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# **The Works Of Horatio Walpole, Earl Of Orford**

In Five Volumes

**Walpole, Horace**

**London, 1798**

Advertisement to the Fourth Volume of the Anecdotes.

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[urn:nbn:de:hbz:466:1-59965](https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:hbz:466:1-59965)

## ADVERTISEMENT

To the Fourth Volume of the ANECDOTES of PAINTING,  
 Edit. 4th. 1786,

Which commences with Chapter XVII. of the present Edition.

THIS last volume has been long written, and even printed. The publication\*, though a debt to the purchasers of the preceding volumes, was delayed from motives of tenderness. The author, who could not resolve, like most biographers, to dispense universal panegyric, especially on many incompetent artists, was still unwilling to utter even gentle censures, which might wound the affections, or offend the prejudices, of those related to the persons whom truth forbid him to commend beyond their merits. He hopes, that as his opinion is no standard, it will pass for mistaken judgment with such as shall be displeas'd with his criticisms. If his encomiums seem too lavish to others, the public will at least know that they are bestowed sincerely. He would not have hesitated to publish his remarks sooner, if he had not been averse to exaggeration.

The work is carried as far as the author intended to go, though he is sensible he could continue it with more satisfaction to himself, as the arts, at least those of painting and architecture, are emerging from the wretched state in which they lay at the accession of George the first. To architecture, taste and vigour were given by lord Burlington and Kent—They have successors worthy of the tone they gave; if, as refinement generally verges to extreme contrarities, Kent's ponderosity does not degenerate into filligraine—But the modern Pantheon, uniting grandeur and lightness, simplicity and ornament, seems to have marked the medium, where taste must stop. The architect who shall endeavour to refine on Mr. Wyatt, will perhaps give date to the age of embroidery. Virgil, Longinus, and Vitruvius afford no rules, no examples, of scattering finery.

This delicate redundance of ornament growing into our architecture might

\* It was not published till October 9, 1780, though printed in 1771.

perhaps

perhaps be checked, if our artists would study the sublime dreams of Piranesi, who seems to have conceived visions of Rome beyond what it boasted even in the meridian of its splendour. Savage as Salvator Rosa, fierce as Michael Angelo, and exuberant as Rubens, he has imagined scenes that would startle geometry, and exhaust the Indies to realize. He piles palaces on bridges, and temples on palaces, and scales heaven with mountains of edifices. Yet what taste in his boldness! what grandeur in his wildness! what labour and thought both in his rashness and details! Architecture, indeed, has in a manner two sexes: its masculine dignity can only exert its muscles in public works and at public expence; its softer beauties come better within the compass of private residence and enjoyment.

How painting has rekindled from its embers, the works of many living artists demonstrate. The prints after the works of sir Joshua Reynolds have spread his fame to Italy, where they have not at present a single painter that can pretend to rival an imagination so fertile, that the attitudes of his portraits are as various as those of history\*. In what age were paternal despair and the horrors of death pronounced with more expressive accents than in his picture of count Ugolino? When was infantine loveliness, or embryo-passions, touched with sweeter truth than in his portraits of miss Price, and the baby Jupiter? What frankness of nature in Mr. Gainsborough's landscapes; which may entitle them to rank in the noblest collections! What genuine humour in Zoffanii's comic scenes; which do not, like the works of Dutch and Flemish painters, invite laughter to divert itself with the nastiest indelicacy of boors!

Such topics would please a pen that delights to do justice to its country—

\* Sir J. Reynolds has been accused of plagiarism, for having borrowed attitudes from ancient masters. Not only candour but criticism must deny the *force* of the charge. When a single posture is imitated from an historic picture, and applied to a portrait in a different dress, and with new attributes, this is not plagiarism, but quotation: and a quotation from a great author, with a novel application of the sense, has always been allowed to be an instance of parts and taste; and may have more merit than the original. When the sons of Jacob imposed on their father by a false coat of Joseph, saying, "Know now whether this be thy son's coat or not,"

they only asked a deceitful question—but that interrogation became wit, when Richard I. on the pope reclaiming a bishop whom the king had taken prisoner in battle, sent him the prelate's coat of mail, and in the words of scripture asked his holiness, whether *THAT* was the coat of his son or not? Is not there humour and satire in sir Joshua's reducing Holbein's swaggering and colossal haughtiness of Henry VIII. to the boyish jollity of master Crewe? One prophecy I will venture to make: sir Joshua is not a plagiarist, but will beget a thousand: the exuberance of his invention will be the grammar of future painters of portrait.

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but the author has forbidden himself to treat of living professors. Posterity appreciates impartially the works of the dead. To posterity he leaves the continuation of these volumes; and recommends to the lovers of arts the industry of Mr. Vertue, who preserved notices of all his cotemporaries, as he had collected of past ages, and thence gave birth to this work. In that supplement will not be forgotten the wonderful progress in miniature of lady Lucan\*, who has arrived at copying the most exquisite works of Isaac and Peter Oliver, Hoskins and Cooper, with a genius that almost depreciates those masters, when we consider that they spent their lives in attaining perfection; and who, soaring above their modest timidity, has transferred the vigour of Raphael to her copies in water-colours. There will be recorded the living etchings of Mr. H. Bunbury, the second Hogarth, and first imitator who ever fully equalled his original; and who, like Hogarth, has more humour when he invents than when he illustrates †—probably because genius can draw from the sources of nature with more spirit than from the ideas of another. Has any painter ever executed a scene, a character of Shakespeare, that approached to the prototype so near as Shakespeare himself attained to nature? Yet is there a pencil in a living hand as capable of pronouncing the passions as our unequalled poet; a pencil not only inspired by his insight into nature, but by the graces and taste of Grecian artists. But it is not fair to excite the curiosity of the public, when both the rank and bashful merit of the possessor, and a too rare exertion of superior talents, confine the proofs to a narrow circle. Whoever has seen the drawings and bas-reliefs designed and executed by lady Diana Beauclerc ‡ is sensible that these imperfect encomiums are far short of the excellence of her works. Her portrait of the duchess of Devonshire, in several hands, confirms the truth of part of these assertions. The nymph-like simplicity of the figure is equal to what a Grecian statuary would have formed for a dryad or goddess of a river. Bartolozzi's print of her two daughters after the drawing of the same lady, is another specimen of her singular genius and taste. The gay and sportive innocence of the younger daughter, and the demure application of the elder, are as characteristically contrasted as Milton's Allegro and Penserofo. A third female genius is Mrs. Damer §, daughter of general Conway, in a walk

\* Margaret Smith, wife of sir Charles Bingham baron Lucan in Ireland.

† For instance, in his prints to Tristram Shandy.

‡ Eldest daughter of Charles Spencer second

duke of Marlborough, married first to Frederic St. John viscount Bolingbroke, and afterwards to Topham Beauclerc, only son of lord Sidney Beauclerc.

§ Only child of general Henry Seymour, commander

walk more difficult and far more uncommon than painting. The annals of statuary record few artists of the fair sex, and not one that I recollect of any celebrity. Mrs. Damer's busts from the life are not inferior to the antique, and theirs we are sure were not more like. Her shock dog, large as life, and only not alive, has a looseness and softness in the curls that seemed impossible to terra-cotta: it rivals the marble one of Bernini in the royal collection. As the ancients have left us but five animals of equal merit with their human figures, namely, the Barberini goat, the Tuscan boar, the Mattei eagle, the eagle at Strawberry-hill, and Mr. Jennings's, now Mr. Duncombe's, dog, the talent of Mrs. Damer must appear in the most distinguished light. Aided by some instructions from that masterly statuary Mr. Bacon, she has attempted and executed a bust in marble. Ceracchi, from whom first she received four or five lessons, has given a whole figure of her as the muse of sculpture, in which he has happily preserved the graceful lightness of her form and air.

Little is said here but historically of the art of gardening. Mr. Mason, in his first beautiful canto on that subject, has shown that Spenser and Addison ought not to have been omitted in the list of our authors who were not blind to the graces of natural taste. The public must wish with the author of this work, that Mr. Mason would complete his poem, and leave this essay as unnecessary as it is imperfect.

The historic compositions offered for St. Paul's by some of our first artists, seemed to disclose a vision of future improvement—a period the more to be wished, as the wound given to painting through the sides of the Romish religion menaces the arts as well as idolatry—unless the methodists, whose rigour seems to soften and adopt the artifices of the catholics (for our itinerant mountebanks already are fond of being fainted in mezzotinto, as well as their St. Bridgets and Terefas), should borrow the paraphernalia of enthusiasm now waning in Italy, and superadd the witchery of painting to that of music. Whitfield's temples encircled with glory may convert rustics, who have never heard of his or Ignatius Loyola's peregrinations. If enthusiasm is to revive, and tabernacles to rise as convents are demolished, may we not hope at least to see them painted? Le Sueur's cloister at Paris makes some little amends for the

mander in chief in 1782 and 1783, by lady Catherine Campbell, countess dowager of Ailesbury. Mrs. Damer was widow of John Damer, eldest son of Joseph lord Milton.

imprisonment of the Carthusians. The absurdity of the legend of the reviving canon is lost in the amazing art of the painter; and the last scene of St. Bruno expiring, in which are expressed all the stages of devotion from the youngest mind impressed with fear to the composed resignation of the prior, is perhaps inferior to no single picture of the greatest master. If Raphael died young, so did Le Sueur: the former had seen the antique, the latter only prints from Raphael: yet in the Chartreuse, what airs of heads! what harmony of colouring! what aerial perspective! How Grecian the simplicity of architecture and drapery! How diversified a single quadrangle, though the life of a hermit be the only subject, and devotion the only pathetic! In short, till we have other pictures than portraits, and painting has ampler fields to range in than private apartments, it is in vain to expect the art should recover its genuine lustre. Statuary has still less encouragement. Sepulchral decorations are almost disused; and though the rage for portraits is at its highest tide both in pictures and prints, busts and statues are never demanded. We seem to wish no longer duration to the monuments of our expence, than the inhabitants of Peru and Ruffia, where edifices are calculated to last but to the next earthquake or conflagration.

October 1, 1780.

CHAP.