such as 'dialectics' (pp. 10 and 19). It is a good idea to end the work with an epilogue on the Enlightenment's legacy (pp. 278–303), since this is a topic of current discussion. The work includes materials from and insights into four centuries. But it is the eighteenth century that is central, and given the book's overall theme, it is hardly surprising that print culture looms large.

If there is a category of art that has a peculiar and privileged relationship to the long eighteenth century, and especially in Britain, it is indeed the print and above all the satirical print, described by Mark Hallett as 'a distinct and venerable branch of print making, in which an eclectic range of pictorial and textual materials are mixed together in order to make acidic and often humorous commentaries on social or political life'.[15] Different kinds of print existed in the period – for example, those based on paintings and those that were not – as well as prints of varying sizes, quality, and media.[16] The satirical print holds a special appeal for historians because it appears, if I may put it this way, outward looking, in responding to current events and gossip and in providing, in the often copious wording, references that help situate it. Even if Derek Jarrett's confidence that Hogarth provides a window on to his world seems epistemologically naïve, many historians

[14] Kim Sloan, ed., *Enlightenment: discovering the world in the eighteenth century* (London, 2003), which is extensively illustrated with 263 images and intended for a broad readership, and R. G. W. Anderson et al., eds, *Enlightening the British: knowledge, discovery and the museum in the eighteenth century* (London, 2004), which is based upon a conference and contains 89 illustrations.

[15] Mark Hallet, 'James Gillray and the language of graphic satire', in Richard Godfrey, ed., *James Gillray: the art of caricature* (London, 2001), p. 23.

[16] Antony Griffiths, *Prints and printmaking: an introduction to the history and techniques* (London, 1980), is useful; see also Tim Clayton, *The English print, 1688–1802* (New Haven, CT, and London, 1997).

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remain convinced that eighteenth-century prints are privileged, and straightforward sources.[17] Like all evidence, they naturally need to be treated with care, and often work at several distinct levels at once. Historically minded art historians and literary critics have been doing important work on prints for some time now. They have been especially attentive to their internal complexities, and to their relationships with other images, scenes, and viewing practices. Furthermore, the status of those who made prints seems to be increasing. Widely esteemed artists who were also print makers – Rembrandt, Hogarth, and Whistler for instance – have long enjoyed recognition, but those who primarily earned their living in this way have, with the exception of figures such as Gillray, a more fragile hold on public and scholarly interest.[18] While historians should be sceptical about and independent of aesthetic hierarchies, any shifts within them are significant in that they bring with them the attention of curators, museums, collectors, and audiences.

Given the complexities of prints – both verbal and visual – works that discuss them are peculiarly dependent upon the quality of illustrations if readers are to appreciate precisely how they work. Tamara Hunt's 2003 book, *Defining John Bull*, follows lines that will certainly be familiar to historians of the period in the ways she uses satirical prints to trace political shifts. Unfortunately, she has been exceptionally poorly served by her publishers, who have provided illustrations of unusually poor quality. They lack crispness, have an ugly black line drawn around their edges and are sometimes not aligned on a page (top of p. 218 for example). Some are so small as to be illegible. For example, on page 219 there are four small illustrations; each one is approximately one and half inches wide and two and half high. The caption below them runs along the page and is one and a half inches deep. Might the pictures have been bigger and the caption shorter? Since satirical prints were generally hand-coloured, they are much easier to appreciate if reproduced in colour, especially when the image is small. Artists and publishers of prints are rarely provided in Hunt's book; they are not given in either the list of illustrations at the front (pp. x–xii) or in the index of caricatures at the back (pp. 426–37).

Hunt is emphatic about the value of caricatures for historians; they 'figure as the primary – and in many cases, the only – contemporary visual record of events' (p. 2). Her thesis is that 'caricature produced during the reign of George III came to visually express new concepts of Britishness' (p. 22). For her they *reflect* public opinion: 'over the course of George III's reign, caricatures indicate that the public's view of the British polity changed dramatically' (p. 230). While there manifestly are relationships between caricature and 'the public', they are surely considerably more mediated than Hunt allows. Rather than exploring such mediations, Hunt declares that 'taste and aesthetics are merely the reflection of public mentality, desires, ideals, and aesthetic sensibilities' (p. 299). Thus her monograph uses caricature because it provides, allegedly, direct access to phenomena such as public opinion. Yet the people – artists and publishers – who made graphic satires but are

[17] Derek Jarrett, *England in the age of Hogarth* (London, 1974): 'Nobody saw these things more clearly than Hogarth and it was for this reason that Englishmen continued to gaze, for many years after his death, into the mirror he had held up to them' (p. 11).

[18] Exemplary works include Michael Bury, *The print in Italy: 1550–1620* (London, 2001), who pays attention to the operations and processes of printmaking, the types of people who published prints, and printmaking as a business, and David Alexander on Richard Newton (1777–98), whose career was tragically short. He provides transcriptions of the wording on all the plates, pp. 115–39: *Richard Newton and English caricature in the 1790s* (Manchester, 1998).

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not routinely named, were individuals, whose distinctive types of agency, and audiences, need to be explored.

Hunt touches on a number of important and intriguing issues, such as the relationships between caricatures and portraits, strategies for suppressing offensive prints, and the development of a different aesthetic in the late 1820s that was hostile to caricature. She attributes the nineteenth-century change to middle-class worries about popular radicalism, to broad concerns about revolutionary politics, and to the importance of respectability. Cindy McCreery, in a book published the following year, also detects changes in the same period, away from satire and towards sentiment (p. 255). Her focus is rather different from Hunt's and she covers a shorter period of time, although she agrees that prints 'can tell us things that other sources cannot' (p. 6). Based on an Oxford doctorate, *The satirical gaze* is a thoughtful exploration of women as the subject, that is to say, the object of satire. Like others working in this area, she is building on recent scholarship by Diana Donald and Mark Hallett among others.[19] Her book contains eighty-seven illustrations, of superior quality to those in *Defining John Bull*. Both her captions and the 'List of Figures' (pp. xii–xvii) are informative, although neither provides size.

McCreery organizes her work in an interesting, and successful, way, by taking the principal female roles that were satirized and dealing with them each in turn: prostitutes and market vendors, actresses, writers and women who participated in politics, wives, mothers, and old women. The first chapter on the London art market sets the scene most effectively by discussing those involved in making and selling prints, how the prints themselves were used, by whom they were viewed, and possible reactions to them. Some of the prints she considers are well known and often reproduced, others have been less discussed and it is good to have them drawn to our attention. She always stresses the range of responses to women that the prints represent, and is attentive to the visual devices used for making comments about them. In a telling remark in the conclusion she notes that however much she was satirized, the duchess of Devonshire is never portrayed as ugly (p. 253). Rather than presenting the satires as reflecting a homogenized public opinion, McCreery explores them as an integral part of a wide commentary on women. One image in particular stood out because it is surprising and puzzling, and therefore a challenge to historians – *Indecency*, 1799 by Isaac Cruikshank (p. 72). It depicts a squatting prostitute urinating in the street and swearing at the viewer. McCreery uses it to explore both the maker's perspective on prostitution and changing views about the public behaviour of women. In addressing spectators directly and aggressively, the print is unusual – it draws the audience in and by that token implicates them in the scene it depicts. Vic Gatrell's lavishly illustrated book, *City of Laughter*, also includes the plate, in colour (fig. 175); for him it 'pointlessly shows a St Giles woman urinating in public' (p. 377).

City of laughter examines a number of the themes, issues, and images that appear in Hunt's and McCreery's books. However, his publishers have provided illustrations in colour, although some are a bit on the small size to appreciate all the details. One notable respect in which Gatrell's book differs from theirs is his evident relish for his subject matter, as chapter titles such as 'Lady Worsley's bottom' and 'Bums, farts and other transgressions'

[19] Diana Donald, *The age of caricature: satirical prints in the reign of George III* (New Haven, CT, and London, 1996); Mark Hallett, *Spectacle of difference: graphic satire in the age of Hogarth* (New Haven, CT, and London, 1999); McCreery's work invites comparison with Sophie Carter's book, also based on a doctorate and published in the same year: *Purchasing power: representing prostitution in eighteenth-century English popular print culture* (Aldershot, 2004), which focuses on London.

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reveal. If the book has a main protagonist it is London itself – the people, their goings on, the places, shops and streets, protests, and entertainments are celebrated in a manner reminiscent of the late Roy Porter. The idea that 'satirical prints were knitted deeply into metropolitan cultures' is compelling (p. 210).[20] Yet there are other major protagonists in the book. Gatrell's admiration for Gillray and Rowlandson comes across most vividly. Figures depicted in satires and contemporary commentators also recur in a manner indicative of the author's pleasure in his materials. The man who became George IV naturally features prominently, as do poor Lady Worsley and, of course, James Boswell. Gatrell too mounts an enthusiastic defence of satirical prints as a source for historians: 'the sources that best illuminate these indecorous mindsets' (p. 9); 'they uniquely caught the fleeting moment and transient sensation' (p. 213). 'There exists no other artefact that reveals so graphically how their purchasers thought about and imagined their world' (p. 212). Many of those who work on patronage and the consumption of artefacts feel a similar conviction and commitment to their sources.

The need for deft handling is acknowledged: 'although the graphic satires' relation to reality was skewed by fantasy and illusion, they remain invaluable cultural barometers' (p. 11). 'The prints had their limitations. They held up their mirrors to Londoners primarily' (p. 231). Barometers are measuring instruments, mirrors reflect back what is in front of them. Prints, like all forms of art, are mediations, their makers active mediators. Matching the complexities of production are those of reception. While Gatrell says 'the question will probably never be settled what [women] made of' sentiments that were hostile to them (p. 376), he assures us they 'perused [prints] unsqueamishly' (p. 386). He ends the chapter by remarking on 'the *fact* that many [women] would find the most vicious slanders of other women gratifying' (my emphasis, p. 387). He may well be right; I am not sure how we might make a judgement on the matter. He is certainly correct to encourage historians to consider 'malice as a social force', but it is best to be open about the speculations involved in assessing responses.

Gatrell's project is also designed to give humour and laughter a more prominent place in historical practice. The conviction has been growing for some time that the history of humour deserved more attention. While it is an intriguing and enchanting idea, it is also exceptionally difficult to work with. How is it possible to distinguish between humour that is about 'feeling good about life' (p. 41) and that which is profoundly cruel or misogynistic? Although he sometimes concedes an image is cruel, on the whole Gatrell stresses the former, hinting that prints could be 'celebrations' (p. 136), 'smiling not savage satires' (p. 146). Not surprisingly, he invokes Bakhtin (ch. 6) and the carnivalesque, and applauds a manly form of open, free speaking (p. 178). It is hard to demonstrate that the Lady Worsley prints (reproduced on pp. 2 and 3) generally provoked laughter, rather than perhaps *schadenfreude*, patronizing criticism, derision, or simply a smirk. Something of the complexity of laughter in the period is demonstrated in Beerbohm's 1920 essay on the subject, where he relates a story about Samuel Johnson laughing very long and loud about a man making his will.[21]

[20] Hallett, *Spectacle of difference*, and Carter, *Purchasing power*, for example, similarly adopt a metropolitan focus. See also Sheila O'Connell, *London 1753* (London, 2003). The great pioneer in this field was M. D. George, *Hogarth to Cruikshank: social change in graphic satire* (London, 1967); her *London life in the twentieth century* was first published in 1925 (London and New York, NY).

[21] Max Beerbohm, *Selected essays* (London, 1958), pp. 41–3.

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Inevitably a book on this scale and of this length and ambition has its stronger and weaker moments. The role of the microscope in the eighteenth-century imaginary is not quite as depicted on page 301, and 'materialism', a notoriously elusive concept, is made to bear too heavy an explanatory burden in his chapter on the penis (ch. 10 'The tree of life'). One longs for more discussion of the prints themselves, the exact ways in which they depict and distort the body, use expressions and accoutrements, clothing, furniture, and so on. Sometimes illustrations are juxtaposed, as on pages 48 and 49 by Rowlandson and George Cruikshank respectively, in order to show similarities, but they are sufficiently different to warrent detailed analysis. Gatrell, wisely, provides core information in the captions, and more in the list of illustrations at the front, which gives size 'where known'. There is also an Index of Artists' Works at the back (pp. 690–6). He is attentive to the makers and publishers of prints, the different types of prints, markets, and audiences and intersperses such information throughout the book, so that an outline of print-making techniques, print runs, and so on, may be found in chapter 8, more than 200 pages into the text. The quality of illustrations may usefully be compared to those in the catalogue for the 2001 Gillray show at the Tate; in *City of laughter*, they are certainly better than in most history books, but not as good as in art or art-historical publications.[22]

Gatrell's epilogue is built around Francis Place's testimony in his *Autobiography* and papers on how London had changed over his lifetime, although unfortunately Place does not discuss prints (p. 583). The 1820s emerge as the crucial decade in the displacement of 'the old satire' by a 'new pietism' and concern for respectability (p. 575). We might also see these shifts in terms of the preoccupation with 'reform'.[23] Sir Thomas Lawrence, born 1769, who had been president of the Royal Academy for ten years, died in 1830, followed in 1831 by the aged James Northcote, Reynolds's pupil, assistant, and biographer, who had known Gillray. It was the end of an era. James Northcote painted John Ruskin as a small child in a delightful canvas in the National Portrait Gallery London, and it is Ruskin whose ideas and spirit pervade *Men at work*.[24]

Tim Barringer's ravishing book, *Men at work: art and labour in Victorian Britain*, focuses on what he calls 'the mid-Victorian moment' (p. 13), 1851–78, arguing that 'the sphere of the visual image, and more specifically the representation of the male labouring body, provided the most powerful and significant formulation of work as the nexus of ethical and aesthetic value' (pp. 1–2). The labour of the male *artist* is integral to his account, which is richly contextualized, beautifully conceptualized, and precisely documented. Built around a series of case studies, it spans the period from the Great Exhibition to the famous trial of John Ruskin for slandering James McNeil Whistler, which, Barringer suggests in the epilogue, 'Aestheticism and labour', was concerned with 'theory and even the politics of labour' (p. 318).

[22] For instance, compare p. 73 in Godfrey, *James Gillray*, with p. 324 in *City of laughter*, which reproduce the same 1788 print by Gillray, *The morning after marriage – or – a scene on the continent*. Size is an important factor here: the illustration in Godfrey is seven and three-quarter inches by six and a half, in Gatrell, four and a quarter by three and three-eighths.

[23] Gatrell, *City of laughter*, p. 575; Arthur Burns and Joanna Innes, eds., *Rethinking the age of reform* (Cambridge, 2004), esp. the introduction and the chapter on art by Holger Hoock.

[24] James Northcote, *John Ruskin*, 1822, oil on canvas, NPG 5973, 1267 × 1010 mm; it may be viewed on the website.

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Men at work is ravishing because it has been so thoughtfully and elegantly designed and because it is particularly well written; indeed the prose is sometimes as gorgeous as the pictures. It is also satisfying because it takes what I can only describe as a rounded view of each case study. The first concerns Ford Maddox Brown's famous canvas *Work* (1852–65); the second, George Cole's and John Linnell's depictions of agricultural labour; the third turns to images of the forge and considers the activities of John Sharples, who was both artist and blacksmith; in chapter 4, Barringer examines Godfrey Sykes, an artist and designer, who represented the labouring body in a number of media; finally, he discusses 'Colonial Gothic'.

Starting with the 1851 exhibition, Barringer develops the theme of colonial Gothic by examining representations of Indian manual labour in his mid-Victorian moment. He uses the term to discuss a 'hybrid form', and

> explores Victorian notions of Gothic craftsmanship and labour, and traces their intersection with an increasingly politicised defence of traditional Indian craft skills. Together, these ideas would form not only an anti-industrial but an anti-imperial polemic of considerable power and urgency, whose essence was a re-interpretation of the meaning and value of labour. (p. 248)

Thus Barringer's project is, at once, thoroughly historical and just as thoroughly art-historical. Chapter 5 weaves together Pugin, Ruskin, and the building of the Oxford Museum in the late 1850s, the 1851 exhibition itself and responses to it, policy in India and the development of the South Kensington Museum, the role of illustrators of Indian life, the design of buildings in Bombay, and the ways in which British commentators used accounts of Indian villages in their analyses of skilled artisanal work, among other themes. In this chapter materials from later decades are also used, and it closes with a discussion of Gandhi, who 'self-consciously assumed the posture of the models of potters and spinners at the Crystal Palace of 1851' (p. 310). Barringer claims that Gandhi recognized 'the radical potential of colonial Gothic as a critique both of capitalism and imperialism [which] enabled him to play a pivotal role in the dissolution of the British Empire at whose heart the idea had originated' (p. 311).

Throughout the book Barringer meticulously probes the depiction of labour, the labour of depiction, and their intricate ideological dimensions. He achieves this in three ways; by the sorts of research with which historians are familiar, by deploying art-historical techniques and by bringing the two into an intimate relationship. He deftly rejects 'a polarity in which contextual readings and formal analysis are seen as mutually exclusive' (p. 17). He is thinking with and through his visual and material sources – paintings, prints, statues, magazines, cartoons, drawings, buildings, photographs, and diagrams. There are 143 illustrations, many of them in colour and integrated into the text. In the case of important items several reproductions are used. For example, at the beginning of chapter 1, we have four illustrations of *Work* over the five pages in which he describes the painting, three details and one of the whole canvas, including the frame. Here word and image are particularly close, enabling readers to see the painting in fresh ways. Captions, in a smaller font than the text, are not used for commentary, but only for core information: maker, title, date, medium, size, and location. There is no single consolidated list, but photo credits at the end (p. 380); when a picture library has been used, the location of the work is given as well. The art history books published by Yale University Press are justly renowned for their beauty and high-quality design. Art historians routinely apply for grants to cover the cost, especially of colour plates, and many put considerable sums of their own money into their publications. Yet without careful and thoughtful book design, such resources would

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be to no avail. The size of the page is one crucial factor here; with a wider page it seems to be considerably easier to achieve a pleasing layout and reading experience.[25]

Pre-modernism by J. M. Mancini is also a beautiful, thoughtfully designed book, with seventy-five black and white images, which are sometimes located in the wide outer margins, for example, on pages 83 and 90, where the pictures are a bit on the small side. On the whole, however, the volume works well. It is written by a historian venturing into one of the most hotly contested areas of art history – the origins of modernism. She does so with considerable verve and the result is a fascinating exploration of the American art world in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The aim is to challenge the common idea that the famous 1913 exhibition of modern art, the Armoury Show, was a bolt out of the blue, a revolutionary rupture. For Mancini, it emerged out of earlier publishing practices, art education, art writing, and institutions which were, on the whole, dedicated to expanding the interest and participation in art. The changes that took place in the early twentieth century were genuine, but have, she argues, been misinterpreted, especially by those who buy into the claims and agendas of modernism itself. Strikingly, she links these shifts to processes of professionalization akin to those that took place in medicine and the law (p. 135). The world that supported modernist art was committed to gate-keeping, to exclusiveness, yet it built on earlier developments. 'In the modernist field of art, objects reigned supreme. In the hands of the avant-garde, the field of art was transformed from an expansive, open system for the promotion and development of art in American life into a closed system for a privileged few.' This process happened, according to Mancini, 'in conjunction with professionalization' (p. 161). She is suspicious of pat claims that radicalism in art and radicalism in politics go simply and unproblematically together, not least because she sees the former as not at all 'democratic' (p. 135).

In *Pre-modernism*, Mancini draws on a marvellous range of materials including magazines and Christmas cards, books and advertisements, objects such as ceramics and crayons, photographs, diagrams, architectural plans, even a piece of music (p. 199) in order to evoke the richness of an art world where the same publishers sold both popular greetings cards and magazines that promoted new trends in art. Commerce and innovative culture were much closer than we have supposed. Furthermore, she is attentive to the ways in which these activities took place outside what might be thought of as the established cultural centres. Thus Mancini's goals are significant ones – to think about both the nature and pace of historical change and the relationships between aesthetic shifts and other phenomena; to show the roles played by the art world as a whole and not just by a few individuals; to reflect, via a specific historical situation, upon the place of art in public life. In her inspiring postscript, she uses her work on the origins of modernism to think about its demise. Taking the removal of Richard Serra's 1981 sculpture *Tilted arc* from the place for which it was commissioned as her focus, she suggests that 'modernism and professionalism continued to be conjoined in the American art world as modernism declined' and notes 'the limits of an art world in which vangardist "oppositionality" is expressed through a language that is itself a sustaining element of the very structures of power it purports to critique' (p. 219). She seeks in the last two pages of the book to make suggestions about how a truly public art might be facilitated. 'We would not think of teaching people to read without also teaching them to write; so how, then, can we think that people will be visually

[25] The width in inches of the pages in the books under review are: Brotton – five and three-quarters; Outram – eight and a half; Hunt – six; McCreery – five and three-quarters; Gattrell – six and an eighth; Barringer – eight; Mancini – eight.

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literate unless we also teach them to draw, to photograph, to sculpt, or to master today's new visual arts and media?' (p. 220). These are strong, empassioned words, and it is revealing that her next move is to insist it should be possible 'to envision an art in which *labor* is content' (p. 220, her emphasis). She closes with a discussion of institutions and the need for citizens to participate actively in the art world.

Mancini is clearly enthused by and deeply engaged with her subject – the historical problem of explaining American modernism – which is inherently visual. In exploring it she is obliged, like Barringer, to tackle some big methodological issues. Both these books can be used to reflect upon the range of issues that historians who wish to think with and through works of art might usefully consider. They bring together and integrate diverse sources, they are attentive to the modes of art production, to the infrastructures without which 'art' cannot exist. But they are equally alive to the elaborate ideological contexts in which items of visual interest are used, bought and sold, reproduced, and displayed. For readers to follow arguments that are necessarily complex, and that depend on careful looking, three requirements must be met – publications where text, images, captions, and other supporting materials are carefully designed to work harmoniously together; illustrations, in colour if possible, of sufficient quality that the details can be appreciated; and full information about the items of visual and material culture in question, including where they can be seen, if they are indeed available to the public. This is not a lot to ask, and it should be possible to meet these criteria without straining anyone's budgets unduly. But publishers of *historical* work will only go down this route if readers, authors, and funding bodies insist they do so. If we become active citizens of the republic of history, it should be possible, and the results would be an enriched polity.

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