

George Turnbull and Art History at Scottish Universities in the Eighteenth Century

Carol Gibson-Wood

Volume 28, 2001–2003

Art History Inside and Outside the University
L'histoire de l'art à l'université et hors de l'université

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1069779ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/1069779ar>

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

UAAC-AAUC (University Art Association of Canada | Association d'art des universités du Canada)

ISSN

0315-9906 (imprimé)

1918-4778 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer cet article

Gibson-Wood, C. (2001). George Turnbull and Art History at Scottish Universities in the Eighteenth Century. *RACAR : Revue d'art canadienne / Canadian Art Review*, 28, 7–18. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1069779ar>

Résumé de l'article

Cet article met en lumière les effets du concept d'importance pédagogique de l'histoire de l'art formulée par George Turnbull, représentant de la philosophie morale en Écosse au Siècle des Lumières. Nous soutenons que les idées de son *Treatise on Ancient Painting* (1740) ont été mises en pratique et intégrées dans les universités écossaises dès le milieu du XVIIIe siècle. Après une comparaison entre les écrits de Turnbull et ceux de la théorie de l'art britannique plus ancienne, donc plus traditionnelle, seront examinées les fonctions premières de la discipline à l'université de Glasgow, plus précisément celles énoncées dans le programme d'histoire, puis à l'Académie des Beaux-Arts de la même ville. Cette analyse montrera qu'en Écosse l'histoire de l'art s'est institutionnalisée beaucoup plus rapidement qu'en Angleterre, la première chaire datant de 1879.

George Turnbull and Art History at Scottish Universities in the Eighteenth Century

CAROL GIBSON-WOOD, UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA

Résumé

Cet article met en lumière les effets du concept d'importance pédagogique de l'histoire de l'art formulée par George Turnbull, représentant de la philosophie morale en Écosse au Siècle des Lumières. Nous soutenons que les idées de son *Treatise on Ancient Painting* (1740) ont été mises en pratique et intégrées dans les universités écossaises dès le milieu du XVIII^e siècle. Après une comparaison entre les écrits de Turnbull et ceux de la théorie de l'art britannique

plus ancienne, donc plus traditionnelle, seront examinées les fonctions premières de la discipline à l'université de Glasgow, plus précisément celles énoncées dans le programme d'histoire, puis à l'Académie des Beaux-Arts de la même ville. Cette analyse montrera qu'en Écosse l'histoire de l'art s'est institutionnalisée beaucoup plus rapidement qu'en Angleterre, la première chaire datant de 1879.

When he was living in London during the 1730s, the Scottish moral philosopher George Turnbull (1698–1748) frequently visited the portrait painter Jonathan Richardson (1667–1745) in order to study his large and significant collection of Old Master drawings. Turnbull particularly admired the methodical way in which Richardson had arranged his collection, “so that one may there see all the different Schools, and go from one to another, tracing the Progress of each, and of every Master in each”.¹ He approved of Richardson’s arrangement because he regarded such an orderly chronological display of concrete examples as the only way “that the History of the Art of Designing and Painting can be fully represented and learned”, an endeavour to which he attached considerable importance in his *Treatise on Ancient Painting* of 1740. In this essay, I will suggest that Turnbull’s ideas played an important role in bringing art history from the outside to the inside of Scottish universities in the eighteenth century.

John Barrell’s important analysis of eighteenth-century British art theory in terms of civic-humanist thought has dominated recent characterizations of the period.² However, as I have argued elsewhere, the genealogy of early British art theory cannot adequately be understood solely with reference to this model.³ The traditions of writing that I draw upon in framing the central arguments of this study give some sense of this historiographical complexity; for example, I assign art-historical significance to the early Royal Society’s History of Trades project, and I situate the influence of Shaftesbury’s writings in relationship to a somewhat different school of thought than the one identified by Barrell – one that concerned itself directly with university pedagogy. My first section consists of a brief summary of the earlier, non-institutional traditions of art history in Britain that Turnbull assimilated. This section is followed by a discussion of those aspects of Turnbull’s philosophical and pedagogical interests with which he associated art history in his *Treatise on Ancient Painting*. Finally, I will describe some of the ways in which Turnbull’s ideas were put into practice, a process which ultimately gave to art history a new institu-

tional setting. I will focus on the University of Glasgow where, in the 1750s, art history found a place both on the arts curriculum, and within the programme of the Foulis Academy of Fine Arts.

Early Art-Historical Writing in Britain

In seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century Britain, textual accounts of the history of the visual arts emerged in two different contexts: as part of the knowledge deemed to be essential to connoisseurs and collectors of art; and as a branch of Baconian programmes for documenting the histories of trades and mechanical arts. In a central tradition of continental art literature, treatises on the principles of good painting and the discernment of quality and authorship were often accompanied by summaries of the lives and stylistic characteristics of major masters. This tradition formed part of the British discourse on connoisseurship in the form of both translations of French and Italian writers, and new texts by English authors, such as William Aglionby’s *Painting Illustrated in Three Dialogues* of 1685.⁴ The art-historical narrative of stylistic progress adopted in these texts usually followed the schemes of Pliny and Vasari, and upheld the achievement of idealized naturalism as representing the high points of painting’s cycles of development. Hence, the arts of Greco-Roman antiquity, the works of Italian Renaissance masters like Raphael, and those of modern classicizing artists such as Poussin represented the touchstones for judgments of artistic quality.

A second, and now lesser-known tradition of English art-historical writing, was initiated by Francis Bacon’s programme for the writing of histories of all arts, crafts and technological processes. In his *Advancement of Learning* of 1605 (and even more fully in the 1623 expanded Latin version of the text), Bacon defined the goals of this programme as being: “to inquire and collect out of the records of all time what particular kinds of learning and arts have flourished in what ages and regions of the world; their antiquities, their progress, their migrations ... and

again their decays, disappearances and revivals”.⁵ His recommendation that this be accomplished through the writing of one hundred and thirty “particular histories” (including the history of painting) that would together comprise a “Natural and Experimental History such as may serve to build philosophy upon”,⁶ was enthusiastically adopted by the newly formed Royal Society in the 1660s as its “History of Trades” project. This undertaking had the practical aim of disseminating and building upon past knowledge, with a view to attaining continued progress in all technical activities. Within the Society’s scheme, painting, sculpture and architecture were classified as mechanical arts, alongside occupations such as cheese-making and tanning, and, although the envisioned comprehensive history never came to fruition, numerous studies of particular arts and crafts were produced.⁷ These histories were premised on the conviction that modern experimental science would ensure the steady advancement of knowledge, and championed the achievements of the “moderns” versus the “ancients”. Advancements in the art of painting included the development of improved pigments and of devices that would aid accurate perspectival constructions. Paintings were valued not just for their idealized classical style and edifying historical subjects, but also for their accuracy in recording natural phenomena. In the form of chronological lists of painters, schematized not according to stylistic schools but rather in terms of a steadily developing universal history of the art, this Baconian model of progress also found a place in English literature on art.⁸

With Jonathan Richardson, the two traditions of art-historical writing were combined, for his *Two Discourses* of 1719, directed largely to the encouragement of connoisseurship, also contained the most fully developed scheme for a “Baconian” history of painting.⁹ Furthermore, Richardson gave concrete expression to this notion of art-historical development in his methodically arranged drawings collection that was so much admired by Turnbull, who explicitly linked it with the Baconian historical project. He observed that collections like Richardson’s that illustrated painting’s progress were invaluable to art-historical study, and that “the Invention and Improvements of ingenious Arts will always be justly esteemed one of the most important Branches of History, by all who have Notions of the true Dignity of Mankind, and of their best Employments”.¹⁰

George Turnbull’s Views on Education and Art

Turnbull’s approval of the role that Bacon had assigned to history in his *Advancement of Learning*, and his acquaintance with historically didactic art collections like Richardson’s, were two of the factors that situated the unique perspective of his *Treatise on Ancient Painting*. Of even greater importance were his admiration for the philosophical writings of the third Earl of

Shaftesbury, his interest in educational reform at Aberdeen, and his experiences as a travelling tutor in Italy and France.

As a young man, Turnbull was deeply influenced by Shaftesbury’s philosophical ideas, and he brought them into the classroom at Marischal College, Aberdeen, where he taught philosophy in the 1720s.¹¹ In addition to being the teacher of such figures as the philosopher Thomas Reid, Turnbull was particularly concerned with educational reform. Turnbull claimed that “the true end of education was the formation of virtuous, patriotic citizens”, and he regarded all branches of learning as being interrelated in so far as they “all rested on the study of human nature”. In keeping with this vision of education’s goal being an integrated “Science of Man”, he recommended that history be added as a subject of study at the university. He replaced the scholastic model of philosophical teaching with one that both emulated Shaftesbury’s “free, elegant and pleasing” style, and gave a central place to principles of moral and civic virtue. His reforms at Aberdeen also included applying Sir Isaac Newton’s empirical method of analysis and synthesis to moral philosophy in place of sophistic dispute.¹²

Many of Turnbull’s educational ideals became embodied in the revised arts curriculum adopted at Aberdeen and, together with a similar system of moral philosophy introduced by Francis Hutcheson at the University of Glasgow in the 1730s, contributed directly to the transformation of the curricula of Scotland’s five universities¹³ which, with their new emphasis on both polite learning and empirical philosophy, placed them among the most intellectually progressive educational institutions in Europe. Indeed, Scottish universities underwent a major transformation in the first half of the eighteenth century. English replaced Latin as the language of instruction, and specialized teaching replaced the regenting system that had made professors responsible for teaching all subjects in the *cursus philosophiae* to students enrolled in their classes. Changes to the university curricula included the introduction of new subjects, such as history, with the belief that understanding the history of human achievements and institutions could contribute to the present by providing models of success or failure, as well as a base of practical knowledge upon which the progress of the arts and sciences could advance. Revisions to the philosophy syllabus similarly related both moral and natural philosophy to civic ideals and empirical methods. New professorial chairs in subjects such as law, ecclesiastical history, astronomy and natural history were also added to university faculties, partly in response to demands that the universities provide an education that would prepare boys for professional careers.¹⁴

Turnbull did not hold any further university positions after he resigned from Marischal College in 1727. His subsequent pedagogical activities took the form of private tutoring that included accompanying young men on “Grand Tour” travel

Figure 1. Title-page from George Turnbull, *A Treatise on Ancient Painting*, London, 1740 (Photo: University of Victoria Photographic Services).

A
T R E A T I S E
ON
A N C I E N T P A I N T I N G,
CONTAINING
O B S E R V A T I O N S

ON THE
RISE, PROGRESS, and DECLINE of that Art
amongst the *Greeks* and *Romans*;

THE
High Opinion which the Great Men of Antiquity had of it; its
Connexion with POETRY and PHILOSOPHY; and the Use that
may be made of it in Education:

To which are added

Some REMARKS on the peculiar Genius, Character, and Talents of
Raphael, *Michael Angelo*, *Nicholas Poussin*, and other Celebrated Modern
Masters; and the commendable Use they made of the exquisite Remains of
Antiquity in PAINTING as well as SCULPTURE.

The Whole illustrated and adorned with

FIFTY PIECES of ANCIENT PAINTING;

Discovered at different times in the Ruins of Old *Rome*, accurately engraved from
Drawings of *Camillo Paderni* a *Roman*, lately done from the Originals with
great Exactness and Elegance.

By GEORGE TURNBULL LL. D.

—Eft etiam illa Platonis vera, et libri Catuli, certe non inaudita vox, emam doctrinam harum in-
geniorum, et humanarum Artium, una quodam Societatis vinculo conitineri, ubi enim perspecta vis est
rationis ipsi, que rursus rerum, atque eorum cognoscantur, mirari quidem quosf amoniam confregit doctrinarum,
construiffet reperire. Cicero de Oratore, Lib. 3.

ΟΣ τις μη αναδραμα το ερεπιδιαι, αλαρι το αλαριαι, αλαρι το ερεπιδιαι το ερεπιδιαι, φησιν οτι το
αρεπιδιαι το ερεπιδιαι το ερεπιδιαι, οτι το ερεπιδιαι το ερεπιδιαι το ερεπιδιαι, οτι το ερεπιδιαι το ερεπιδιαι το ερεπιδιαι.
Philoftrati Imagines.

L O N D O N :

Printed for the AUTHOR; and sold by A. MILLAR, at *Buchanan's* Head, over-against
St. Clement's Church, in the *Strand*.

M.DCC.XL.

on the Continent, a form of teaching undertaken by many Scottish scholars in the eighteenth century. He lived in London intermittently from 1732 to 1742 and, after being ordained in 1739, became rector of an obscure parish in Ireland.¹⁵ However, his continued interests in educational reform, moral philosophy and the arts found expression in his numerous publications of the late 1730s and early 1740s, including his *Treatise on Ancient Painting* of 1740 (fig. 1).¹⁶

Turnbull's interest in the writings of Shaftesbury included familiarity with his essay on "A Notion of the Historical Draught of the Judgment of Hercules" of 1713 and the "Letter Concerning Design" which accompanied it.¹⁷ In these essays in particular, Shaftesbury had articulated his strict adherence to a strongly moral view of the role of painting. Painting should not please or titillate the senses, but instruct the mind. Appropriately, he used

a detailed analysis of an exemplary pictorial representation of Hercules' choice between pleasure and virtue as his most extended demonstration of this idea, and suggested to Lord Somers, to whom both treatises were dedicated, that a well-painted picture of this subject would be a most fitting furnishing of the schoolroom of the young English princes, should any of Queen Anne's offspring reach that age, for "to see virtue in this garb and action, might perhaps be no slight memorandum hereafter to a royal youth, who should one day come to undergo this trial himself".¹⁸ Shaftesbury upheld the principles of ancient art (as he knew it) and their interpretations by its modern followers like Nicholas Poussin, as the appropriate models for achieving this level of moral edification in the viewer, and rejected both the sensual excesses of high baroque art and the lack of significant content in still-life, landscape or portrait painting.

Turnbull's reading of Shaftesbury's art theory was tempered by his acceptance of Lockean and Newtonian empirical models of knowledge, as well as his knowledge of other art-theoretical texts and his practical experiences. His references in the *Treatise* indicate that he was familiar with an extensive range of literature on art that included not only Richardson's books, but also Pliny's discussion of the history of Greek art; Italian authors such as Vasari, Lomazzo and Bellori; French writers including André Félibien, Roger De Piles and J.B. Dubos; and Franciscus Junius's tome of 1638, *The Painting of the Ancients*, a compilation of all of the discussions and references to painting which were to be found in the writing of ancient Greek and Roman authors. Turnbull's travels had both provided him with a knowledge of the major monuments of ancient and Italian art, and also brought him into contact with painters including Allan Ramsay, with whom he spent time in Rome in the 1730s.¹⁹

Turnbull's aim in writing the *Treatise on Ancient Painting* was "to set the Arts of Design in a just Light; and to point out in particular the excellent Use that may be made of them in Education."²⁰ This goal was premised on his conviction that true education "or Instruction in the Science of Man, must consist in being able to lead Students in the most natural Way and Order thro' the various Connexions and Laws of Nature, upon which Man hath Dependence, or the Knowledge of which is necessary to give him a just View of himself, and of the Relation he bears to Nature".²¹ Turnbull argued that this could only be achieved through an educational programme in which all of the sciences and liberal arts were taught together, and suggested that "the designing arts" could serve several purposes in such a programme. As already mentioned, he identified the study of painting's rise and progress as a worthy branch of historical enquiry. Additionally, he regarded both the practice and appreciation of painting as being intimately connected to the three central goals of education, namely "to improve the Senses and Imagination", "to improve our reasoning Powers,

and our inward Sense of Beauty natural and moral”, and “to form a benevolent, generous, and great Temper of Mind”.²² This represented a greatly enlarged view of Shaftesbury’s notion of painting’s potential for moral improvement and, in practical terms, Turnbull replaced Shaftesbury’s vision of royal princes imbibing virtuous principles by gazing at exemplary pictures, with the educational contexts familiar to him as a university teacher and travelling tutor. He maintained, for example, that the proper aim of young men’s exposure to art on the Grand Tour should not be to learn to distinguish one painter’s hand from another, or a Greek statue from a Roman one, but rather to regard art as a means “to convey in an agreeable manner into the Mind the Knowledge of Men and Things; or to instruct us in Morality, Virtue and human Nature”.²³ Most significant to the subject of this essay was the institutional setting that Turnbull envisioned for art: “a School consisting of different Apartments for Instruction in the several Parts of useful Learning and Philosophy, suitably adorned with Pictures and Sculptures, or good prints of them”²⁴ In such a school, students would have ready access to paintings, sculptures and prints as agreeable aids to their studies, so that, when reading “antient Poets and Historians” for example, they could have “recourse to such Pieces of Painting and Sculpture as exhibit the Customs, Rites and Manners described or alluded to by them”; or images of celebrated ancient heroes could be studied in conjunction with the reading of their lives; or visual representations of historical and mythological subjects could be compared to written ones. Turnbull also suggested that, for such an educational programme to be most beneficial, students should have been taught drawing, so that they would have a proper taste and understanding of the visual examples used in the various branches of their studies.²⁵

It was perhaps from Richardson’s writings, which assigned instructive potential not just to history painting but also to portraiture and (to a lesser extent) other genres, that Turnbull came to embrace a view of painting’s pedagogical value that was much more inclusive than Shaftesbury’s. Turnbull, like Shaftesbury, considered history paintings to be capable of providing instructive examples of moral principles, but his designation of such pictures as “experiments in moral Philosophy” signals their role in his larger concept of the “Science of Man”. However, he also saw landscape paintings as being equally edifying as “experiments in natural Philosophy”, able to illustrate the laws of physics. For example:

Pictures which represent visible Beauties, or the Effects of Nature in the visible World, by the different Modifications of Light and Colours, in Consequence of the Laws which relate to Light, are Samples of what these Laws do or may produce. And therefore they are as proper Samples and Experiments to help and assist us in the Study of those Laws,

as any Samples or Experiments are in the Study of the Laws of Gravity, Elasticity, or of any other Quality in the natural World. They are then Samples or Experiments in natural Philosophy.²⁶

Turnbull even argued that looking at pictures of the natural world had certain advantages over studying nature itself without visual representations, whether these be “exact Copies of some particular Parts of Nature” or “imaginary” landscapes that were, none the less, “conformable to Nature’s Appearances and Laws”. For by comparing a pictorial rendition of a landscape, figure, plant or animal to an actual example, “The Mind ... is excited narrowly to canvass the Resemblance; and thus it is led to give a closer and more accurate Attention to the Original itself”.²⁷

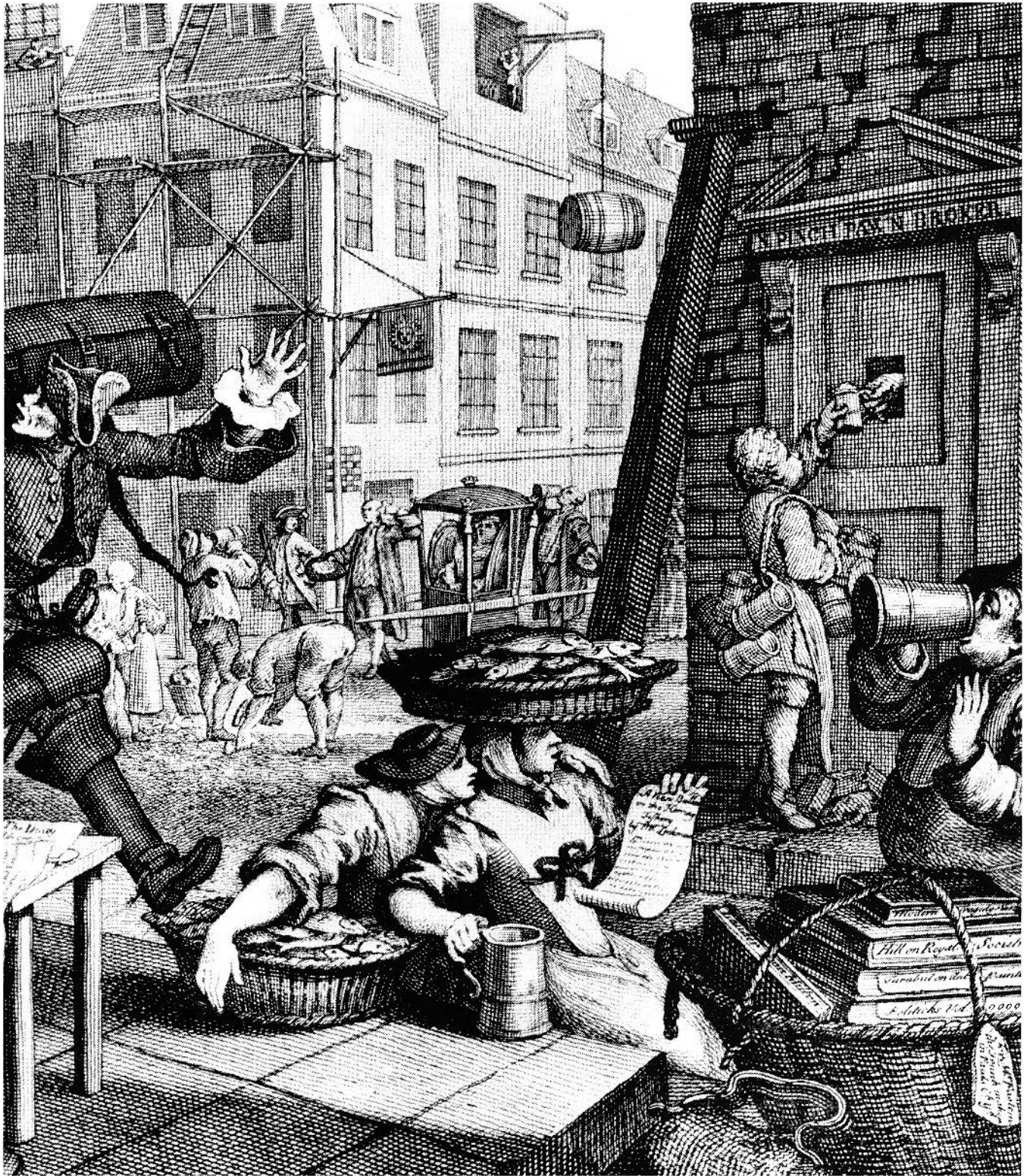
The theoretical value thus assigned to landscape, portraiture, still-life and botanical painting represented a radical departure from both the conventional “hierarchy of the genres” and the superior status assigned in classical art theory to idealization versus verisimilitude.²⁸ Although the art-theoretical implications of the *Treatise* were revolutionary for the intellectual significance assigned to *all* types of painting, both ancient and modern, this message was masked by the book’s title, its ponderous prose, the inordinate amount of text devoted to ancient art, and its extensive series of engraved plates of fragments of ancient Roman paintings, all of which give the impression that its central purpose is to uphold the moral and aesthetic superiority of ancient classical art. Few readers seem to have recognized the potential relevance of Turnbull’s enormous folio to contemporary painting.²⁹ William Hogarth, for example, evidently assumed that it was irrelevant, indeed antithetical, to his own interests as a modern British artist, despite the fact that his social-satirical pictures might be considered quintessential “experiments in moral philosophy”. In the foreground of his print *Beer Street* of 1750, he included Turnbull’s *Treatise on Ancient Painting* among the useless books tied up in a basket and labelled to be sent to the trunkmaker for recycling (fig. 2).

Art History at the University of Glasgow

It was not through English artists but rather among Scottish educators that some of Turnbull’s views on the instructive value of painting were given their fullest practical realization. Turnbull’s writings, including the *Treatise on Ancient Painting*, were well known to the next generation of Scottish academics, some of whom sought to put his pedagogical principles into practice in the classroom. With respect to the educational roles of painting and art history, the evidence is fullest at the University of Glasgow in the 1750s and 1760s.³⁰

Turnbull’s suggestion that the history of the visual arts

Figure 2. William Hogarth, *Beer Street*, 1751, detail. Etching and engraving (Photo: University of Victoria Photographic Services).



could be part of the study of history was institutionalized at Glasgow by both William Ruat (or Rouet, ca.1720–85), who was Professor of History from 1752 to 1762, and his successor in that position, William Wight (1731–82). The Chair of History was designated as Professor of Ecclesiastical History and Lecturer on Civil History, making its holders responsible for lecturing on both religious and secular history.³¹ Ruat did not have an extensive teaching career at Glasgow for, like Turnbull, he spent a considerable amount of time on the Continent as a private tutor (fig. 3).³² None the less, he delivered numerous lectures on aspects of both ecclesiastical and secular history, and the manuscripts of Ruat's lectures indicate that these included some on the history of painting.³³

Three of Ruat's lectures on the history of painting survive.³⁴ The first, very long lecture traces the development of the art in Egypt and its progress in Greece, then gives an account of the most famous Greek and Roman painters (according to ancient authors) that is derived directly from Turnbull's lengthy treatment of the subject in his *Treatise on Ancient Painting*.³⁵ The last part of this presentation, however, is based on Ruat's eyewitness accounts of ancient paintings he had seen in Italy, notably in Herculaneum, which he had visited in 1748.³⁶ In the second and third lectures, Ruat again draws extensively on Turnbull's *Treatise* in discussing the various types and functions of paintings produced in antiquity, and comparing the achievements of ancient and modern masters.

William Wight emulated Ruat's model of including lectures on the history of art in his course on civil history. His lectures seem not to have survived, but syllabi of his courses, listing the main topics of his lectures, were published in 1767 and 1772. Wight's art-historical lectures focused on modern, rather than ancient painting, and covered topics such as art's "revival", the "peculiar advantages of Italy with respect to the cultivation of the Fine Arts", the "different schools of painting and their respective merit", "Characters of the most eminent performers in the different nations of Europe", and the "State of this art in modern times".³⁷ Ruat's and Wight's inclusion of art-historical material in their history courses may well have been in response to the fact that in 1753 a painting academy and a collection of pictures also were housed at the University of Glasgow.

The Glasgow Academy of Fine Arts was established by Robert Foulis (1707–76) who, in 1743, had been appointed as printer to the University. As proprietor of the Foulis Press, Foulis gained a high reputation as a printer of fine books for scholars and collectors. Foulis had trained as a barber, but was well educated in Greek and Latin, and also attended the moral philosophy classes of Francis Hutcheson, who encouraged his career in printing and book selling. His scheme for a painting academy had the backing of prominent Glasgow businessmen,

for one of its aims was to teach boys drawing skills that would be useful in professional and manufacturing careers.³⁸ However, the establishment of the Academy can also be seen as a direct response to Turnbull's suggested educational reforms that gave a place to drawing and painting in liberal education, for it was approved and accommodated at the University of Glasgow. The University minutes record that, on 23 October 1753:

A paper was presented from Mr. Robert Foulis containing Proposals for teaching designing in the University with the approbation and protection of the Masters, and under their conduct and special direction. And the Faculty approve of the same and allow him to publish an advertisement of it in the News papers, and give him the use of the room under the north part of the new Library for a place in which to teach the Scholars.³⁹

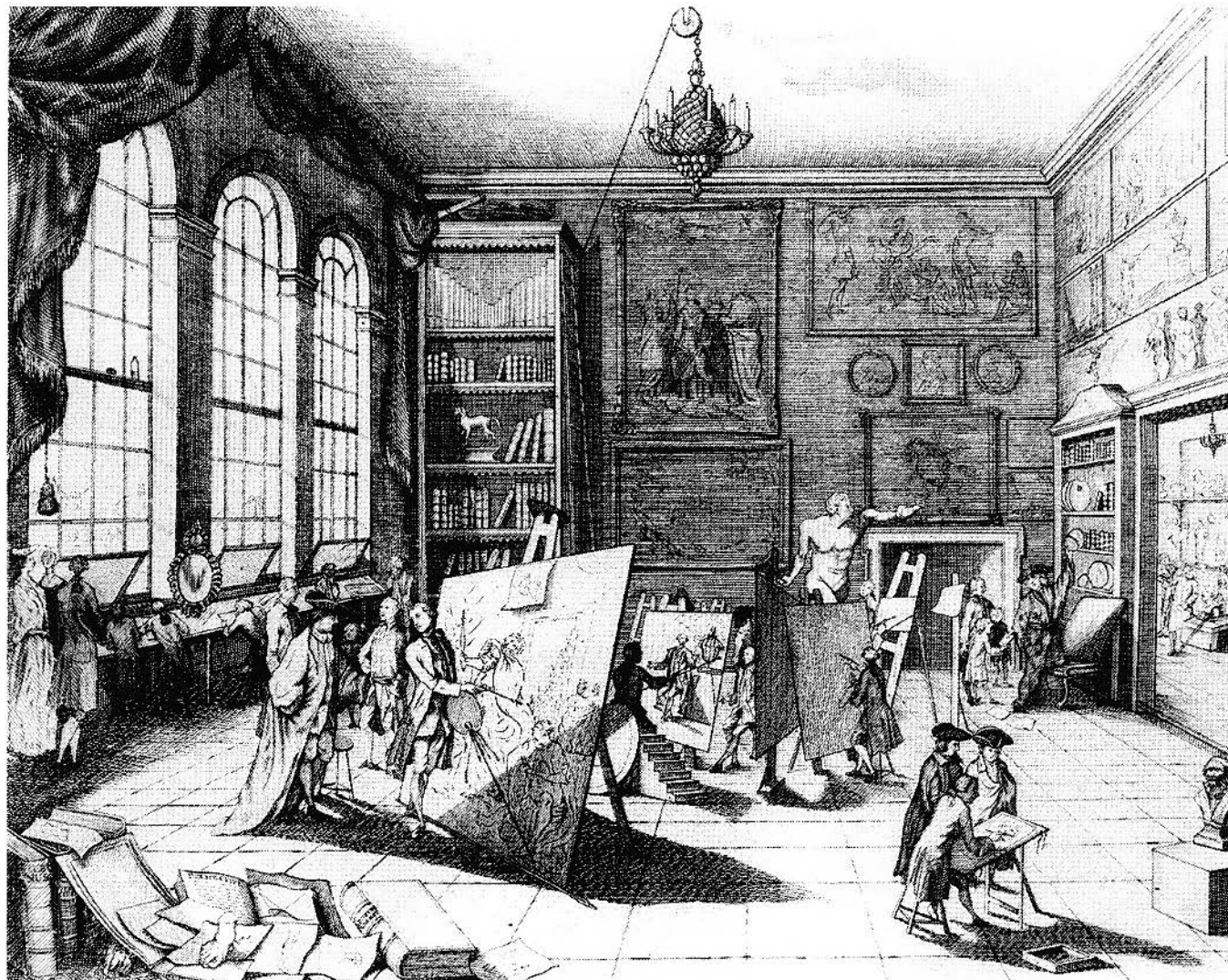
The correspondence between Turnbull's ideal educational system, and Robert Foulis's vision of his Academy's role, is even more explicit in a letter written by Foulis in 1758 to one of his patrons, wherein he expresses his hope that the Academy will become a permanent part of the University, for "a seat of the Sciences and Belles Lettres is the perfect nursery for the Fine Arts: particularly that the University of Glasgow, who are sensible of the intrinsic value of the Fine Arts, and the excellent uses to which they may be made subservient, both moral and political".⁴⁰ Thus, unlike the continental academies on which it was superficially modelled, the Foulis Academy was closely affiliated with a university.

Advertisements for the Academy placed in the Glasgow papers describe its teaching programmes and progress in more detail, and indicate that from its inception the academy was intended not only to offer practical instruction in drawing that would be useful to students pursuing careers in trades and professions, but also to provide pictorial examples that would contribute to a liberal education. The plan for such a scheme is already suggested in an advertisement of October 1753,⁴¹ and articulated more fully two years later: "As this kind of Knowledge is deservedly esteemed a Part of liberal Education, Drawings, Pictures, and Prints of the principal Masters in all the Schools, will be regularly exhibited, in order to form a true Taste, and to give [young Gentlemen] a perfect Idea of the Rise, Progress, and Perfection of the Fine Arts, and the peculiar Excellencies that distinguish each School".⁴² The examples to be exhibited belonged to the large collection of paintings, drawings and prints that Foulis had acquired on a trip to the Continent in 1751–53.⁴³ With funds provided by the Glasgow merchants John Glassford and Archibald Ingram, Foulis purchased more than 350 paintings painted by Italian, French and Netherlandish masters, as well as "a large Collection of fine

Figure 3. Nathaniel Dance, *Charles Lord Hope, the Honorable James Hope and Dr William Rouet*, 1763. Oil on canvas. Collection of Hopetoun House Preservation Trust (Photo: University of Victoria Photographic Services).



Figure 4. David Allan, *Interior of the Foulis Academy*, ca. 1760. Engraving. The Mitchell Library, Glasgow (Photo: The Mitchell Library, Glasgow).



drawings, a Collection of books on painting, prints after the great Masters of the different Italian Schools, [and] a large collection of plates, many of which are Originals of Celebrated engravers".⁴⁴ These served not only as models from which students copied as they learned to draw and paint, under the tutelage of the French and Italian masters employed by Foulis (fig. 4), but also for the edification of all students at the university, for they were placed "in apartments of general access that all might have an opportunity of seeing them", an institutional environment remarkably similar to that envisioned by Turnbull.⁴⁵ The collection, displayed in several rooms of the University in addition to that occupied by the Academy, was shown to and remarked upon by eminent visitors, including John Wesley in 1757. Beginning in 1761, on the occasion of the coronation of George III, the pictures were exhibited in the open air, hung

in the College's inner quadrangle, on the outsides of the buildings (fig. 5). Similar exhibitions were held annually until about 1775, in celebration of the King's birthday.⁴⁶

The collection seems to have been amassed with the idea of providing a sequence of art-historical examples that illustrated the progressive development of painting, for it included a few specimens of early works, such as an altarpiece in the "style of Cimabue", as well as numerous examples attributed to Raphael and later masters.⁴⁷ Perhaps Ruat's and Wight's lectures on the history of painting complemented the role intended for the art collection within the University's programme, for painting's development and stylistic schools would hardly have been self-evident to adolescent boys through the display of examples alone. There is no evidence of the precise roles played by lectures in art theory or art history at the Academy, however, and

Figure 5. David Allan, *Exhibition of Pictures in the Inner Court of Glasgow University, 1761*. Engraving. The Mitchell Library, Glasgow (Photo: The Mitchell Library, Glasgow).



the 600-odd books published by the Foulis Press included editions of just two art-theoretical texts: Charles Coypel, *Dialogue sur la Connoissance de la Peinture* (1753–54); and Charles-Alphonse Dufresnoy, *A Judgment on the Works of the Principal and Best Painters of the Last Two Ages* (1755).⁴⁸

Already in 1753, an advertisement for the Academy stated that, “It has been thought proper by several, that there should be a school of the same kind for the Ladies”.⁴⁹ There is no evidence that a separate class for women was ever established *per se*, but since Robert Foulis’s two eldest daughters attended the Academy,⁵⁰ it is clear that women were allowed to study there in some capacity. While not eligible to study for university degrees at this date, women did attend courses of lectures that were given by Scottish university professors in the evenings for the

benefit of townspeople. In 1745, for example, Colin Maclaurin, Professor of Mathematics at Edinburgh, was delivering public lectures on experimental philosophy that were attended by mixed audiences of men and women.⁵¹ In Glasgow, Robert Dick offered a similar evening course in experimental philosophy that was advertised in the local newspapers in 1756 so that Glasgow citizens could attend, and his successor John Anderson (1726–96) also opened up his university courses in natural philosophy to townspeople.⁵² Whether women were present at these lectures is not recorded, but Anderson did articulate a strong belief in making classes more accessible, especially to women. In his will, he set down detailed instructions for the establishment of a new university, and these included the stipulation that the Professor of Natural Philosophy regularly offer “The Ladies’

Course of Physical Lectures". When "Anderson's Institution" (later to become the University of Strathclyde) opened in 1796, these progressive principles were put into practice. Although a course aimed specifically at women was not offered, its public lectures in natural philosophy were attended by large numbers of women.⁵³

Robert Foulis had intended that the Academy be financially self-sufficient, through the sales of paintings and engravings executed by the students. Their productions, which were offered for sale both at auctions and through newspaper advertisements, included copies of paintings in the collection, landscape views of local topography, and sets of engravings done after Nicholas Dorigny's renditions of Raphael's cartoons.⁵⁴ The student works were listed in *A Catalogue of Pictures, Drawings, Prints, Statues and Busts in Plaster of Paris done at the Academy in the University of Glasgow*, published by Foulis in 1758, as part of a subscription scheme to support the Academy. Revenues generated by these means could not meet the expenses of the Academy, however, which included paying for selected students to study in Rome. After the death in 1775 of his brother and business partner Andrew, Robert Foulis closed the Academy and sold its collection of pictures. Whereas the continental pictures were sold by auction in London, remaining works executed by Academy students were disposed of in other ways. These included a consignment of sixteen paintings and a larger number of prints sent in 1782 to one James Dunlop, a merchant in Montreal.⁵⁵

Although not long-lived, the Foulis Academy was undoubtedly central to the process by which the practice and history of "the designing arts", from George Turnbull's theoretical ideal, came to be included as university subjects in Scottish universities well before art history was similarly institutionalized in England. A "drawing school" was established at King's College, Aberdeen, in 1761,⁵⁶ and a Lectureship in drawing and painting was formalized at Glasgow in 1819.⁵⁷ The first British Chair in Art History was established in 1879, not at Oxford or Cambridge, but at the University of Edinburgh.

Notes

- 1 George Turnbull, *A Treatise on Ancient Painting* (London, 1740), 37–38.
- 2 John Barrell, *The Political Theory of Painting from Reynolds to Hazlitt* (New Haven and London, 1986).
- 3 This view is central to Carol Gibson-Wood, *Jonathan Richardson, Art Theorist of the English Enlightenment* (New Haven and London, 2000). On the significance of my interpretation there, see Harry Mount's review, "The Englishness of English Art Theory," *Oxford Art Journal*, 25, no. 1 (2002), 102–6.
- 4 A significant part of Aglionby's text in fact comprised the first

English translation of selected parts of Vasari's *Lives*, including those of the early painters Cimabue and Giotto, as well as later masters such as Raphael and Michelangelo. Other continental texts that were available in English translations included Roger De Piles, *The Art of Painting, with the Lives and Characters of above 300 of the most Eminent Painters* (London, 1707).

- 5 Francis Bacon, *De Dignitate et Augmentis Scientiarum* (1623), chapter 4, translated by James Spedding, in *The Philosophical Works of Francis Bacon*, ed. John M. Robertson (London, 1905), 431.
- 6 Francis Bacon, *Parasceve ad historiam naturalem et experimentalem* (1620), translated by Spedding, *The Philosophical Works of Francis Bacon*, 402–12.
- 7 In the area of the visual arts, John Evelyn published *Sculptura*, his history of engraving, in 1662, researched other arts such as miniature painting, and translated Fréart de Chambray's texts on architecture and painting as contributions to the project, and a Royal Society subcommittee planned to compile a complete history of painting. On Evelyn's contributions to the History of Trades project, see Michael Hunter, *Science and the Shape of Orthodoxy: Intellectual Change in Late Seventeenth-Century Britain* (Woodbridge, 1995), 74–84; and Carol Gibson-Wood, "Susanna and her Elders: John Evelyn's Artistic Daughter," in Frances Harris and Michael Hunter, eds, *John Evelyn and his Milieu* (London, 2003), 233–54.
- 8 For a fuller discussion of this tradition, see Carol Gibson-Wood, "Jonathan Richardson, Lord Somers's Collection of Drawings, and Early Art-Historical Writing in England," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 52 (1989), 167–87, esp. 180–85.
- 9 Jonathan Richardson, *An Argument in behalf of the Science of a Connoisseur* (London, 1719), 69 ff.
- 10 Turnbull, *A Treatise on Ancient Painting*, 37.
- 11 On Turnbull's admiration of Shaftesbury's writings, see M.A. Stewart, "George Turnbull and Educational Reform," in Jennifer J. Carter and Joan H. Pittock, eds, *Aberdeen and the Enlightenment* (Aberdeen, 1987), 95–103; and Paul B. Wood, *The Aberdeen Enlightenment: The Arts Curriculum in the Eighteenth Century* (Aberdeen, 1993), 40.
- 12 Wood, *The Aberdeen Enlightenment*, 40–47.
- 13 These were: King's College, Aberdeen; Marischal College, Aberdeen; Glasgow; Edinburgh; and St Andrew's.
- 14 For a general discussion of curricular changes in Scotland, see Roger L. Emerson, "Scottish Universities in the Eighteenth Century, 1690–1800," *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century*, 167 (1977), 453–74.
- 15 For the most authoritative biographical information about Turnbull, see Stewart, "George Turnbull and Educational Reform"; see also John Ingamells, *A Dictionary of British and Irish Travellers in Italy, 1701–1800* (New Haven and London, 1997), 956. Turnbull served as travelling tutor to Andrew Wauchope of Niddry, Thomas Watson, the son of Lord Rockingham, and Horatio Walpole.
- 16 Turnbull's other publications from this period include *The Principles of Moral Philosophy* (1740); *Observations upon Liberal Education* (1742); and his translations (with original introductions) of *Three Dissertations* (1740) and Justinus's *History of the World* (1742).

- 17 For full details of these publications, see Robert Voitle, *The Third Earl of Shaftesbury, 1671–1713* (Baton Rouge and London, 1984), 418.
- 18 Anthony Ashley Cooper, Earl of Shaftesbury, “A Letter Concerning Design”, in B. Rand, ed., *Second Characters: Or, The Language of Forms* (1914; New York, 1969), 26. Shaftesbury did in fact have the painting executed by Paolo de Matteis, following the iconography prescribed in the “Notion”. The painting is now in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.
- 19 Ingamells, *A Dictionary of British and Irish Travellers*, 956.
- 20 Turnbull, *A Treatise on Ancient Painting*, Preface, xx.
- 21 Turnbull, *A Treatise on Ancient Painting*, 180.
- 22 Turnbull, *A Treatise on Ancient Painting*, 150.
- 23 Turnbull, *A Treatise on Ancient Painting*, Preface, xv.
- 24 Turnbull, *A Treatise on Ancient Painting*, 151.
- 25 Turnbull, *A Treatise on Ancient Painting*, 151.
- 26 Turnbull, *A Treatise on Ancient Painting*, 146.
- 27 Turnbull, *A Treatise on Ancient Painting*, 145.
- 28 Carol Gibson-Wood, “Painting as Philosophy: George Turnbull’s *Treatise on Ancient Painting*”, in Carter and Pittock, *Aberdeen and the Enlightenment*, 189–98.
- 29 On the relationship of the *Treatise* to better-known British art theory, see Barrell, *The Political Theory of Painting from Reynolds to Hazlitt*, 7–29; and Gibson-Wood, “Painting as Philosophy”. Without suggesting a direct influence, David Solkin has pointed to correspondences between Turnbull’s ideas and the aims of contemporary British painters such as Joseph Wright of Derby; David Solkin, *Painting for Money* (New Haven and London, 1993), 228–30.
- 30 In addition to the examples discussed here in detail, references to the role of the arts in education also occur in the lectures of William Cleghorn, Professor of Moral Philosophy at Edinburgh.
- 31 On the history of Glasgow’s History professorship, see Andrew Browning, “History”, in J.B. Neilson, ed., *Fortuna Domus. A Series of Lectures delivered in the University of Glasgow in Commemoration of the Fifth Centenary of its Foundation* (Glasgow, 1952), 41–57, esp. 42–45; on Ruat’s and Wight’s university careers, see James Coutts, *A History of the University of Glasgow* (Glasgow, 1909), 239–46, 324–25.
- 32 Ruat was on the Continent from 1741 to 1744, while serving as tutor to John Maxwell of Pollock. His travel diaries from these years indicate that he usually spent the winters with Maxwell in Geneva, but travelled extensively with him throughout Belgium, Germany, France and especially Italy during other months. The winter of 1742–43 was also spent in Rome. In 1748 Ruat was again in Rome, this time with his new charge, James Murray of Broughton. Ruat had arrived there from Naples where, in the company of one Dr Hope, another Scot, he had been studying the antiquities at Herculaneum. Ruat’s travel diaries are in the National Library of Scotland, mss. 4990, 4991, 4992. See also Ingamells, *A Dictionary of British and Irish Travellers*, 825–26.
- 33 National Library of Scotland, ms. 4992. I am grateful to Roger Emerson for pointing out to me the existence of the Ruat manuscripts, and other sources relevant to my interests.
- 34 The folios of these lectures are quite mixed up in NLS ms. 4992, but can be reconstructed as follows. The first, very long lecture (or lectures) begins on folios 173–74, continues on folios 25–28, then folios 7–16. The second lecture is found on folios 248–49, 17–20, 29–32. The third lecture occupies folios 1–6, 21–24. Folios 240–41 are devoted entirely to Herculaneum, and probably formed the last part of the first lecture.
- 35 Ruat uses various passages from Turnbull intermittently throughout the entire lecture, but without repeating any of Turnbull’s larger sections of text in their entirety.
- 36 The excavation of Herculaneum had begun in 1738, under strict supervision by the King of Naples, who allowed no material to leave the site and even forbade artists from making drawings of the many paintings which were uncovered there. Ruat carefully recorded the appearance of several of them in writing. Like others who were eager to uphold the supremacy in the arts of the ancients over the moderns, Ruat records with relief that the paintings of buildings, for example “abundantly show that they understood perspective as the moderns, which confirms the accounts given us by Plutarch and others” (NLS ms. 4992, fol. 240v). When the King of Naples later released the authoritative volumes of prints of the Herculaneum paintings (9 vols, 1757–92), Ruat recorded with evident satisfaction that he had procured a set for the university library; in the same year (1763) St Andrews also acquired a set of these volumes, which were clearly sought after by the Scottish universities.
- 37 The headings are reproduced in David Murray, *Robert and Andrew Foulis and the Glasgow Press with some account of the Glasgow Academy of Fine Arts* (Glasgow, 1913), 70–71.
- 38 The fullest account of the Foulis Academy is still that in Murray, *Robert and Andrew Foulis*, 57–114; see also David and Francina Irwin, *Scottish Painters at Home and Abroad* (London, 1975), 85–90; and George Fairfull-Smith, *The Foulis Press and the Foulis Academy: Glasgow’s Eighteenth-Century School of Art and Design* (Glasgow, 2001).
- 39 Cited in Murray, *Robert and Andrew Foulis*, 66.
- 40 Glasgow University Library, ms. Murray 506 (transcript of Lord Buchan’s correspondence), fols. 85–89.
- 41 *The Glasgow Courant*, number 419 (22–29 Oct. 1753).
- 42 *The Glasgow Courant*, number 520 (29 Sept.–6 Oct. 1755).
- 43 Murray, *Robert and Andrew Foulis*, 58–64, and 72–73.
- 44 Robert Foulis to William Bentinck, 12 June 1752, cited in Murray, *Robert and Andrew Foulis*, 60. Foulis wrote this letter to Bentinck, who was living in Holland, to request his help in reclaiming the paintings from the customs officials in Rotterdam, who were holding them for evaluation; the pictures were eventually released and arrived in Glasgow in 1753.
- 45 Glasgow University Library, ms. Murray 506, fol. 95.
- 46 Murray, *Robert and Andrew Foulis*, 89–90. David Allan produced a drawing and engraving of this public exhibition, as well as an engraving of the interior of the Academy that shows several of the historical pictures displayed on its walls. These are reproduced in Fairfull-Smith, *The Foulis Press*, plates 19 and 27.
- 47 A catalogue of the paintings in the collection was published by Robert Foulis in 1776: *A Catalogue of Pictures Composed and*

- Painted Chiefly by the Most Admired Masters of the Roman, Florentine, Parman, Bolognese, Venetian, Flemish, and French Schools*, 3 vols (London, 1776).
- 48 Philip Gaskell, ed., *A Bibliography of the Foulis Press*, 2nd edn (Winchester, 1986), 180, 195.
- 49 *The Glasgow Courant*, number 428 (24–31 Dec. 1753).
- 50 Murray, *Robert and Andrew Foulis*, 99.
- 51 Paul Wood, "Science, the Universities, and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-century Scotland", *History of Universities*, 13 (1994), 99–135, esp. 105.
- 52 Wood, "Science, the Universities, and the Public Sphere", 113; and John Butt, *John Anderson's Legacy. The University of Strathclyde and its Antecedents 1796–1996* (East Linton, 1996), 5.
- 53 Wood, "Science, the Universities, and the Public Sphere", 114; Butt, *John Anderson's Legacy*, 19–22.
54. Some of these are reproduced and described in Fairfull-Smith, *The Foulis Press*, 38–69. Students at the Academy included David Allan, James Tassie and William Cochran; see Murray, *Robert and Andrew Foulis*, 85–89.
- 55 Hamish Miles, "A Parcel of Paintings sent from Glasgow to Montreal in 1782", *National Gallery of Canada Bulletin*, 3, no. 2 (1965), 1–6. Miles reproduces a letter and bill of lading sent from John Brown in Glasgow to James Dunlop in Montreal. Brown thought the pictures might find a market in Quebec, since "a Roman Catholick Country would be proper for them, as severall of them are Catholick & Scripturall Pieces, and would do for Alter Pieces".
- 56 Aberdeen University Library, ms. K.45, (Faculty Minutes), fols. 97–98.
- 57 Murray, *Robert and Andrew Foulis*, 70.