

## 'A revolution in art': Maria Callcott on Poussin, Painting, and the Primitives

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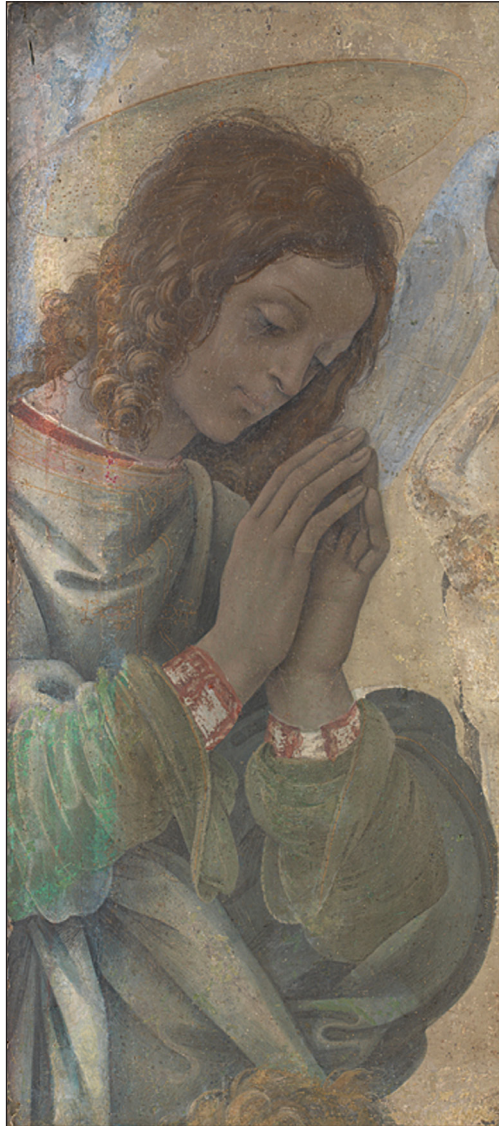
In May 1845 the *Athenaeum* expressed outrage at the apparent loss to the British nation of an 'exquisite fragment' by Filippino Lippi (1457–1504): an 'antique fresco' of *An Angel Adoring* owned by the late landscape painter Augustus Wall Callcott (1779–1844) and his wife Maria (1785–1842), and recently sold at Christie's (*Fig. 1*).<sup>1</sup> The 'cream of gentlemen critics' in Trafalgar Square, the writer declared, should blush with shame to see this gem snapped up by a dealer instead of being 'enshrined for universal homage' in the National Gallery.<sup>2</sup> Suggesting that the trustees had been lulled to sleep by the murmuring of their new fountains, the writer, George Darley, begged 'their Somnolencies to wake up and look about them', pointing to other recent wasted opportunities to acquire important works for the national collection: Charles Aders's fine copy of Van Eyck's Ghent altarpiece (*c.* 1625) and a 'Memling' sold to the poet Samuel Rogers, for example; and the magnificent Thomas Lawrence collection of Raphael and Michelangelo drawings purchased for the University of Oxford.<sup>3</sup> Darley found this all the more inexplicable because Charles Eastlake, keeper of the National Gallery, was known to be a partisan of the 'Grandiose Antique style' ('Filippino', p. 548). Eastlake, of course, was hamstrung by bureaucracy — a situation with which many museum professionals will be only too familiar.<sup>4</sup> However, it is perhaps odd that he did not do more to persuade

<sup>1</sup> [George Darley], 'The Filippino', *Athenaeum*, 31 May 1845, pp. 548–49 (p. 548); [Darley], 'Sale of the Late Sir A. W. Callcott's Collection', *Athenaeum*, 17 May 1845, pp. 499–500 (p. 499). As Maria had died before her husband, the paintings were sold as his collection, though many of the works had been acquired by them jointly while on honeymoon. The *Angel Adoring* (NG927) may well have been purchased by Maria herself, as a Botticelli. Although described as a fresco, it is in fact tempera on wood.

<sup>2</sup> 'The Filippino', p. 548. See also, David Robertson, *Sir Charles Eastlake and the Victorian Art World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), p. 90.

<sup>3</sup> 'The Filippino', p. 548. The Ghent altarpiece was not in fact sold to Rogers, but to the brother-in-law of Joseph Green. The Memling is now considered to be by Van der Weyden. See Jenny Graham, *Inventing Van Eyck: The Remaking of an Artist for the Modern Age* (Oxford: Berg, 2007), pp. 65, 75–76; and Robyn Cooper, 'The Growth of Interest in Early Italian Painting in Britain: George Darley and the *Athenaeum*, 1834–1846', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 43 (1980), 201–20.

<sup>4</sup> Susanna Avery-Quash and Julie Sheldon, *Art for the Nation: The Eastlakes and the Victorian Art World* (London: National Gallery, 2011), pp. 156–60.



*Fig. 1:* Filippino Lippi, *An Angel Adoring*, probably c. 1495, tempera on wood, 55.9 × 25.4 cm. © National Gallery, London.

the trustees to acquire this particular painting, given that he had long been a close friend of Maria, Lady Callcott.

Eastlake had first met her in Malta with her then husband Captain Thomas Graham, and in 1819 they lodged together in the same house in Rome, near the Spanish Steps.<sup>5</sup> 'Dear Carlo', as Maria later called him,

<sup>5</sup> Captain Graham was to die at sea off the coast of Chile in April 1822.

supplied illustrations for her account of a journey they undertook together, *Three Months Passed in the Mountains East of Rome* (1820), and spoke of him warmly, as being like ‘a brother’ to her.<sup>6</sup> Maria Graham, later Callcott, was according to one reviewer ‘a perfect phenomenon in the history of woman’.<sup>7</sup> Various descriptions as ‘intrepid’ and ‘undaunted’, she was not to everyone’s taste: Lady Holland, for example, sympathized with ‘poor Callcott’ on the announcement of their engagement.<sup>8</sup> Today, Maria is perhaps best known for her lively travel writing, thanks to her stays in India, Brazil, and Chile.<sup>9</sup> She first worked for John Murray as a reader, translator, and author, with interests ranging from history to geology and botany, before focusing increasingly on art.

Maria had been interested in art from an early age, visiting Horace Walpole’s Strawberry Hill through her uncle Sir David Dundas and the Miss Berrys, and being taught drawing by William Crotch and William Delamotte (Gotch, pp. 26, 44, 63–64). However, it may well have been Eastlake and the painter Thomas Lawrence who first persuaded her to write specifically on art (Gotch, p. 58). She knew Lawrence from her time in Richmond as a teenager, and the friendship between the three is underlined by the portrait sketch of Maria painted in Eastlake’s studio in Rome, and given by Lawrence to Eastlake in exchange for some of his sketches (Fig. 2). Maria’s close relationship with Murray may also have contributed to this move towards art historical publications, and her pioneering *Memoirs of the Life of Nicholas Poussin* (1820) undoubtedly encouraged him to commission further art-related translations and reviews.<sup>10</sup> In this biography Maria underlined the value of artists as connoisseurs, emphasizing the importance of their practical knowledge for appreciating art of the past. She clearly based her comments concerning Poussin’s technique and use of colour on her conversations with living artists, such as Lawrence, Eastlake, and J. M. W. Turner — another friend met through the painter

<sup>6</sup> Rosamund Brunel Gotch, *Maria, Lady Callcott: The Creator of ‘Little Arthur’* (London: Murray, 1937), pp. 171–72.

<sup>7</sup> Review of Maria Graham, *A Journal of a Residence in India, Theatrical Inquisitor, and Monthly Mirror*, April 1813, pp. 159–60 (p. 159).

<sup>8</sup> David Blayney Brown, *Augustus Wall Callcott* (London: Tate Gallery, 1981), pp. 15–16.

<sup>9</sup> Carl Thompson, ‘Journeys to Authority: Reassessing Women’s Early Travel Writing, 1763–1862’, *Women’s Writing*, 24 (2017), 131–50.

<sup>10</sup> Maria Graham, *Memoirs of the Life of Nicholas Poussin* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1820). Eastlake and Lawrence exchanged letters suggesting Maria should tackle a biography of Titian, based on Stefano Ticozzi’s 1817 publication. See Eastlake, letter to Lawrence, 15 August 1822, London, Royal Academy (RA), Sir Thomas Lawrence Letters and Papers, LAW/4/49. In a letter of 29 November 1826, Maria later suggested to Murray a translation of Lanzi, after she had reviewed Richard Duppa’s life of Raphael for him (Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland (NLS), John Murray Archive, MS40185).



Fig. 2: Thomas Lawrence, *Portrait of Maria, Lady Callcott*, 1819, oil on canvas, 59.7 × 49.5 cm, National Portrait Gallery, London.

John Linnell. The work was overtly patriotic, encouraging contemporary British artists to take Poussin as their model for his gritty determination to succeed without relying on autocratic patronage. She praised his landscapes and mythological subjects, while criticizing his Madonnas as too ‘austere and dignified’ (pp. 112, 145).

Reviews of the book were not universally positive, but although some considered the text derivative, based on French and Italian sources, others recognized its more innovative aspects, such as the catalogue of Poussin’s works, which included prints made after them.<sup>11</sup> Maria stressed that Poussin’s cerebral paintings appealed to the understanding rather than to the eye, and so were especially ‘favourable to engraving, as they depend[ed] more on composition than colour’ (p. 179). Drawing on previous writings by Reynolds, Walpole, and Fuseli, she nevertheless handled her sources critically. Controversially, for example, she criticized the great

<sup>11</sup> ‘Graham’s *Memoirs of Poussin*’, *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine*, April 1821, pp. 23–26 (p. 26).



Fig. 3: Jean Audran, after Nicolas Poussin, *The Deluge (Winter)*, c. 1690, etching and engraving, 44.1 × 59 cm, Harvard Art Museums/Fogg Museum, Gift of Belinda L. Randall from the collection of John Witt Randall.

*Deluge* in the Louvre (Fig. 3), the most praised of all Poussin's works, for tackling an impossible subject. 'One critic has followed another, till it is become a kind of heresy to dispute its justice', but she insisted that 'the effect of the whole picture is unpleasant' (pp. 124, 125).<sup>12</sup> As late as 1900 her book was still the only biography to have been published on Poussin, and had been translated into French and German. One reviewer pointed out the unfairness of Maria being remembered as the author of the popular children's book *Little Arthur's History of England* (1835) rather than for her far more scholarly work on Poussin.<sup>13</sup>

#### In search of Ancients north and south

This was a tentative start, but Maria's connoisseurial confidence was growing. As she wrote to Lawrence in 1820, 'I am no connoisseur [...] but I can feel — & moreover I can be alive to what the painter meant to say.'<sup>14</sup> Ultimately, Maria — like Eastlake — promoted art that lay beyond the prevailing canon of early nineteenth-century Britain, and herein lies her importance for art

<sup>12</sup> This was too much for one reviewer. See Review of Maria Graham, *Memoirs of the Life of Nicholas Poussin*, *British Review*, and *London Critical Journal*, September 1821, pp. 28–42 (pp. 33–35).

<sup>13</sup> 'Bibliographical', *Academy*, 27 April 1901, p. 358.

<sup>14</sup> Letter to Lawrence, [1820], RA, LAW/4/293.

history.<sup>15</sup> When the Callcotts embarked on their lengthy honeymoon tour of Europe in 1827 and 1828, the couple deliberately sought out early works in Germany and Italy, meeting the curators and artists who were producing ‘a revolution in art’ and taste.<sup>16</sup> It was less of a honeymoon and more of an extended research trip. In particular, the Callcotts went in hunt of the Boisserée collection, which they finally tracked down in Munich and to which they gained privileged access.<sup>17</sup>

In a sense they went as representatives of a small coterie of British enthusiasts for early art, including their artist friends and collectors — such as William Young Ottley, David Wilkie, William Hilton, Thomas Phillips, and Dawson Turner, for example (Collier and Palmer, pp. 4–5). Their conscious mission was to study first-hand the works of fourteenth- and fifteenth-century artists, and to bring back news of the latest Continental ‘discoveries’ for their friends. The second part of their plan was to examine the revival of fresco painting by the Nazarenes busily at work in Bonn, Munich, and Rome, and to obtain information on their techniques and materials (Collier and Palmer, pp. 39–42).

The Callcotts were particularly unusual in their taste for early Northern European art, as inspired by August and Friedrich Schlegel, Ludwig Tieck, and the Boisserée brothers, Sulpiz and Melchior. They were among the first to appreciate works by the Cologne school and to question the pre-eminence of Dürer (Collier and Palmer, p. 143). Like Eastlake, they had a thorough awareness of recent German scholarship, and through their travels forged lasting links with like-minded enthusiasts, such as Gustav Waagen, Johann David Passavant, the Nazarene painter Karl Christian Vogel in Dresden, and the collector August Kestner, Hanoverian minister in Rome. A letter written to Goethe by Sulpiz Boisserée reveals how warmly the German cultural elite responded to the Callcotts; he praises Augustus for his outstanding connoisseurship and understanding of colour, while recommending that Goethe’s daughter-in-law Otilie should get to know the witty and intelligent (‘*geistreich*’) Maria, who, like a ‘second

<sup>15</sup> Christopher Lloyd, ‘Lady Callcott’s Honeymoon, 1827–8: Art-Historical Reflections in Germany and Italy’, in *Britannia, Italia, Germania: Taste and Travel in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. by Carol Richardson and Graham Smith (Edinburgh: VARIE, 2001), pp. 44–58 (p. 48); *The Journal of Maria, Lady Callcott, 1827–28*, ed. by Christopher Lloyd and David Blayney Brown (Oxford: Oxford Microform Publications, 1981); Francis Haskell, *Rediscoveries in Art: Some Aspects of Taste, Fashion, and Collecting in England and France*, Wrightsman Lectures, 7 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1976), pp. 47–48.

<sup>16</sup> Maria, letter to John Murray II, 20 September 1827, NLS, MS 40186.

<sup>17</sup> Carly Collier and Caroline Palmer, *Discovering Ancient and Modern Primitives: The Travel Journals of Maria Callcott, 1827–28*, Volume of the Walpole Society, 78 (London: Walpole Society, 2016), especially pp. 20, 142–43.

Odysseus', had travelled many lands and oceans.<sup>18</sup> As in the case of Anna Jameson and the Eastlakes, the German connection was a vital component in the Callcotts' approach to connoisseurship, inspiring their interest in pre-Renaissance artists (Jenny Graham, pp. 53–89).

The tour was very much a joint project, relying on Augustus Callcott's art-world connections and expertise as a painter, and numerous notebooks were compiled by the couple en route, along with meticulous catalogues and gallery descriptions.<sup>19</sup> However, Maria's more discursive journal of the trip was ultimately designed to transmit new ideas from the Continent, not just to painters and connoisseurs, but to a much broader audience. This is clear from an unpublished manuscript in Oxford which is an adapted version of the start of the honeymoon journal. Written in letter form, it indicates that Maria was planning a travel book for a general readership, which would explain and promote the High and Low German schools.<sup>20</sup> She has a lively way of bringing the past alive for this non-specialist audience by making cross-cultural connections. For example, she uses the experience of seeing pictures exhibited in a marketplace in Germany to explain the function of medieval 'series' paintings, which taught moral tales by showing the lives of the saints as a kind of 'strip cartoon', or 'raree show'.<sup>21</sup> She gives detailed accounts of works in Augsburg and Munich, and stresses the importance of the early German and Flemish schools as an epoch in the history of art.

Maria was recognized as an important writer by a number of key German connoisseurs. Passavant, for example, who had met her when visiting England in 1831, acknowledged her as the author of many 'highly-esteemed works', while Waagen commented, 'I have very seldom seen a woman in whose features so much depth of feeling is united with so much mind.'<sup>22</sup> He describes receiving a copy of the *Description of the*

<sup>18</sup> This letter, dated 9 July 1827, never reached Goethe, because — despite a cryptic note in Goethe's diary for 15 August — the Callcotts do not appear to have visited Weimar as they originally intended. See also, *Sulpiz Boisserée: Tagebücher 1808–1854*, ed. by Hans-J. Weltz, 5 vols (Darmstadt: Roether, 1981), II: 1823–1834, 182–84. My thanks to Sylk Schneider for bringing this to my attention.

<sup>19</sup> See Collier and Palmer, pp. 249–51. Boisserée's diary entry for 9 July 1827 makes very clear their intention to publish these notes on the painting collections of Europe (*Tagebücher*, ed. by Weltz, II, 184).

<sup>20</sup> Oxford, Bodleian Library, Callcott Papers (CP), MS.Eng.d.2280. Lloyd and Brown suggest this was written while travelling (*Journal of Lady Callcott*, p. 5), but internal evidence indicates that it was composed after further research, c. 1829. See also 'Beginning of Heads of our Tour in 1827', which suggests headings for a travel book (CP, MS.Eng.d.2279).

<sup>21</sup> CP, MS.Eng.d.2280, fol. 63.

<sup>22</sup> J. D. Passavant, *Tour of a German Artist in England*, trans. by [Elizabeth Rigby], 2 vols (London: Saunders and Otley, 1836), II, 61; G. F. Waagen, *Works of Art and Artists in England*, 3 vols (London: Murray, 1838), I, 154.

*Annunziata dell'Arena; or, Giotto's Chapel in Padua* (1835) — one of the earliest publications to draw attention to the tender beauties of Giotto, based on notes by Maria and drawings first made by her husband in 1827.<sup>23</sup> The work was limited in its impact, being privately printed, but its influence extended to key individuals in Britain and across Europe. Apart from the British recipients, copies were sent to Vogel and Johann Frenzel in Dresden, to Passavant and Waagen, Carlo Lasinio and Kestner in Italy, and to the Danish sculptor Bertel Thorvaldsen.<sup>24</sup>

This groundbreaking publication was an outcome of the Callcotts' joint honeymoon project (though undertaken primarily to distract Maria during her severe illness). However, the second publication broadly based on the tour was Maria's own. It was her modestly titled *Essays Towards the History of Painting* (1836), with its *Continuation* — a single essay published in 1838. There are few reviews, but most agree on the particular value of Maria's final chapter on materials and techniques, based on her awareness of actual use as well as thorough historical research. Her closeness to painters — especially to Augustus — was again of central importance here, as was the opportunity to study unfinished paintings while on tour. Discussions with the Nazarenes and Carlo Lasinio in Pisa led to a fresh understanding of fresco, while her enquiries on the chemical properties of pigments were answered by Humphry Davy. As in the case of Mary Merrifield, Maria used her extensive network to boost her authority, while claiming to write as a mere 'unpretending' lover of art.<sup>25</sup>

In this context Maria makes a virtue of what she calls her 'homely' approach, using examples drawn from everyday life, as opposed to displaying 'the pride of unusual learning'.<sup>26</sup> It was not just women writers on art who took this approach at the time, but also many middle-class male writers, upholding the value of 'common sense' as against the myopic focus of the gentleman connoisseur, blinded by excess classical learning

<sup>23</sup> Carly Collier, 'From "Gothic Atrocities" to Objects of Aesthetic Appreciation: The Transition from Marginal to Mainstream of Early Italian Art in British Taste during the Long Eighteenth Century', in *The Centre and the Margins in Eighteenth-Century British and Italian Cultures*, ed. by Frank O'Gorman and Lia Guerra (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013), pp. 117–39.

<sup>24</sup> Maria's own copy in the National Art Library (NAL), V&A contains letters of thanks from the Duke of Bedford, Lord Carlisle, and Lady Egerton, as well as numerous artists (National Art Library, II, RC.F.7, copy B). For Maria's letters to Thorvaldsen, see <<http://arkivet.thorvaldsensmuseum.dk>> [accessed 20 March 2019], m20 1835, nos. 51 and 54.

<sup>25</sup> Hilary Fraser, *Women Writing Art History in the Nineteenth Century: Looking Like a Woman*, Cambridge Studies in Nineteenth-Century Literature and Culture, 95 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 25–33.

<sup>26</sup> Mrs Callcott, *Essays Towards the History of Painting* (London: Moxon, 1836), pp. 219, 218.



to the evidence of his own eyes (a frequent topos of eighteenth-century art-writing).<sup>27</sup> This had been Hogarth's strategy, to emphasize the valuable clear-sightedness of those who were apparently excluded from the intellectual elite — even women and servants!<sup>28</sup> Maria's advantage was that in addition to this 'no-nonsense' freshness of vision, she could offer a great breadth of examples, casting her gaze across a worldwide field, from Europe to India, Chile, and Brazil, as well as taking a long view of history. Her greatest innovation in the *Essays* was to call for deeper appreciation of certain medieval artists, placing them as equals alongside later Renaissance painters.

Maria was original in many of her ideas but was prevented from publishing as much as she would have liked by ill health. From 1831 she was in considerable pain, barely able to write, and confined to her home; reading was almost her sole amusement, she told Passavant in 1833.<sup>29</sup> The poet Joanna Baillie described her in 1836 as being in a 'very weak state' though still 'full of spirit, industry and animation': 'She gave me a copy of her last Essay on the history of Painting which she expects to be the last thing she shall ever write.'<sup>30</sup> It is regrettable that Maria's ambitious plans were frustrated. Her published *Essays* were only a small fragment of the work she planned, as she makes clear in several letters. According to the *Continuation* of her *Essays*, she had intended mapping the development of art alongside the progress of European society from the second to the fifteenth centuries, tracing in particular the transfer of art from east to west, and from south to north.<sup>31</sup> Copious notes survive, spread across the collections of the Bodleian Library, the Courtauld Institute, and the Royal Academy, covering everything from Druidical stone circles to the art of Sweden, Spain, and Bohemia.<sup>32</sup>

In another manuscript of c. 1834, entitled 'Extracts from Some Letters Written to a Person in Rome', Maria writes on the representation of sibyls by Michelangelo, Raphael, and Perugino, as well as emphasizing the debt owed to earlier medieval artists by these great masters of the Renaissance.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Harry Mount, 'The Monkey with the Magnifying Glass: Constructions of the Connoisseur in Eighteenth-Century Britain', *Oxford Art Journal*, 29 (2006), 167–84.

<sup>28</sup> William Hogarth, *The Analysis of Beauty*, ed. by Ronald Paulson (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), p. 18.

<sup>29</sup> Letter to Passavant, 24 June 1833, Frankfurt a.M, Universitätsbibliothek Johann Christian Senckenberg (UJCS), Ms.Ff.J.D.Passavant A.II.e Nr 95.

<sup>30</sup> *Collected Letters of Joanna Baillie*, ed. by Judith Bailey Slagle, 2 vols (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1999), II, 872.

<sup>31</sup> Maria Callcott, *Continuation of Essays Towards the History of Painting* (London: Moxon, 1838), pp. 38–39.

<sup>32</sup> See, for example, RA, Callcott Papers, CA/11/16, p. 73, on the transfer of art from Byzantium to Flanders; Collier and Palmer, pp. 249–51.

<sup>33</sup> Bodleian Library, CP, MS.Eng.2732; and RA, CA/11/9, 14, 15, 17 and 18. (Bodleian Library, MS.Eng.d.2289 is a copy in a different hand.) Earlier examples are also given, including Van Eyck's sibyls on the outer wings of the Ghent altarpiece.

She explains the historical background to the sibyls as ‘prophetical ladies’, justifying their adoption by the early Christian church for their oracular sayings foretelling the coming of Christ. In a second essay she then explains the typology of the Sistine Chapel, advising visitors to look more closely at the earlier frescoes along the side walls, by Perugino, Ghirlandaio, and Botticelli, depicting scenes from the life of Moses. While admiring Michelangelo’s ceiling, she emphasizes the profound achievements of his predecessors, and expresses annoyance at the notion peddled by ciceroni that earlier ages were unaware of typological links. ‘In the name of common sense,’ she pleads, ‘pause before you ascribe to the invention of one man that which Ages had been gradually preparing.’<sup>34</sup> These ‘letters’ were most likely written in response to questions from a real or imagined travelling correspondent (perhaps her cousin Sir William Dundas), and Maria must have considered publishing the text with illustrations. She commissioned through Linnell a copy after a Perugino print, writing to him, ‘I wish to have the group of sibyls only copied, the rest not belonging to my subject.’<sup>35</sup> This was probably a print after the fresco in the Collegio del Cambio, Perugia — possibly the engraving by Francesco Cecchini (*Fig. 4*).



*Fig. 4:* Francesco Cecchini, after Perugino (Pietro Vannucci), *The Prophets and Sibyls*, 1780–92, etching and engraving, Harvard Art Museums/Fogg Museum, Gift of William Gray from the collection of Francis Calley Gray.

<sup>34</sup> Bodleian Library, CP, MS.Eng.2732, p. 24; cf. Lady Eastlake, in Avery-Quash and Sheldon, p. 146. Ironically, Gotch later described Maria herself as a ‘Sibylline being’ (p. 283).

<sup>35</sup> Alfred T. Story, *The Life of John Linnell*, 2 vols (London: Bentley, 1892), 1, 275–76 (p. 276).

### Informal influence: the Callcott 'salon'

I would argue that despite her few publications on art, Maria Callcott wielded considerable influence over artistic debates of the day through her 'salon' at the Mall, Kensington Gravel Pits during the 1830s. As in the case of the collectors Charles Aders and Samuel Rogers, she must have played an informal role in transforming the climate of aesthetic opinion.<sup>36</sup> Although housebound, she corresponded with figures in the art world across Europe — sending Passavant lists of corrections to his publication on English collections, for example.<sup>37</sup>

Within England, Maria maintained a web of contacts with those who shared her fascination with early printmaking and manuscript illumination, swapping books and portfolios of prints — with Linnell, John Flaxman, Dawson Turner, and Francis Palgrave. She borrowed Samuel Rogers's collection of drawings of the Sistine Chapel, for example, then thought to be by Vasari, and it was while they were with the Callcotts that Linnell saw them and decided to create facsimile copies, published in 1833.<sup>38</sup> Many of Maria's interests overlapped with those of the antiquary Francis Douce (1757–1834), including Holbein's *Dance of Death*, and the recently uncovered murals of St Stephen's Chapel, Westminster.<sup>39</sup> Like Douce, Maria had an interest in early British art that Eastlake did not display, while also sharing Douce's thematic approach to visual material, ranging across cultures, and from high to low art.<sup>40</sup> The connection between them is highlighted by the publication *The Seven Ages of Shakespeare*, illustrated

<sup>36</sup> M. K. Joseph, 'Charles Aders', *Auckland University College Bulletin*, 43.6 (1953), 2, 6, 23–26.

<sup>37</sup> Ms.Ff.J.D.Passavant A.II.e Nrs 95 and 96; J. D. Passavant, *Kunstreise durch England und Belgien* (Frankfurt a.M.: Schmerber, 1833), later published in English in 1836 as *Tour of a German Artist in England*.

<sup>38</sup> Letter to Mary Ponsonby, Countess Grey, 6 September 1832, University of York, Borthwick Institute for Archives, A1.4.24 (my thanks to Carly Collier for this reference); Story, 1, 221–22.

<sup>39</sup> On the disagreement between Ottley and Douce regarding Holbein's block cutters, see RA, Callcott Papers, CA/7. For St Stephen's Chapel, see Bodleian Library, CP, MS.Eng.d.2287 (MC.III.a.f.162–68), and the 1820 painted copies by Edward Crocker presented by Douce to the University of Oxford, Ashmolean Museum, WA1863.1450–72; Jon Whiteley, 'The Douce Collection', *Apollo*, May 1997, pp. 58–59; and Mercedes Cerón, 'Wood-Engravings from the Collection of Francis Douce at the Ashmolean Museum', in *Burning Bright: Essays in Honour of David Bindman*, ed. by Diana Dethloff and others (London: UCL Press, 2015), pp. 224–33.

<sup>40</sup> Susanna Avery-Quash and Corina Meyer, "Substituting an approach to historical evidence for the vagueness of speculation": Charles Lock Eastlake and Johann David Passavant's Contribution to the Professionalization of Art-Historical Study through Source-Based Research', *Journal of Art Historiography*, 18 (2018) <<https://arthistoriography.files.wordpress.com/2018/05/avery-quash-and-meyer.pdf>> [accessed 20 March 2019] (p. 31).

by Maria's artist-friends William Mulready, Wilkie, and C. R. Leslie, as well as by her husband. Maria contributes to the theme of the Ages of Man a Hebrew parable from the Midrash Kohelet, revealing her continuing interest in cross-cultural religious links.<sup>41</sup> She suggests early visual examples by Tobias Stimmer and Federighi of Siena, while Douce supplies a woodcut from a children's picture book of 1658.

Despite her lack of any official position, Maria was therefore vital in forging connections between members of the artistic community, just as Mary Berry had done in an earlier period.<sup>42</sup> When Eastlake translated August Kestner's *Über die Nachahmung in der Malerei* ('On Imitation in Painting', 1818), for example, Maria offered to show the work to Murray, in the hope of getting it published — unsuccessfully, as it turned out.<sup>43</sup> Kestner described the Callcotts as the 'best people in the world', having established relations with them of 'mutual Attachement'.<sup>44</sup> Maria continued to write to him during the 1830s, expressing her views on the unsuitability of fresco for the English climate and discussing recent discoveries in the Etruscan tombs.<sup>45</sup> In a letter delivered by Ludwig Grüner, she also introduced the sculptor Laurence Macdonald (1799–1878) to Passavant, requesting that he show him 'whatever is most worth seeing in Frankfort — As a Sculptor of great talent he will of course be anxious to see Danecker's Ariadne & as a lover of Art pray shew him the Staedel & whatever private collections you have.'<sup>46</sup> Such pan-European introductions were important, despite the fact that it is difficult to quantify their impact.

Maria may also have had some influence on contemporary painters, while lying 'somewhat imperious in her state chamber'.<sup>47</sup> E. V. Ripplingille underlines this in his 'Recollections'; he describes Augustus Callcott as a 'somewhat stately personage', his 'subdued' manner forming a strong contrast with his

<sup>41</sup> *The Seven Ages of Shakespeare*, ed. by John Martin (London: van Voorst, 1840), pp. 5–11, 13. Maria's copy of *Giotto's Chapel* in the National Art Library is annotated with passages from the Koran that chime with her extracts from the Apocryphal Gospels.

<sup>42</sup> See Caroline Palmer, 'Women Writers on Art and Perceptions of the Female Connoisseur' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Oxford Brookes, 2009), pp. 87–89.

<sup>43</sup> Letter to Kestner, August 1828, Universitätsbibliothek Leipzig (UL), Autographensammlung Kestner, Kestner/II/D/I/100/nr 1, Mappe 100, Blatt 1. Kestner's responses are in the NAL, MSL/1973/4012/45–48.

<sup>44</sup> Letter from Kestner to his sister Charlotte, 8 March 1828, in Marie Jorns, *August Kestner und seine Zeit, 1777–1853* (Hanover: Madsack, 1964), p. 159.

<sup>45</sup> Letters to Kestner, September 1832 and July 1836, UL, Kestner/II/D/I/100/nr 1, Mappe 100, Blatt 2 and 3. Kestner's portrait drawing of Maria, mentioned by Gotch (p. 271), was almost certainly destroyed during World War II (personal communication from Museum August Kestner, Hanover).

<sup>46</sup> Letter to Passavant, 29 September 1832, UJCS, Ms.Ff.J.D.Passavant A.II.e Nr 94.

<sup>47</sup> Richard and Samuel Redgrave, *A Century of Painters of the English School*, 2 vols (London: Smith, Elder, 1866), II, 404.

talented partner, whose lively talk [...] upon any subject that turned up, never failed to excite surprise, attention, and interest [...]. A social and a hospitable feeling was found in his house, by which many intelligent people were brought together, and the utmost freedom and ease prevailed.<sup>48</sup>

Although Maria complained to Passavant that she could not attend the Royal Academy summer exhibitions — for ‘alas! I am a prisoner’ — many paintings were brought to her sickbed beforehand so she could offer her thoughts to the painters concerned. She then transmitted news of these paintings to Passavant in Frankfurt and Kestner in Rome, describing works by Mulready, Landseer, Leslie, Wilkie, and Linnell — all but the very biggest canvases.<sup>49</sup> She kept Passavant up to date with the opening of the National Gallery, parliamentary reform, and with news of Ottley’s appointment to the British Museum.<sup>50</sup> Informally too, Maria seems to have given advice to Queen Victoria on prints and collecting, via her friend Marianne Skerrett, the Queen’s head dresser.<sup>51</sup>

Apart from this exchange of information, the Redgraves give a fascinating glimpse into the physical context of the Callcott household where, according to a poem written by Maria, there were ‘gold-ground saints of face demure | From Pisa — more than half a score’. Some of these are visible in the sepia sketch by her great-nephew John Callcott Horsley (*Fig. 5*).<sup>52</sup> On the wall to the left we see the Lippi painting, which is likely to be the ‘head of Botticelli’ Maria describes buying in Florence from the restorer Natale Ussi in Santa Croce on 19 December 1827.<sup>53</sup>

This Lippi was one of sixteen lots of early paintings, then attributed to Giunta Pisano, Giotto, Benozzo Gozzoli, Ghirlandaio, and Fra Angelico, listed in the Christie and Manson sale catalogue of the Callcott collection on 8 May 1845. Many of these were probably fragments of dismembered altarpieces acquired through Carlo Lasinio in Pisa.<sup>54</sup> Also mentioned in

<sup>48</sup> E. V. Ripplingille, ‘Personal Recollections of Great Artists’, *Art Journal*, April 1860, pp. 99–100 (p. 99).

<sup>49</sup> Letter to Passavant, 29 September 1832, UJCS.

<sup>50</sup> Letter to Passavant, 30 July 1833, UJCS, Ms.Ff.J.D.Passavant A.II.e Nr 96.

<sup>51</sup> Carly Collier, ‘Maria Callcott, Queen Victoria and the “Primitives”’, *Visual Resources*, 33 (2016), 27–47 (pp. 35–36).

<sup>52</sup> ‘Remembrancer’ album, Bodleian Library, CP, MS.Eng.d.2290, p. 262. She also mentions ‘two cherubs’ heads’ on either side of the fireplace, and a small altarpiece is visible over the door to the right.

<sup>53</sup> Collier and Palmer, p. 182. Lippi was apprenticed to Botticelli following his father’s death. For the novelty of Maria’s taste for Botticelli, see Michael Levey, ‘Botticelli and Nineteenth-Century England’, *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 23 (1960), 291–306 (p. 297).

<sup>54</sup> Donata Levi, ‘Carlo Lasinio, Curator, Collector and Dealer’, *Burlington Magazine*, 135 (1993), 133–48 (p. 144). For Maria’s honeymoon journal for 13 and 15 April 1828, see Collier and Palmer, pp. 211–12.



Fig. 5: John Callcott Horsley, *The Book Room*, 1833, pen and brown ink and wash, The Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford, MS.Eng.d.2290 (p. 262).

George Darley's *Athenaeum* article is 'another very curious [...] antique', a Giunta Pisano Virgin and Child on copper, just four by three inches in size, 'the late Mr. Ottley's picture so-called' ('Sale', p. 499). Although Waagen is said to have described it as 'Greekish', Darley insists that it improves on the early Greek style, as the impasto is 'full of brushmarks, not smooth and japanned; the expression earnest and individual, not copied mechanically after the one Byzantine prototype' (pp. 499–500). Both Virgin and Child wear black tiaras, 'arabesqued with small red and white roses'; 'the Virgin also wears a hooded mantle [...] adorned in front with a pelican vulning herself between two of her brood [...]'. Golden glories and background of course.<sup>55</sup>

It is difficult to judge the effect of such paintings on the Callcotts' many visitors. As in the case of Ottley's domestic picture gallery, hung 'floor to ceiling with pictures by the old pre-Raphaelite artists', so it must

<sup>55</sup> [Darley], 'Sale', p. 500. An annotated catalogue in the Frick Collection (Frick Auction Catalogs, Christie, Manson & Woods, 'Drawings and Sketches', London, 8 May 1845–11 May 1845) reveals how Darley was able to describe the work in such detail. It seems to have been purchased by none other than Charles Wentworth Dilke (1789–1864), editor of the *Athenaeum*. The name 'Dilke' appears next to lot 402, 'Small heads of the Virgin and Child — on gold ground'. The copy in the Bodleian Library (CP, MS.Eng.2270) is annotated 'Colnaghi', but this could refer to lot 403, a second Giunta Pisano.

have been with the Callcotts' home.<sup>56</sup> Their regular evening parties brought together important figures in the art world, as well as musicians, writers, and other intellectuals. Waagen, for example, described a 'congenial' gathering chez Callcott where he met Eastlake, Eduard Magnus, a portrait painter from Berlin, and Dr Rosen, an expert in Oriental languages.<sup>57</sup> These interdisciplinary and cross-European exchanges must have facilitated the development of fresh insights.

### The angel restored: vindication of a woman's taste?

Dwelling in the 'very densest atmosphere of art', as wife to a respected painter at the centre of the art establishment, Maria Callcott used her wide personal networks and travel experience to challenge the accepted canon of taste.<sup>58</sup> On both a personal level and in print, she contributed to the transformation of conventional wisdom regarding early Renaissance art, while also helping to combat prejudice against women writers and connoisseurs. Evidence of that continuing prejudice can be found in responses to her publications. There is the usual backhanded compliment, for example, in a review of the *Essays*: 'It is a work of more substance and research, of more positive knowledge and practical information, [...] than it is either usual or reasonable to expect at the hands of lady authors.'<sup>59</sup>

Rather more obliquely, in the very *Athenaeum* article that praises her Lippi painting, Darley reveals continuing resistance to female connoisseurship. He recalls Samuel Woodburn's exhibitions of the Lawrence drawings where the Leonardos, Michelangelos, and Raphaels 'produced a thin attendance of enthusiasts, all mute and almost all masculine' — while those by the Carracci 'drew a throng of both sexes, all bustle, rustle, ecstasies, — and exclamations, the fair fanatics (save for their tight stays which restrained them a little, like strait-waistcoats) threatening to run mad with amatorial raptures'. He characterizes the 'higher gusto' for Raphael and Michelangelo as '*caviare*' for the masculine elect, while the vulgar-minded 'inferior smack' for Murillos and Carlo Dolces is seen as '*ketchup*' for the female multitude ('Sale', p. 499, emphases in original).

<sup>56</sup> John Sartain, *The Reminiscences of a Very Old Man 1808–1897* (New York: Appleton, 1899), p. 98.

<sup>57</sup> Waagen, 1, 154–56. Maria's friends included the writers Maria Edgeworth, Harriet Martineau, Sarah Austin, Jane Marcet, Sydney Smith, and Charlotte Lockhart, daughter of Sir Walter Scott.

<sup>58</sup> Review of Mrs Callcott, *Essays Towards the History of Painting*, *Monthly Review*, July 1836, pp. 302–15 (p. 303).

<sup>59</sup> Review of Mrs Callcott, *Essays Towards the History of Painting*, *Morning Post*, 29 June 1836, p. 6. My thanks to Carly Collier for this reference.

The age-old prejudice against women as serious viewers of art is still in evidence here — a prejudice rife in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries — and which Maria Callcott was resisting in publishing on art. Her choice of history-painting heavyweights like Michelangelo and Poussin was especially challenging, since women were believed to dislike the ‘grand manner’.<sup>60</sup> How ironic that such prejudice should continue to be expressed in the context of a painting sale that amply demonstrated a woman’s revolutionary connoisseurship.

Darley comments in the article on the change in taste that had swept over England in the previous ten years. A decade before, he writes, the Lippi angel would have been dismissed as ‘uncouth’ and ‘wooden’; ‘every petty vial of wrathful criticism’ would have been ‘poured upon it’ and the ‘vocabulary of vulgar vituperation emptied to the dregs’. Whereas now it was described as ‘graceful, dignified, [...] expressive! angel-like indeed’ (‘Sale’, p. 499). Having had the truth about the beauty of early Renaissance art thundered into their ears for the last ten years, he declares, the English public are at last listening to reason.

Along with Ottley, Jameson, and the Eastlakes, Maria’s was one of the voices that had long been thundering that truth into the ears of the British public. For Maria, the lifetime of Raphael marked a fundamental change from the ‘old intellectual style’ to the ‘new sensual style’.<sup>61</sup> She was one of the first to describe Bolognese art as vulgar, mannered, and decadent, while admiring the predecessors to Michelangelo and Raphael as pure, noble, and graceful. Indirectly, Darley was acknowledging the success of her influence, while still belittling the vulgar-mindedness of ‘Carracci-bitten, Murillo-mad’ female viewers.<sup>62</sup>

The Lippi angel was not in fact lost to the nation, as Darley first feared, but was sold to the liberal politician Wynn Ellis via the Sloane Street dealer Bentley (‘The Filippino’, pp. 548–49). It was ultimately bequeathed to the National Gallery in 1876 and stands as a reminder of Maria Callcott’s contribution to the rediscovery of the Primitives.<sup>63</sup> Typical of her taste, it exemplifies the revolutionary ideas set out in her publications and unpublished manuscripts.

<sup>60</sup> John Barrell, *The Political Theory of Painting from Reynolds to Hazlitt: ‘The Body of the Public’* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), pp. 65–68.

<sup>61</sup> Bodleian Library, CP, MS.Eng.d.2287 (MC.III.a.f.145).

<sup>62</sup> [George Darley], ‘The National Gallery’, *Athenaeum*, 24 July 1841, p. 558.

<sup>63</sup> Another painting from the Callcott collection, which arrived at the National Gallery by a rather circuitous route, is *The Virgin and Child with Two Angels* (c. 1467–69) by Verrocchio, NG2508. See Martin Davies, *The Earlier Italian Schools* (London: National Gallery, 1961), pp. 187–88.