Joseph Wright's Pastel *Portrait of a Woman* An Article in Three Parts

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INTRODUCTION

In 2006 The Metropolitan Museum of Art acquired its first pastel by Joseph Wright of Derby (1734–1797), the British portrait, history, and landscape painter known for his dramatic scenes of artificial light. *Portrait of a Woman* (Figure 3), executed in grisaille pastel on blue paper, shows a young woman with her head turned, looking beyond the space depicted. The figure's upswept hair, high forehead, straight eyebrows, long nose, full lips, and fleshy chin reappear—at what appears to be a slightly older age—in a painting dated 1772, *A Young Woman Reading a Letter with a Young Man Peering over Her Shoulder* (Figure 1). Similar features also characterize Wright's less precisely rendered *Young Woman Reading a Letter by Candlelight with an Old Man Peering over Her Shoulder* of about 1771 (Figure 2), suggesting that the same person may have modeled for all three works. Yet Wright is unlikely to have prepared the pastel as a study for either candlelight painting. Rather, it almost certainly functioned as a finished, independent work of art, one of several pastel portraits he made during the productive years before his mid-life journey to Italy.

The essays that follow examine the Metropolitan's sheet within three contexts: its place within Wright's larger graphic oeuvre, its use of seventeenth-century sources and recent thought on beauty, and the relationship of its materials and technique to aesthetic concepts. Together, they begin to redress a lacuna in the literature, from which a comprehensive study of Wright's drawings remains conspicuously absent.

Elizabeth E. Barker

1. Joseph Wright of Derby (British, 1734–1797). *A Young Woman Reading a Letter with a Young Man Peering over Her Shoulder*. Signed and dated: *Jo.s Wright pinx.t 1772*. Oil on canvas, approx. 28 x 36 in. (71.2 x 91.5 cm). Private collection

2. Joseph Wright of Derby. *A Young Woman Reading a Letter by Candlelight with an Old Man Peering over Her Shoulder*, ca. 1771. Oil on canvas, 36 x 28 in. (91.5 x 71.2 cm). Private collection

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Joseph Wright's Pastel *Portrait of a Woman* Part II: Sources, Meaning, and Context

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The Metropolitan Museum's *Portrait of a Woman* (Figure 3) is one of a group of monochrome heads drawn by Joseph Wright between 1768 and 1771 while he was based in Liverpool.[1] Related works include portraits of two young men wearing exotic headgear (Figures 11, 12), two girls with feathers or pompoms in their hair (Figure 13), and a studious boy in a ruffled collar (Figure 14).[2] A pastel self-portrait (Figure 15) is similar in size and closely related in conception.[3] An exhibition held in 2007 and 2008 at the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool, and the Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, allowed many of these works to be studied together, and the discoveries made by Elizabeth Barker and Alex Kidson relating to the circumstances surrounding their creation formed the foundation upon which the following discussion is built.[4] Each of these portraits conveys a strong sense of physical presence and was undoubtedly based on study from life. But the emphasis given to expression and fanciful costume demonstrates Wright's equal or greater interest in a range of nonportrait modes, including the character head, called in Dutch *trony*, as well as the French *tête d'expression*. A demonstrable sense of role-playing connects some in the group to that imaginative, self-consciously modern British genre, the fancy picture.[5]

Wright executed these drawings either in grisaille pastels or black and white chalks, usually upon blue or gray laid paper. The close focus on head and shoulders and characteristic sense of intimacy suggest that the models were friends rather than patrons.[6] A strong light, cast from one side, produces deep shadows of the kind associated with Wright's candlelight pictures. In addition, the construction of these drawings relates more closely to his subject paintings of the same period than to his commissioned portraits. Even as he rethought the conversation piece in his exhibited subject paintings, Wright here addressed the British tradition of the informal portrait head drawing, borrowing from seventeenth-century precedents but applying up-to-date aesthetic principles.

Portrait of a Woman, close to lifesize, is brought to a high degree of finish in pastel, a medium admirably suited to evoking the soft texture of skin and hair. The subject's pose is defined by her sharply turned head and averted gaze. The

11. Joseph Wright of Derby (British, 1734–1797). *Head of a Man, Probably Peter Perez Burdett*, ca. 1770–71. Black, brown, and white chalk and charcoal on laid paper; 14¼ x 11¾ in. (36.2 x 29.8 cm). Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, Paul Mellon Collection (B1977.14.6320)

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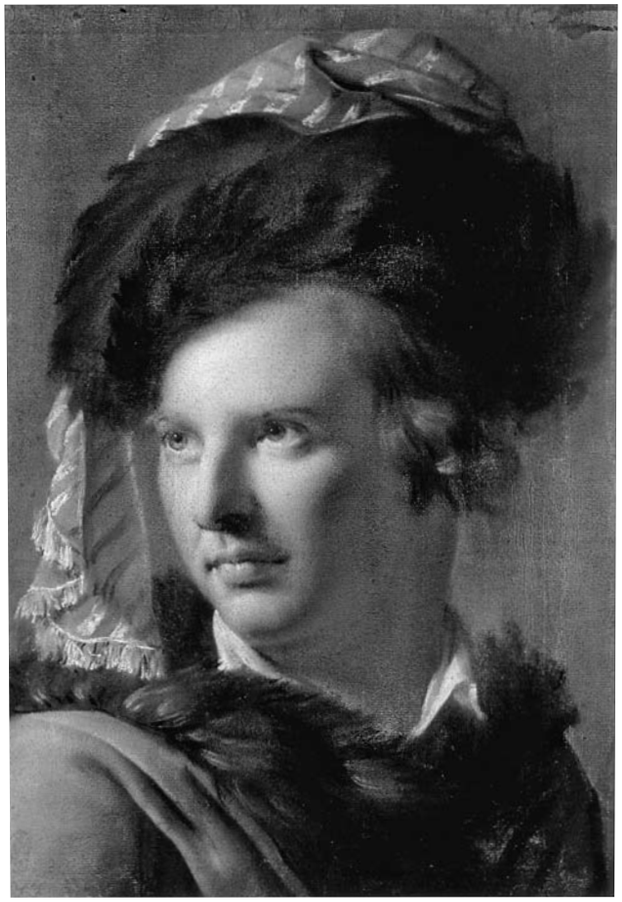
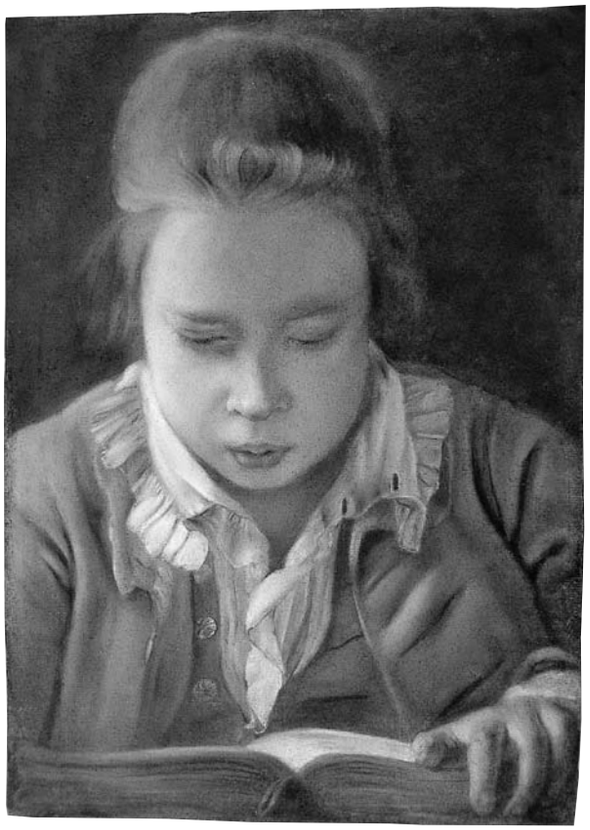


12. Joseph Wright of Derby. *Head of a Young Man in a Fur Cap (Possibly Richard or William Tate?)*, ca. 1770–71. Black chalk heightened with white on wove paper, 16⅞ x 11⅝ in. (42.9 x 29.5 cm). Speed Art Museum, Louisville, Kentucky, Purchase, Museum Art Fund (1963.30)

13. Joseph Wright of Derby. *Study of a Girl with Feathers in Her Hair*, ca. 1770. Black and white chalk on blue paper, now gray; 12⅞ x 11½ in. (32.7 x 29.2 cm). Fitzwilliam Museum, University of Cambridge, Henry Reitlinger Bequest (PD.128-1991)



light falling from the left accentuates the sinuous line of her twisted neck and casts the far side of her face into shadow. The sole rendering of a mature woman among the monochrome portraits, the subject is also distinguished by her simple toilette. Every other subject wears some fanciful accessory: an exotic hat, turban, striped scarf, ruffled collar, feathers, or pompoms, but the woman in the Metropolitan's drawing is clad in a plain, low-necked gown whose smooth, white-edged bodice frames the delicate skin of her neck and bosom, and her lustrous hair is unconstrained by cap or scarf. This is noticeably different from the dress pictured in Wright's commissioned portraits, where his young female subjects invariably wear pendant earrings, ribbon ruffs, or garnet necklaces and have ribbons and pearls woven through their hair.[7] The only adornment here is a small gold earring, whose function seems more formal than decorative,

14. Joseph Wright of Derby. *Boy Reading*, ca. 1769–71. Grisaille pastel, 16½ x 11 in. (41.9 x 27.9 cm). Private collection, United Kingdom

15. Joseph Wright of Derby. *Self-Portrait in a Fur Cap*, ca. 1770–71. Monochrome pastel on gray-blue laid paper, 16¾ x 11⅝ in. (42.5 x 29.5 cm). Art Institute of Chicago, Clarence Buckingham Collection (1990.141)

placed to mark the pivot point of the head and to punctuate the line dividing the shadowed background from her brightly lit face. A delicately applied highlight on the loop of the earring is echoed by another reflective touch just below the tip of the nose, and together these points help to establish the dimensions of the face and underscore its implied movement from left to right.

Wright seemingly believed his subject possessed a natural beauty that needed no artificial enhancement. In the late 1760s the middle and upper classes in Britain and France began to favor a greater simplicity of dress and manners.[8] This trend was articulated by Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778), who argued for casting off civilized artifice to reveal innately admirable human qualities previously concealed or distorted. Rousseau's major texts were quickly translated into English and were widely read in Britain.[9] Indeed, before he moved to Liverpool, Wright may have been aware of the philosopher, who in 1766–67 was living on the border of Derbyshire, to escape likely persecution in France and Switzerland.[10]

To convey visually the idea of deliberately eschewing adornment, Wright turned to a British portrait type from the previous century established by Sir Peter Lely (1618–1680) and Sir Godfrey Kneller (1646?–1743). Seeking an alternative to the strictures of formal court imagery, these artists had borrowed tropes from pastoral literature and portrayed female sitters as hermits or shepherdesses.[11] A mezzotint by John Smith (after 1654?–1742/43) after Kneller's *Isabella, Duchess of Grafton* (Figure 16) exemplifies the type: its noble subject placed in an uncultivated landscape bareheaded and without jewels, and dressed in a plain, low-necked, unconstructed gown.[12] Setting aside normal indications of rank to appear alone in a wild place, the sitter enacts a kind of conceptual retreat from the demands of civilized life. *Portrait of a Woman*, with its sitter's deliberately plain gown and bare head and neck, restates this mode on an intimate scale. Wright's visual method parallels Rousseau's literary one, as Rousseau also absorbed and reconstituted pastoral forms to create his own concept of "the natural."[13]

Wright would have had ample opportunity to study similar portraits during his two periods of apprenticeship under Thomas Hudson (1701?–1779) in 1751–53 and 1756–57. Hudson ran the most successful portrait studio in London during the 1740s and 1750s. He inherited compositional forms from Jonathan Richardson the Elder (1665–1745), his teacher and father-in-law, many of which were traceable back to Kneller, Lely, and Anthony Van Dyck (1599–1641). Of equal importance was the art collection that Hudson began to form in the 1740s. This eventually included more than two hundred paintings, thousands of prints, some terracotta models, and a large number of old master drawings, including sheets by Peter Paul Rubens (1577–1640), Van Dyck, Rembrandt van Rijn (1606–1669), and Italian masters of the preceding two centuries.[14] Together with the workaday copies assembled by any active studio, this corpus would have provided Hudson's students with a wide range of British and European examples.

In their scale, vivacity, and materials, Wright's chalk and pastel heads rely on a type of intimate portrait drawing introduced to Britain from Flanders by Rubens and Van Dyck.[15] Lely inherited the mode and then helped to establish the informal chalk head as an independent form, signing chalk portraits to indicate their independent status and intending them to be framed and hung.[16] Subsequently, Michael Dahl (1659?–1743), Richardson (see Figure 22), and Hudson also drew dynamic large-scale heads in chalks, often on blue paper.[17] Even when preparatory to paintings, these possess a physical immediacy that anticipates Wright. When he joined Hudson's studio in 1751, Wright addressed this tradition in a series of chalk portrait heads derived from Van Dyck, Lely, Dahl, Kneller, and Richardson. These works, now at the Derby Museum and Art Gallery, represent his introduction to a form he later developed in a masterly fashion.[18]

16. John Smith (British, after 1654?–1742/43) after Godfrey Kneller (British, 1646?–1723). *Isabella, Duchess of Grafton*, 1692. Mezzotint, 13⅜ x 9⅞ in. (34 x 25 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gertrude and Thomas Jefferson Mumford Collection, Gift of Dorothy Quick Mayer, 1942 (42.119.206)

Wright's monochromes (Figures 3, 11–15) reconfigured the seventeenth-century character head or *trony*. Exotically dressed, expressive renderings of this type were developed in Leiden by Rembrandt (see Figure 17) and Jan Lievens (1607–1674) before 1631, when Rembrandt then took the form to Amsterdam, and introduced it to students and followers such as Ferdinand Bol (see Figure 18) and Carel Fabritius (1622–1654).[19] Many fanciful portraits and self-portraits by these Dutch artists are now recognized as *tronies*.[20] Well before 1700 British printmakers were copying and imitating Dutch originals, and the growing popularity of mezzotint, introduced to England by Prince Rupert of the Rhine (1619–1682) in 1662 (see Figure 23), was intrinsically tied to the spreading taste for Dutch portrait and genre modes.[21]

By applying elements normally associated with history painting, such as exaggerated expression and evocative costume, *tronies* aimed to capture evanescent emotions and to suggest a persona rather than establish social identity. They were also regarded as finished, salable works. A related mode, the oriental head, used turbans, rich fabrics, and jewels to embody exotic character and was popular north and south of the Alps. In Italy, it was associated with Giovanni Benedetto Castiglione (see Figure 19) and Salvator Rosa (1615–1673). In the eighteenth century Giovanni Battista Piazzetta reenergized the character head with lively chalk drawings of Venetian types; these were collected by British connoisseurs and widely reproduced as prints (see Figure 20).[22]

In London, the Irish artist Thomas Frye drew contemporary character portraits in chalks and published eighteen at lifesize as mezzotints "in the manner of Piazzetta" between 1760 and 1762 (see Figure 21).[23] These striking prints are often cited as likely influences on Wright, and the latter's monochromes certainly manipulate scale and light in a similar manner, while avoiding the elongated forms and mannered gestures often found in Frye's prints.[24] Wright's female subjects in particular (see Figures 3, 13) move with an assured grace that comes closer to Frye's acknowledged source Piazzetta (see Figure 20), an artist Wright had studied when he first entered Hudson's studio and in whom he maintained a mature interest.[25] Wright comes closer to Frye in his assured handling of pastels and chalks and choice of a grisaille palette, unusual in England at this period, but commonly practiced by artists trained in Dublin.[26]

Wright's *Head of a Man* at Yale (Figure 11) recalls seventeenth-century Dutch *tronies* with its intense, quizzical expression and fanciful costume. Similar soft, lace-edged

17. Rembrandt van Rijn (Dutch, 1606–1669). *Self-Portrait in a Heavy Fur Cap*, 1631. Etching, 2½ x 2¼ in. (6.2 x 5.6 cm). British Museum, London (1835,0613.1). © Trustees of the British Museum

ruffs appear in well-known portraits by Rembrandt and Van Dyck, but Wright used them so often—in two other monochrome drawings (see Figure 13) and several candlelight paintings of the 1760s—that he may simply have intended this element to signal fanciful role-playing.[27] Formally, the collar's close folds and fringe allowed him to introduce passages of texture next to ones describing smooth skin and fabric and to break up the predominant darkness with rippling bands of tone.

The sitter in the Yale drawing has convincingly been identified, by Gillian Forrester, as Peter Perez Burdett, a cartographer, artist, and close friend of Wright's who facilitated his move to Liverpool in 1768.[28] Burdett was the first Briton to use aquatint (one of his rare extant works in the medium is of Wright's *Two Boys Blowing a Bladder by Candlelight*),[29] and he exhibited several prints in that medium at the Society of Artists in London in 1771. He must have been experimenting with the tonal technique when Wright drew his portrait in monochrome.[30] The pose, with the head supported by the right hand and the index finger raised, echoes in reverse a self-portrait drawing by Jonathan Richardson (Figure 22).[31] Wright may have encountered a version of this composition in Hudson's studio and revived it here, to portray another intellectual artist.[32]

19. Giovanni Benedetto Castiglione (Italian, 1609–1664). *Head Looking Down to the Left, from Small Oriental Heads*, ca. 1645–50. Etching, 4⅛ x 3⅛ in. (10.4 x 8 cm). British Museum, London (1871,0812.32). © Trustees of the British Museum

18. Ferdinand Bol (Dutch, 1616–1680). *Portrait of an Officer Wearing a Hat with Two Long Feathers*, 1645. Etching and drypoint, 5⅜ x 4½ in. (13.7 x 11.3 cm). British Museum, London (S.15). © Trustees of the British Museum

Burdett's turban, made from a wrapped and knotted fringed scarf, although not genuinely oriental, adds another layer of "fancy." Similar headgear can be found in character heads by Frye (Figure 21) and Piazzetta, and in the first mezzotint made in Britain, Prince Rupert's *Little Executioner* (Figure 23).[33] In costume pieces, turbans normally were paired with fur-edged robes rather than ruffs, and the sense of incongruity produced by Wright's mixed references was probably deliberate. It is accentuated by the contemporary coat lapel allowed to peek from beneath the seventeenth-century collar. The subject's expression suggests amusement at the game of make-believe, and the character he projects is simultaneously intelligent, imaginative, and eclectic in his tastes. A contemporary description indicates that Burdett's real-life persona matched Wright's image: "He had the eye of an Hawk . . . [and was] a most ingenious man, well informed of strong mind & sound judgement on matters of taste, beauty & the arts—and excellent draughtsman. . . . He was of those who laid the foundation of taste in Liverpool."[34]

It is an intriguing possibility that all of Wright's male monochrome portraits, like the two self-portrait drawings at Chicago (see Figure 15) and Derby,[35] may represent artists. Elizabeth Barker has proposed either Richard or William

20. Johann Lorenz Haid (German, 1702–1750) after Giovanni Battista Piazzetta (Italian, 1682–1754). *Young Woman Holding a Mask*, ca. 1750s. Mezzotint, 19¼ x 14¼ in. (48.9 x 36.2 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Purchase, PECO Foundation Gift, 2007 (2007.157)

21. Thomas Frye (Irish, ca. 1710–1762). *Man Wearing a Turban*, 1760. Mezzotint, 19⅞ x 13⅞ in. (50.5 x 35.2 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Purchase, Harry G. Friedman Bequest, 1966 (66.695.7)

22. Jonathan Richardson the Elder (British, 1665–1745), *Self-Portrait*, ca. 1733. Black, red, and white chalk on blue paper; 18¼ x 12½ in. (46.5 x 31.8 cm). Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, Paul Mellon Collection (B1977.14.4333)

Tate as the subject of *Head of a Young Man in a Fur Cap* (Figure 12).[36] Her research has shown Richard Tate to have been not only a merchant and patron of the arts but also an enthusiastic amateur draftsman and painter. His younger brother William studied with Wright between 1768 and 1770 and eventually became a professional artist.[37] These two monochrome male heads relate more obviously to Dutch precedents than to British or Italian models, in both their moody tonality and the exotic dress (the fur would have been seen as coming from Russia, eastern Europe, or America, the striped silk scarf from Venice or the Orient). Rembrandt's 1631 etched *Self-Portrait in a Heavy Fur Cap* (Bartsch 16; Figure 17) is an early example of the subject of a self-portrait/*trony* in which the subject is wearing fur, and the mode subsequently became popular with Dutch artists.[38] In eighteenth-century Britain the taste for Rembrandt ran deep, and artists who portrayed themselves in fur hats or velvet berets usually intended to pay tribute to the Dutch master.[39] Examples include a drawing by Jonathan Richardson from 1734 (Figure 24) and a mezzotint by Nathaniel

23. Prince Rupert of the Rhine (Bohemian, 1619–1682) after Jusepe de Ribera (Spanish, 1591–1652). *The Little Executioner,* 1662. Mezzotint with traces of burin, 5⅛ x 6½ in. (13.1 x 16.4 cm). British Museum, London (1838,0420.9). © Trustees of the British Museum

24. Jonathan Richardson the Elder. *Self-Portrait as a Young Man in a Fur Cap,* 1734. Graphite on parchment, 5¾ x 4⅝ in. (14.7 x 11.6 cm). Courtauld Institute of Art Gallery, London (D.1952.R.W.1660)

25. Nathaniel Hone (Irish, 1718–1784). *Self-Portrait in a Fur Hat,* 1747. Mezzotint, plate 14 x 9⅞ in. (35.6 x 25.1 cm). The Lennox-Boyd Collection

Hone published in 1747 (Figure 25).[40] An early self-portrait drawing by Wright (Figure 26) resembles the latter composition and may have been inspired by it.[41]

Two seventeenth-century sources may have influenced Wright's conception of *Self-Portrait in a Fur Cap* (Figure 15). The pose resembles Rembrandt's in a small portrait (once thought to be a self-portrait but now believed to be by a follower) that in the eighteenth century belonged to the Duke of Argyle.[42] Well known in England, this work was often emulated and copied, and Wright probably knew it through an etching by Thomas Worlidge (Figure 27). Like Worlidge, he reversed the original composition to make the light fall from the right, and shifted the face into strict alignment with the picture plane.[43] His image also shares the precise brows, well-defined mouth, and slight chin cleft found in the print but missing from the painting.

The careful symmetry and unusual stillness of the features in *Self-Portrait in a Fur Cap* point to Wright's likely awareness of the French *tête d'expression*, which, although it has parallels with the *trony*, developed in close association with the academic formulas and work of Charles Le Brun. Intriguingly, Wright's proportionally arranged features resemble the illustration for *Tranquility* (Figure 28) in Le Brun's *Conference upon Expression*.[44] First published in English in 1701, this treatise quickly became a standard artists' reference, and Wright would certainly have known it.[45] His possible nod to it here points to the way he carefully constructed his image to demonstrate an awareness of structured academic tradition, on the one hand, and the expressive individualism of Dutch art, on the other.

26. Joseph Wright of Derby after Nathaniel Hone. *Study of a Man's Head in a Fur Cap*, 1755–56. Black and white chalk on blue paper, 15⅞ x 11⅜ in. (40.3 x 28.9 cm). Derby Museum and Art Gallery (1996-1/91A)

There is another suggestive echo of Le Brun in Wright's *Portrait of a Woman*, whose pose shares the sharply twisted neck, averted eyes, and softly rounded chin of the illustration in the *Conference* for *Simple Love* (Figure 29).[46] It may not be coincidental that Wright used a similar pose, albeit reversed, for the young woman who gazes at her lover in *An Experiment on a Bird in an Air Pump*.[47] David Solkin has conjectured that middle-class wives and mothers were excluded from Wright's large candlelight paintings because contemporary decorum barred them from participating in the activities depicted.[48] A similar distinction between the sexes and their roles may lie behind his different approaches to male and female subjects in the monochromes. In his portraits of men Wright addressed aspects of creative identity, but in *Portrait of a Woman* he used pose and expression to embody broader concepts of beauty and love.

Portrait of a Woman demonstrates the influence of two then fairly recent discussions of beauty: Edmund Burke's *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757) and William Hogarth's *Analysis of Beauty* (1753).[49] According to Burke, the aesthetic concept of beauty was formed from a generalization of female physical qualities attractive to men. Its visual components were said to derive, by association, from physical sensation. Setting aside traditional definitions that dated back to Plato and linked beauty to proportion, utility, or moral perfection, Burke substituted purely visual components—"smoothness," "gradual variation," and "delicacy"—and, in an evocative paragraph, concluded that these qualities were most demonstrably located in the female neck and upper torso:

> Observe that part of a beautiful woman where she is perhaps the most beautiful, about the neck and breasts; the smoothness; the softness; the easy and insensible swell; the variety of surface, which is never for the smallest space the same; the deceitful maze, through which the unsteady eye slides giddily, without knowing where to fix, or whether it is carried. Is not this a demonstration of that change of surface continual and yet hardly perceptible at any point which forms one of the great constituents of beauty? It gives me no small pleasure to find that I can strengthen my theory in this point, by the opinion of the very ingenious Mr. Hogarth; whose idea of the line of beauty I take in general to be extremely just.[50]

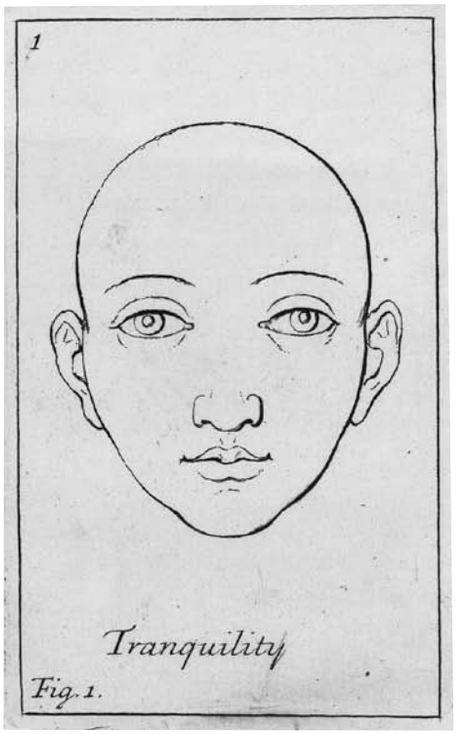
Wright's portrait self-evidently focuses upon that area singled out by Burke as a locus of beauty. Modesty prevented him from depicting his subject's breasts, but their abundance is implied by the way the open bodice flows into the lower margin of the drawing. (Piazzetta's flirtatious subject in Figure 20 demonstrates the point.) Like Burke, Wright clearly admired Hogarth's concept of "the line of beauty." In his *Analysis of Beauty* Hogarth devoted a chapter to demonstrating how that serpentine shape was fundamental to beautiful forms. Exactly this kind of swooping curve forms the hair, neck, chin, cheeks, and shoulders of the woman in the Metropolitan's drawing.[51]

Although they broke new aesthetic ground, both Burke and Hogarth retained a reverence for antique sculpture and cited famous examples to demonstrate the validity of their arguments. The *Medici Venus* (Figure 30), for instance, is held up by both as the supreme exemplar of female beauty.[52] Wright would have known the statue through prints, models, and casts. The relation of head to neck and shoulders in Wright's *Portrait of a Woman* recalls the *Venus*, whose pose was said to represent the naked goddess responding modestly to an unexpected intruder. The veneration of classical marbles lies at the heart of two of Wright's candlelight pictures: *Three Persons Viewing the Gladiator by Candlelight* (1765)[53] centers on *The Borghese Gladiator*,[54] and *An Academy by Lamplight* (1770)[55] on *Nymph with a Shell*.[56] It

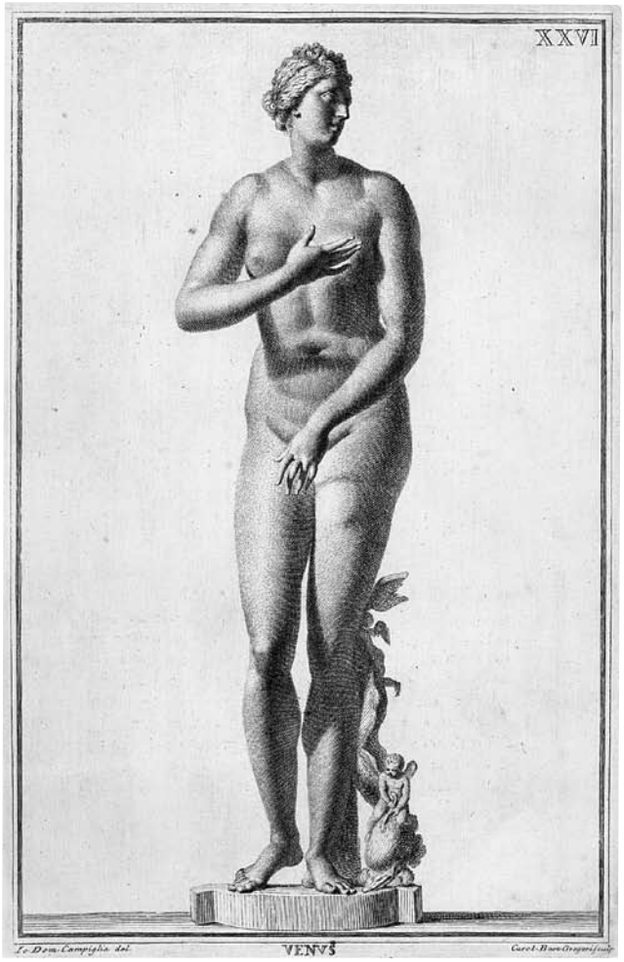
27. Thomas Worlidge (British, 1720–1766). *Rembrandt's Head, by Himself*, before 1766. Etching and engraving, 8⅜ x 6⅜ in. (21.3 x 16.1 cm). British Museum, London (1858,0417.445). © Trustees of the British Museum

is not surprising, therefore, to find the artist paying tribute to another famous statue in one of his monochromes. Barker has noted how Wright rendered the stone nymph in *An Academy by Lamplight* soft and lifelike to underscore the Pygmalion-like admiration of a student.[57] In *Portrait of a Woman*, Wright actually brought his classical source to life. By doing so, he followed Rubens's famous advice that "in order to attain the highest perfection in painting, it is necessary to understand the antiques. . . . Yet [this knowledge] must be judiciously applied, and so that it may not in the least smell of stone."[58] Wright's choice of monochrome may hint at marble, but the masterful application of pastel evokes, far more powerfully, the soft flesh and moist reflective quality of his living subject's eyes, nose, and lips.

Portrait of a Woman, together with Wright's other monochrome heads from the same period, reconsidered the seventeenth-century informal, expressive portrait head. His references to British, Continental, and classical models added meaning and evoked character. Recent aesthetic and philosophic discussion about beauty and naturalism influenced the pose and dress of Wright's female subject. In the male portrait heads, by contrast, he emphasized texture and tone, juxtaposed rough and smooth passages, and set dark against light. This recalled Dutch precedents widely available through reproductive mezzotints, and Wright was undoubtedly influenced by the intensely tonal character of that medium. The formal distinction he drew between qualities associated with beauty, applied to a female subject, and



28, 29. *Tranquility* and *Simple Love*. Le Brun 1701, figs. 1, 15



30. Carlo Bartolomeo Gregori (Italian, 1719–1759) after Giovanni Domenico Campiglia (Italian, 1692–1768). *Venus Anadyomene (Medicea)*. Gori 1734, pl. 26

the rougher, textural mode he developed for males, is notable. It anticipates a debate that was shortly to erupt in Britain around the concept of the Picturesque.[59] While that term is normally considered in relation to landscape, it is evident that a similar division between rough and smooth forms characterizes Wright's figural conception in the monochrome portraits he drew between 1769 and 1771.

NOTES

1. Barker and Kidson (2007, pp. 166–67, 177–78, nos. 39, 40, 51, 52) establish dates for these works coincident with Wright's residence in Liverpool and propose likely models. Barker (in ibid., p. 177) suggests that Wright may have given several to the sitters "as tokens of friendship" before he left for Italy in 1773. For an earlier discussion of the group, see Egerton 1992, pp. 113–23, 183–84.
2. The primary references for these drawings are as follows: Figure 11: Nicolson 1968, no. 166; Forrester in Wilcox et al. 2001, no. 12; and Barker and Kidson 2007, no. 51; Figure 12: Nicolson 1968, no. 135, and Barker and Kidson 2007, no. 52; Figure 13: Egerton 1990, no. 71, and Barker and Kidson 2007, no. 39; *Study of a Girl Wearing a Turban or Pompom* (ca. 1770; black and white chalks on blue paper laid onto canvas, 17 1/4 x 11 3/4 in. [43.8 x 29.8 cm]; private collection, U.K.): Egerton 1990, no. 72, and Barker and Kidson 2007, no. 40; Figure 14: sale, Sotheby's, London, November 30, 2000, lot 5.
3. Nicolson 1968, no. 165; Druick and McCullagh 1991, no. 23; Barker and Kidson 2007, no. 50.
4. Barker and Kidson 2007; Barker 2003; Barker 2009, which she generously made available.
5. See Postle 1998 for a useful overview of the genre.
6. Forrester (in Wilcox et al. 2001, no. 51, confirmed in Barker and Kidson 2007, pp. 177–78, no. 51) convincingly identifies Wright's close friend Peter Perez Burdett as the subject of the drawing in Figure 11. Barker and Kidson (2007, pp. 45–47, no. 52) suggest Richard or William Tate as the subject of Figure 12. Wright rented lodgings from the merchant Richard Tate in Liverpool.
7. Nicolson 1968, nos. 7–9, 15, 32, 123, 134; Barker and Kidson 2007, nos. 15, 16, 19–21, 24, 26.
8. Wakefield 1984, p. 58.
9. Rousseau's primary writings appeared in English as follows: *A Discourse of Mr. Rousseau of Geneva, . . . Whether the Revival of the Arts and Sciences Has Contributed to Render Our Manners Pure? Proving the Negative* (London, 1752); *A Discourse upon the Origin and Foundation of the Inequality among Mankind* (London, 1761); *Eloisa, or A Series of Original Letters . . .* (London, 1764); *Emilius and Sophia, or A New System of Education* (London, 1762); *The Miscellaneous Works of Mr. J. J. Rousseau* (London, 1767).
10. Wright was based in Derby at this date. Rousseau arrived in London in January 1766 with the Scottish philosopher David Hume and stayed with him for three months before moving to Wootton Hall, Staffordshire, the home of Richard Davenport. He returned to France in May 1767; see Egerton 1990, p. 116; Barker and Kidson 2007, p. 89; and Smart 1999, p. 175, no. 451 (Allan Ramsay's 1766 portrait of Rousseau; National Gallery of Scotland, Edinburgh).
11. The pastoral mode in literature originates with Theocritus' *Idylls* and Virgil's *Eclogues* and was revived by Italian poets of the fourteenth century. Influential early British examples include Edmund Spenser's *The Shepheardes Calender* (1579), Christopher Marlowe's *The Passionate Shepherd to His Love*, and John Milton's *Lycidas* (1637).
12. Many portraits of this type by Lely and Kneller were reproduced in mezzotint by John Smith and James McArdell (1728?–1765); see Goodwin 1903, no. 126; and Chaloner Smith 1883, vol. 3, nos. 119–229. Wright's teacher, Thomas Hudson, often worked in a more lighthearted pastoral vein, dressing female subjects as shepherdesses. Wright himself used this mode in several portraits painted about 1770. See Hudson's *Mary Carew* (as a shepherdess; Miles and Simon 1979, no. 10) and Wright's *The Bradshaw Children* (holding a lamb; 1769, mezzotint by Valentine Green [1739–1813]

in Egerton 1990, p. 237, no. 155) and *Anna Ashton, Later Mrs. Thomas Case* (as a shepherdess; oil on canvas, ca. 1769; University of Liverpool Art Gallery; Barker and Kidson 2007, no. 20). Stewart (1976) discusses Wright's frequent borrowings from mezzotints by Smith.

13. A decade later Wright explicitly combined Rousseau and the pastoral in *Brooke Boothby* (1781; Tate Britain; see Egerton 1990, pp. 116–18, no. 59, and Cummings 1968), where the subject lies in melancholy solitude next to a brook in a deserted landscape, holding a volume inscribed *Rousseau*. Boothby met Rousseau during the philosopher's 1766–67 stay in England and subsequently published his first dialogue, in 1780. In the portrait of Boothby, Wright used a visual pun to link the subject's name with the depicted brook and combined this with the prominent book to evoke famous lines from Shakespeare's *As You Like It*, a primary exemplar of pastoral literature. In act 2, scene 1, the duke sums up the advantages of exile in words that anticipate Rousseau: "And this our life, exempt from public haunt, finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks, sermons in stones, and good in everything."
14. Miles and Simon (1979, introduction, p. 4n33, nos. 67–78) indicate that Hudson's career and collecting both began in earnest after the retirement of Richardson, and that Hudson bought many works from his father-in-law's estate. The catalogues of Hudson's estate sale, together with collector's marks on located sheets, give us some understanding of the estate's contents. It included, for example, eight sheets attributed in the eighteenth century to Rubens and thirty-three portrait studies by Van Dyck that are now in the British Museum.
15. Stainton and White 1987, pp. 69–70, 85–87, nos. 29, 45–47.
16. Ibid., pp. 123–26, 128, nos. 88, 89, 91.
17. Ibid., pp. 208–9, no. 165 (Dahl, *Edward Harley, 2nd Earl of Oxford*, British Museum); pp. 228–29, no. 182 (Richardson, *James Figg*, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford).
18. Wallis (1997, nos. 13–30) lists these and illustrates several, all acquired by the Derby Museum and Art Gallery in 1995 from Leger Galleries, London; she states that Wright copied mainly from prints, but the scale and technique of his works suggest he also used drawings in Hudson's collection.
19. Van der Veen 1997, pp. 69–80; Smith 1999, pp. 446–47; Liedtke in Liedtke et al. 1995, pp. 3–39.
20. Van Straten 2002, pp. 173–75; Van Straten 1992, p. 132.
21. Griffiths (1998, pp. 169, 263) demonstrates how British printmakers such as Richard Gaywood (ca. 1630–1680) and Jan Griffier (1645?–1718) adapted Dutch models. One could also profitably compare Prince Rupert's *Little Executioner* (Figure 23; ibid., pp. 211–12), one of the first British mezzotints, to Wright's male monochromes.
22. Wiel (1996) discusses the many eighteenth-century print series based on Piazzetta's character heads.
23. The subscription notice for the first set of twelve mezzotints appeared in *The Public Advertiser*, April 28, 1760. Six more were published in 1761–62.
24. Frye's influence on Wright is discussed in Nicolson 1968, vol. 1, pp. 31, 42–44, 46, 48–49; Wynne 1972, p. 83; and Egerton 1992, p. 118.
25. Two chalk drawings Wright made after Piazzetta in 1751 are signed, dated, and numbered. The gap in their numbering suggests they once belonged to a longer series: *Old John Rotheram* (Derby Museum and Art Gallery) is dated "June 29th 1751 No. 2"; and *Head of Judith* (collection of Michael and Elizabeth Ayrton), "July 5, 1751, No. 6." See Nicolson 1968, vol. 2, pls. 2, 3; and Wallis 1997, no. 3. The male head resembles Piazzetta's *Saint Matthias* (1715–20; oil on canvas; private collection, New York), and the female head is based on Judith in Piazzetta's *Judith and Holofernes* (1738–42; oil on canvas; Accademia di San Luca, Rome); see Knox 1992, pls. 56, 130. Wright would have known these compositions through copies or prints (Egerton 1992, p. 116). Many poses in Wright's candlelight paintings of the 1760s could have been inspired by Piazzetta.
26. Frye's earliest recorded work is a pastel (Wynne 1972, p. 79). Little is known of his training, but his facility with grisaille pastel and chalks was also common among slightly younger Irish artists known to have been trained at the Dublin Society Drawing School (founded in 1740 and led by Robert West [d. 1770]), some of whom, like Matthew William Peters (1741–1814) and Hugh Douglas Hamilton (1739–1809), subsequently worked in London (see Crookshank 1995, pp. 47ff.). Egerton (1992, p. 119) notes that Frye exhibited a mezzotint head and chalk or crayon portraits in 1760 at the Society of Artists in London, where Wright could have seen them. My thanks to Susan Sloman for pointing out the Dublin grisaille connection and to Elizabeth Barker for noting Wright's likely but still unexplored interest in Frye's draftsmanship.
27. Egerton (1990, p. 64, and 1992, p. 20) suggests Wright had such a collar as a studio prop. He may have modeled it on Rembrandt's *Herman Doomer* (1640; MMA), owned by the Duke of Ancaster from 1750 and reproduced in mezzotint by John Dixon (ca. 1730–1811) as *The Frame Maker* in 1769 (see Liedtke et al. 1995, pp. 58–61, no. 8; and White, Alexander, and D'Oench 1983, no. 115, pl. 47). Several artists in Van Dyck's *Icones Principum* wear similar collars (see Mauquoy-Hendrickx 1991, nos. 1–90). Wright used them in Figure 13, *Study of a Young Girl Wearing a Turban or Pompom* (see note 2 above), *An Academy by Lamplight* (see note 55 below), and *Two Girls Decorating a Cat by Candlelight* (1770; Kenwood House; Barker and Kidson 2007, no. 38). The sitter in Figure 14 wears a more contemporary ruffled collar.
28. See note 6 above. Barker and Kidson (2007, pp. 13, 15, 21, 43, 48, 52, 159, nos. 9, 10, 28, 36, 64–68) discuss Burdett's friendship with Wright.
29. A rare copy of the print is in the MMA (68.589A).
30. On Burdett's use of aquatint, see ibid., pp. 36, 60, 72, nos. 63–66. Hopkinson (2007, pp. 87–92) notes that Burdett mastered the *mainière de lavis* technique by May 1771, probably by studying prints by the Abbé de Saint-Non that Rousseau brought with him to England and gave to George Harcourt, Viscount Nuneham. Burdett's *View of the Bridgewater Canal, Manchester*, an undated aquatint in the British Museum, is inscribed as after Rousseau.
31. See Forrester in Wilcox et al. 2001, pp. 16–17, no. 2.
32. Richardson was an influential critic and theorist, publishing *An Essay on the Theory of Painting* (1715), *An Essay on the Whole Art of Criticism as It Relates to Painting and an Argument in Behalf of the Science of the Connoisseur* (1719), and *An Account of the Statues, Bas-reliefs, Drawings and Pictures in Italy* (1722; with his son, J. Richardson Jr.).
33. For example, see two 1760 mezzotints by Frye: *Man Wearing a Turban* and *Man Wearing a Turban, Leaning on a Book*. Egerton (1992, pp. 118–19) compares the latter to Wright's *Self-Portrait* in Chicago (Figure 15). Piazzetta's designs for heads wearing turbans include *Etiope* and *Fanciulla con turbane*, both engraved by Teodoro Viero (1740–1819); see Wiel 1996, nos. 164, 165. Griffiths (1998, p. 211, no. 142) notes that Prince Rupert's *Little Executioner* (Figure 23) was a small version of his *Great Executioner*, a mezzotint of 1658. Both were based on a painting then thought to be by Jusepe de Ribera (1591–1652); the English version appeared in John Evelyn's *Sculptura* (1662).
34. Matthew Gregson, quoted in Hopkinson 2007, p. 89, from "Memoirs of P. P. Burdett," in "Materials towards a History of Liverpool," undated manuscript materials, Liverpool Records Office.

35. *Self-Portrait Wearing a Black Feathered Hat*, a charcoal and white chalk drawing in the Derby Museum and Art Gallery (Barker and Kidson 2007, no. 53; Egerton 1990, no. 54; Wallis 1997, no. 79) that was made at later date (ca. 1773–76) than the drawings discussed here.
36. Barker and Kidson 2007, p. 177, no. 52.
37. Barker 2007, pp. 46–49.
38. Hollstein 2007, vol. 18, B.16.
39. White, Alexander, and D'Oench (1983) discuss works by Rembrandt in eighteenth-century English collections, as well as imitations and copies made by British artists after Rembrandt.
40. For the Richardson, see ibid., no. 53, pl. 7. For Hone's mezzotint, based on his own lost painting, see ibid., no. 17, pl. 12.
41. Wallis 1997, no. 25. Egerton (1992, pp. 113, 115, fig. 3) suggests this early drawing was based on "an unknown mezzotint" and proposes it as a precedent for the monochrome self-portrait at Chicago (Figure 15).
42. Rembrandt follower, *Bust of a Young Man* (ca. 1630; oil on panel, 8 x 6¾ in.; Philips-de Jongh Collection, Eindhoven; Rembrandt Research Project [RRP], Corpus, I C 39). Wright was probably aware that Hudson had used this supposed Rembrandt as the basis for his *Portrait of Charles Erskine* (ca. 1747; now Duff House Country Gallery, Scotland; see White, Alexander, and D'Oench 1983, pp. 29–30, no. 20, pl. 16).
43. Worlidge's etching is inscribed: "Rembrandt's head, by himself, Copyed from the Original Painting now in the Collection of his Grace, the Duke of Argyle, by Thos. Worlidge Painter in Bath." Miles and Simon (1979, no. 36, pl. 36) note that the painting probably belonged to the 3rd duke, Archibald Campbell, and hung either in the duke's London house or at his villa at Whitton near Twickenham, when Worlidge copied it. Wright could also have used David Martin's 1765 mezzotint after the same painting.
44. The first engravings after Le Brun's drawings were made by Sébastien Le Clerc and published as twenty-four plates, illustrating fifty-seven heads, *Caractères des passions* (Paris, 1696). In 1698 Bernard Picart published *Conference de Monsieur Le Brun . . . sur l'expression generale & particulière*, containing forty illustrations based on Le Brun; see Montagu 1994, app. 6.
45. Le Brun 1701. Montagu (1994, app. 6) lists the numerous later English editions.
46. Le Brun 1701, p. 14.
47. Egerton 1990, no. 21 (1768; oil on canvas; National Gallery, London).
48. Solkin 1993, p. 236.
49. Burke's text first appeared anonymously on April 21, 1757, and proved so popular it was republished nearly every three years up to 1790 (see Boulton 1958, p. xxii).
50. Burke 1761, "Gradual Variation," part 3, sec. 15, p. 216; see Boulton 1958, pp. lx–lxv, 115.
51. Hogarth 1753, chap. 10: "Of Compositions with the Serpentine Line," pp. 50–66.
52. Ibid., p. 66 (with the *Venus* placed at the center of the illustrative plate); Burke 1761, "On Grace," sec. 22, p. 227. The *Venus* had been installed in the Villa Medici in Rome by the early seventeenth century and was illustrated by Perrier in 1638. In 1677 it was sent to Florence and was placed in the Tribuna of the Uffizi in 1688; Haskell and Penny (1981, pp. 325–28, no. 88) cite the many adulatory references to the statue and the large number of copies made at full scale for English gardens and as statuettes.
53. Barker and Kidson 2007, no. 10 (oil on canvas; private collection, on long-term loan to the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool).
54. Haskell and Penny 1981, no. 43. The *Gladiator*, now in the Louvre, Paris, was at the Villa Borghese in Rome from 1611 to 1807.
55. Barker and Kidson 2007, no. 32 (oil on canvas; Yale Center for British Art, New Haven).
56. Haskell and Penny 1981, no. 67. *The Nymph with a Shell* (also called *Venus and the Cockle Shell*) was at the Villa Borghese by 1638; it was taken to Paris about 1808 and is now in the Louvre.
57. Barker in Barker and Kidson 2007, p. 159.
58. Rubens, *De imitatione statuarum* (ca. 1608–10?), quoted in Harrison, Wood, and Gaiger 1998, p. 144–45. Roger de Piles translated Rubens's previously unpublished text from the original Latin and included it in his *Cours de peinture par principes*, which was published in Paris in 1708 and in English in London in 1743 (as *The Principles of Painting*).
59. William Gilpin initiated the debate in 1782, with *Observations, Relative Chiefly to Picturesque Beauty*. Stimulating responses by Richard Payne Knight and Uvedale Price continued to be published until 1810; these are summarized and discussed in Hussey 1927 and Hipple 1957, the latter in relation to Burke.

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