Cette position de neutralité du sociologue, soutient Nathalie Heinich, est empruntée à l'anthropologue observateur; elle est caractéristique du courant de l'ethnométhodologie de tradition américaine, à laquelle adhèrent aussi certains chercheurs français, tels Bruno Latour et Luc Boltanski. Ceux-ci se démarquent de la sociologie critique en considérant les acteurs sociaux comme les auteurs de leurs propres systèmes de représentation, systèmes dont le sociologue cherche à expliciter la cohérence, sans les ramener à des causes générales externes, telles l'habitus ou l'émergence d'une classe sociale.

Nathalie Heinich s'est appuyée sur cette position théorique de l'ethnométhodologie pour fonder son analyse de l'art contemporain publiée dans *Le triple jeu de l'art contemporain*[3] qui, précise-t-elle dans l'avant-propos, prend pour objet les querelles de l'art contemporain. Dès les premières pages du livre, elle expose cette position en disant que la tâche sociologique n'est pas d'alimenter les querelles, ou de porter un jugement sur l'art, mais plutôt de construire une position de neutralité lui permettant de se déplacer entre les différents points de vue exprimés. Le sociologue de l'art relèvera, de cette manière, la diversité des points de vue sur la création artistique; il prendra ainsi en considération la pluralité des mondes dans lesquels évoluent les acteurs impliqués dans cette discussion afin de comprendre leurs principes de qualification. C'est ce que Nathalie Heinich a fait lorsqu'elle a considéré les oeuvres, l'expérience de celles-ci par le public profane et les amateurs, ainsi que le discours des médiateurs que sont la critique d'art, les musées et les marchands.

Son analyse de l'art contemporain, cependant, a-t-elle été pleinement guidée par cette position de neutralité qu'elle annonce dans l'avant-propos? La sociologue a posé en hypothèse que l'art contemporain relève d'une esthétique négative axée sur la transgression ou ce qu'elle appelle l'expérience des limites. Or, cette hypothèse l'a conduite à proposer une classification des oeuvres contemporaines caractérisant leur effet critique de l'institution artistique. Celle-ci témoigne d'une très bonne connaissance des oeuvres. Cependant, aux fins de son argumentation analytique, la sociologue n'a-t-elle pas omis de considérer d'autres effets de l'art contemporain, tels l'instauration d'une convivialité entre l'art et le public ou l'exploration intéressée, par celui-ci, de nouveaux registres de l'expérience? En ne mettant ainsi en évidence qu'une seule dimension performative de l'art contemporain, ne nous dit-elle pas, non seulement ce que fait l'art contemporain, mais aussi ce qu'est l'art contemporain? Elle en fixe ainsi les paramètres, en énonce une définition, et dévie de la position de neutralité annoncée dans l'avant-propos de son ouvrage.

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Notes

1 Nathalie Heinich, *Ce que l'art fait à la sociologie*, Paris, Les Éditions de Minuit, 1998, p. 37.
2 *Op. cit.*, p. 39.
3 Nathalie Heinich, *Le triple jeu de l'art contemporain*, Paris, Les Éditions de Minuit, 1998.

Kay Dian Kriz, *The Idea of the English Landscape Painter: Genius as Alibi in the Early Nineteenth Century*. London and New Haven, Yale University Press, 1997, 188pp., 33 black-and-white and 22 colour illus., $42.50 U.S.

Thinking art history from a position outside the academy, Aby Warburg imagined that it was the historian's task to confront a reality as perplexing and conflicted as that of the scholar's own time.[1] In *The Idea of the English Landscape Painter*, Kay Dian Kriz approaches the years 1795 to 1820 in Britain in that sense, as an arena of contestation in which the concept of genius was joined in triangulation with a notion of Englishness, in contradistinction to what was defined as French, and with promotion of the hitherto minor genre of landscape. Her project is the demystification of Romantic genius as it took shape in specific conditions of the war beginning in 1793 between Britain and France and its immediate aftermath.

Carefully integrated in an analysis of complex factors, Kriz's handling of the relation between nationalism and landscape in Britain is perhaps the most original dimension of a highly accomplished and tightly argued book. Although ubiquitous in its expression in British culture of the period in forms that seem to take its existence for granted, nationalist feeling is evidently far too internalized, too "normal," to have attracted critical analysis from scholars within the culture. As an American educated in art history in Canada (at U.B.C.), Kriz enriches the treatment of her subject in bringing to it an outsider's perspective. She does so with style and with tact, generously acknowledging scholarship she finds fruitful while avoiding contention with what is at variance with her understanding of the issues.

Kriz locates the nationalist strand in British art at the turn of the eighteenth century in relation to a crisis in visual representation more usually seen as the dilemma of history painting. In her account the lineage of that crisis shows a displacement in the early 1770s of "consensual values" embodied institutionally in the Society of Artists of Great Britain. The Royal Academy's

supplanting presence with its hierarchy of genres predicted that the rise or fall of British art would be indexed by the status of history painting. Notoriously, the Academy's aesthetic collided with severe limits to support for public art in Britain.

A starting point in thinking about this anomaly could be the absence in eighteenth-century Britain of assumptions and structures sustaining a systematic role for government in the arts. That such structures were integral to state formation in modern history was subsequently argued in Emilia Dilke's study of seventeenth-century France, *Art in the Modern State* (1888). From this perspective, Great Britain at the time could hardly be considered a modern state. Yet recent literature chooses to interrogate less fundamental circumstances. Thus, Kriz reviews John Barrell's thesis that history painting's mission was to address individuals in their capacities as public men and David Solkin's argument about the recasting of history to represent relations in a market society (referring, however, to a period prior to reassertion by the R.A. of history's traditional privilege).[2] Her focus is on the junction around 1800 when heightened insistence on the universal values of history was registered in published Academy lectures by Fuseli, Barry and Opie, yet at the same time more implicitly challenged by an idea of English identity or character as a requirement of representation.

Framing a crisis in visual representation, rather than fatalities besetting a particular genre, goes beyond the discourse of the period – and many histories cast in that mould – to fix an intersection of clamorous demands. These were inflected throughout by the question of patronage: "This problem of embodying the public through visual representation was inseparable from on-going attempts to sustain the body of the artist" (p. 9). Kriz writes against the anecdotal mode of British historiography that sees James Barry's unremunerated history paintings for the (private) Society of Arts (1777–84) as the work of an irascible fanatic, and she usefully explores contradictions important for the context in little studied essays by the topographical draughtsman, Edward Dayes. Initially published in 1801, these writings uphold the dignity of history painting, seek to apply its principles to landscape and propose an English subject position (whether of artist or viewer) that is somehow supra-national or cosmopolitan and gender-specific, women being explicitly excluded from the role either of "liberal viewer" or professional artist. Dayes censured unregulated exercise of the imagination, which Kriz reads as a defensive response to praise of the originality of young landscape painters, especially Girtin and Turner. She considers the distance separating Dayes' theory and his own practice from the painterly bravura of works like Girtin's *Durham Castle and Cathedral* (ca. 1798, Victoria and Albert Museum) with its variety of touch and broken lights.

Arguments for government support of art were catalysed by lotteries in 1805 to dispose of pictures from Boydell's Shakespeare Gallery and the Historic Gallery of Robert Bowyer, who exhibited in his private residence originals of illustrations for a 1792 edition of Hume's *History of England*.[3] In seeking to promote history painting in Britain, projects like these depended on the audience and market for engravings and book illustration – public art with respect to accessibility, commercial in its conditions of circulation and private in its reception. Kriz does not explore this side of history painting's anomalous status. But she is illuminating in treating as a genuine debate around patronage what usually figures as a round of polemic for state support of art that somehow failed to persuade. She shows how arguments for government patronage like Martin Archer Shee's *Rhymes on Art* (1805) stigmatized the debasing of high art through the commercial practices of Boydell et al. and were opposed by assertions that art would benefit from private patronage in conditions of open competition. Both sides mobilized anti-French tropes. Assuming a connection between a nation's art and its political institutions, state patronage was advocated so as to demonstrate British superiority over what was supposedly revealed by David's "sapless" art, successor to the equally unworthy French (Rococo) "flutter." In journalism of the period to which Kriz gives close attention, free-market advocates riposted to the Shee argument holding that private patronage was a sign of English independent-mindedness in diametric counter to French character, which was constructed as "servile" when it was not being "licentious." Leading terms of this caricatural mentality are identified and also what may be seen as the winning side's radical philistinism in equating art with personal luxuries or "ornaments" that could properly be subject only to the vagaries of personal taste.

Using colour plates to illustrate exhibition conditions of the period, Kriz explains how competition operated in artists' straining for "effect" as pictures were crowded nearly from baseboard to ceiling or contended with the fashion in interior design for rich hues, gilding and reflective surfaces. When painters like Julius Caesar Ibbetson and Richard Westall strove to attract notice through breadth of handling, bold contrasts and heightened colour, Kriz finds their work was condemned as slapdash or as relying on "glitter" thought capable of appealing, as one critic put it, to "Frenchmen alone" (p. 51). These means were, in fact, an English phenomenon, she says. Prevailing tropes of criticism censured such strategies at the same time that journalists advocated competition as adequate to the support of any art that deserved to exist.

What Reynolds in his Fourth Discourse styled the "humbler walks of the profession" benefitted comparatively in this juncture. Under competitive pressure a taste for painterly effects became closely identified with landscape and other lesser genres. British patterns in collecting art of the past showed a similar tendency. Kriz finds that at this point such patterns were not

seen as revealing traits of national character. But patriotic motives behind establishment of the British Institution in 1805 helped shape a context in which a construction of this kind might be traced. Working to sidestep the Academy's jealousy of its near monopoly as an exhibiting body, the British Institution provided an additional exhibition facility and in 1815 organized the first public "Old Masters" exhibition (of Dutch and Flemish pictures) in Britain. Kriz locates Richard Payne Knight, a founder, and in the second decade of the century, director of the British Institution, in relation to issues outlined here. Appearing just after the height of counter-revolutionary panic, Knight's *Analytical Inquiry into the Principles of Taste* (1805) and other writings provided theoretical justification for painting as an art grounded in visuality rather than intellectual or ethical concerns.

So wide a breach in established doctrine may be understood as favouring an accommodation of national feeling that clearly existed but does not seem from evidence Kriz presents to have been articulated in clear programmatic demands that painting "instantiate... qualities of the national community" (p. 57). There is a problem of what could be articulated within existing discursive channels. Rhetoric of the "British [or English] School," the name adopted by the British Institution for its facility in which artists copied "old masters," goes back to Bainbrigge Buckridge's *Essay Towards an English School of Painting* (1706). As R.W. Lightbown remarked in introducing the *Essay*'s 1969 reprint, Buckridge conceived of "school" as tied to a fixed aesthetic canon, and the "English School" rubric of Boydell's enterprise and its cognates traded on that acceptation. What was novel in nationalist sentiment in the first twenty years of the nineteenth century worked in more oblique ways, as in the attempted construction of a British landscape tradition by including Wilson and Gainsborough in the British Institution's 1814 exhibition of "British Masters" (not to be confused with "Old Masters" who had their show the following year). Kriz identifies objections to this move in contemporary criticism centring on the failure of Wilson's Italianate modes and of Gainsborough's "generalizing" style to truthfully depict external aspects of English nature as well as its internal "character."

At this point Kriz rotates her discussion to look at how aesthetic viewing of nature was popularized between 1790 and 1820 by William Gilpin, whose Picturesque guides trained bourgeois amateurs to see domestic scenery through the conventions of landscape painting. She shows how the technical accessibility and particular formulas of landscape sketching that Gilpin promoted helped sharpen distinctions between professional artists and amateurs. Especially as mediated through exhibition reviews, that effect was stringent in policing the aspirations of female amateurs and in withholding notice from women exhibitors. Kriz adduces publications like Ackermann's *New Drawing Book*, particularly directed to female amateurs, that equated "genius" with masculine creative power. Women were rather to support "national genius" by studying and patronizing the "best artists," all men (p. 72). Associated with "feminine" traits of sensibility and capriciousness, the aesthetic of the Picturesque was pointedly countered, according to Kriz, in the panoramic sweep and broad washes of professional practice epitomized by Girtin's *Kirkstall Abbey* (1800, British Museum) or implicitly criticized by the engravings of Turner's *Southern Coast of England* (1814-26), which "radically reworked picturesque conventions" (p. 70). "Genius," in its relation to class, figures in her treatment of tensions exemplified by Hazlitt's critique of dilettante aristocrats as consumers of art in contrast with the willingness of professionals (middle class) to engage in disciplined study, a requirement of "genius;" Kriz links his strictures to injury suffered by British manufacturers through the 1806 Orders in Council.

Academic depreciation of landscape in the case of Fuseli's lectures of 1801-04 tended to undercut its own argument, Kriz suggests in a fresh interpretation of the evidence. In attacking landscape (*subjects*) as "uninteresting," Fuseli emphasized that in this genre everything depends on the manner of treatment or "the genius of the Artist" (p. 75). Such productions could only lay claim to a private function. Opposing Fuseli's position, John Britton in *Fine Arts of the English School* (1812) claimed value for landscape because its language is accessible to a broad public and through the association of "nature" with the traditionally constituted order of society. Kriz links this Burkean concept of nature with what was now encoded as *British* empiricism (in counterpoint to French "abstract" systems). A nationalist epistemology now allowed English "genius" to be discerned in the treatment of foreign scenes and encouraged critical focus on naturalistic effects of light and colour rather than qualities of design.

Britton's publication of 1812 marked a shift in critical rhetoric in a characterization of the English landscape painter as imaginative genius that centred on Turner's brilliance in evoking memories shared by a national community. Kriz grounds this estimate of Turner in the associationism of Archibald Alison's *Essays on the Nature and Principles of Tastes* (1790). Unlike Knight, who credited artists only with technical ingenuity, Alison considered the landscape painter pre-eminently capable of feeling aesthetic pleasure, which occurred when natural objects – especially natural scenery – set off trains of associated ideas and emotions in a well furnished mind. Quoting Alison, she says: "It is not for imitation that we look... but the genius of the Painter" through which the viewer's imagination and feelings are touched (p. 87). Francis Jeffrey's review of the second edition of Alison's *Essays* extended associationism by exploring social grounds for aesthetic pleasure.[4] Drawing on Adam Smith's

Theory of Moral Sentiments (1759), Jeffrey considered how external objects that fall into three categories of signs involve sympathy (or "fellow feeling") by recalling socially shared experiences. He theorizes as mutually reinforcing the prior existence of an interiorized self and a social community bound by feelings of sympathy through the exercise of taste.

Aligning theoretical considerations with close analysis of specific instances, Kriz shows how associationism operates in the imagery and text of *Views in Sussex* (1820), a book of engravings after Turner with commentary by another landscape painter, Richard Ramsay Reinagle. This publication expatiates on the artist's special ways of knowing, seeing and feeling. Kriz points to its origin in John Fuller's commissioning of Turner in 1810 to produce watercolours of subjects in Sussex. Fuller was a Tory MP, landowner and owner of slaves in Jamaica. When Fuller incurred odium by defending slavery in the House of Commons, private circulation followed by publication of the Sussex views sought to present him in a benign role. He thus appears as patron of landscape art in which inherently uninteresting (un-Picturesque) subjects are transformed by what Reinagle calls Turner's "great science" (p. 93) in the management of atmospheric effects; these effects have nothing to do with meretricious "glitter" but work to reveal the essential character of the site. Turner's plates lend themselves to, or are served by, Reinagle's interpretation of the knowing way they invite and direct national associations. Commentary on the *View of Battle Abbey – the Spot Where Harold Fell*, for example, dwells on Turner's treatment of a passing storm, day's decline expressed in sloping shadows, a hare about to be overtaken by a greyhound, and other suggestions that converge to produce a sense of melancholy. The history of conflict in the Norman Conquest – and current politicized dispute over its interpretation – are erased in the mild pathos of associationist sentiment: man proposes, nature disposes, so to speak. Kriz observes that "the displacement of specific feelings associated with social conflict and other human actions onto representations of natural scenery involves a repression of human agency in favour of natural law" (p. 97). She locates emergence of the idea of native genius and the related concept of landscape as constitutive of national character in conditions of post-war depression, Luddite activity and formulation of a discourse predicated on the endemic nature of class conflict. In this context English "genius" was constructed as retrospective rather than innovative.

The legalism in the title of her final chapter, "Genius as Alibi," adopted also in the book's subtitle, gave me pause. Let us consider, however, the manner in which use of the term is supported. Kriz traces between 1800 and 1820 a heightened critical insistence on the superiority of native artists over foreigners that is most conspicuous in connection with foreign artists who previously enjoyed success in Britain. One of these was Philippe Jacques de Loutherbourg, to whom Leigh Hunt objected in 1812 on the grounds that he "wants the English cast of judgment" (p. 108), implying that this disqualified him from representing English nature. That the reverse was not maintained for English painters of foreign scenes appears in a range of criticism on Turner's *The Upper Falls of the Reichenbach: Rainbow* (1810?, Yale Center for British Art). Turner's myriad fine strokes and virtuoso scratching of the watercolour's surface were here seen as enhancing the site's essential character, while displaying force, freedom and the English nature of the artist. Referring to its exhibition in the private gallery of Turner's patron, Walter Fawkes, Kriz claims that genius functions as alibi in effecting the merger of spaces of fashionable leisure with an ideal of high culture, all to the credit of Fawkes's magnanimity in throwing his "fashionable lounge" open to the (fashionable) public (p. 110).

The operation of genius in revealing underlying truths of nature depended on the artist's subjectivity as an effect rather than any self-projection, according to an analysis drawing on Peter de Bolla's work on the sublime.[5] Kriz finds that subjectivity-as-effect did not preclude differentiations of style in the work of individual male artists. But such distinctions were seldom, if ever, made with respect to women artists; their gender was seen as determining their manner of painting. Stylistic debts of English artists to art of the past posed a critical problem, as Kriz shows in instancing an attempt in the *Repository of Arts* to address dependence on Cuyp in A.W. Callcott's *The Pool of London* (R.A. 1816), given the traditional respect in Britain for Cuyp and, at the same time, value attached to the empirical observation of English nature.

Another order of anxiety centred on supposed dangers of the artist's specialized knowledge expressed in modes of representation not easily comprehended by the viewer, especially in regard to "indistinctness." Later in 1845 when Turner said that "Indistinctness is my fault," he avowed for his work what Kriz identifies as a link drawn by eighteenth-century theorists between indistinctness and imaginative power.[6] On this issue, Richard Payne Knight's concern for massing did not prevent him from requiring that subject elements be clearly identifiable. A preoccupation on his part with artistic regulation of the viewer's imagination was connected, Kriz finds, with his effort to subject artistic license to the authority of the market.

Desire to control the imaginative faculty, whether of artists or viewers, informed a particularly wide purview in an 1805 essay on this question by a Baptist minister, John Foster. Kriz analyses "On the Application of the Epithet Romantic" to demonstrate the close affiliation of landscape effects in their metaphoric structure with associative powers of the imagination. Here, those effects are not seen as revealing the character of a site but are linked with imaginative habits of mind likely to

spill over in unsound judgment on the part of either sex and in utopian visions of society. (Goya may have professed cognate anxieties in glossing his etching, *The Dream of Reason.*)

The idea of the English landscape genius is thus understood as one outcome of a crisis in visual representation. Its formulation served a wide range of social interests, defining national character, providing modes of seeing and knowing not dependent on a classical education, and ascribing to professional practitioners of a lesser genre qualities of imagination and sensibility that elevated them above mere imitators. The idea presupposed an atomized concept of the individual, one that was not without danger; Kriz suggests that, if Turner's indistinctness was troubling, it was because it presented an artistic subject so autonomous as to repudiate the need for social engagement. Properly engaged, the landscape painter could produce intense feelings of pleasure in representing what was familiar, while eschewing what was not (properly) to be imagined.

This concept of the landscape genius seems close to the notion of Romantic genius promoted by modern scholars, usually in reference to the poet, who is cast as an alienated victim of commercial society. The Romantic template is limited, Kriz states, in its applicability to the artist, given distrust of the painter's secret or specialized knowledge, and also with regard to evidence for the compatibility of "genius" with commercial interests. Part of the evidence lies in the replacement of history as an authoritative basis for judging by a turn to biography. Kriz quotes, memorably, a critic for the *London Chronicle* in 1819: "Biography represents the great multitude of those solitary and rapt spirits [i.e. painters and sculptors], as comparatively unstained . . . and living in the midst of cities in a kind of holy and hermit contemplation" (p. 140). No critique of relations in a commercial society is here implied, but rather a view of the artist's position in society as fixed and unchanging throughout history. The painter is both material and immaterial: he enters the spaces of exhibition and heroically overcomes the competition with his virtuoso effects, then is discovered never to have been in the marketplace at all. The landscape painter, above all in the case of Turner, continues to be promoted as the essence of Englishness. Kriz closes with the observation: "At a time when the detritus of commercial societies threatens the landscape on a world scale, it remains to be seen if it is possible to reconfigure the artistic and viewing subject in a way which will facilitate a reappraisal of what has for so long been a vexed and mystified relationship between land, human society, and personal freedom" (p. 141).

Taken from the Latin word for elsewhere, an alibi in law is the accused's defence that he or she was elsewhere at the time an offence was committed. Fowler's *Modern English Usage* objects to the common use of *alibi* as a pretentious synonym for any kind of excuse. This view would deplore Charles Harrison's construal of T.J. Clark on Manet's *Olympia* in 1980 to mean that "autonomizing of effects in Modernism amounts to construction of a form of alibi" (that is, to question whether what is seen in Greenbergian terms as the pursuit of flatness entailed pursuit of a critical virtue or a form of willful ineffectiveness).[7]

But *alibi* in this context and that of Kriz turns metaphorically on the idea of absence, bending it to suggest absence from some engagement the absentee ought to have kept rather than non-attendance at the scene of a crime. The protean play, or creative deformation of language, in this instance figures absence not as exoneration but as a deception for which the alibi is at best a doubtful excuse. That fable of presence and absence, L. Frank Baum's *Wizard of Oz*, reaches its climax in the terrible emptiness of the Wizard's Throne Room, where Dorothy and her companions find only a small man throwing his voice from behind a screen: absence without an alibi. The difficulty with *alibi* in connection with the English landscape genius, especially Turner, is that its signified (despite Fowler) includes the humbuggery of pretenders in need of an alibi like the Omaha con man. Its present application could seem to intimate that there is not really anything *there*.

This is not at all a judgement that Kriz's nuanced analyses of particular works, or her approach throughout, would support. The problem has more to do with an inherent dilemma in dramatizing the outcome of historical contingencies so as to challenge the impression of a natural effect. To this end, Kriz focuses on social and institutional vectors converging towards the idea of the English landscape genius, especially the promotional modes of art criticism. Apparently by deliberate choice, she leaves aside the efforts of individual artists on their own behalf, such as the *Liber Studiorum* (1807–19) in which Turner presented himself as mastering all reaches of landscape art. But then she avoids framing the development as one of the individual artist as competitor, a standard topic accommodated in the monographic format just as it is embedded in the ideology of individualism itself. She writes against the grain of the artist's monograph and against a contemporary horizon of uncritical celebration, one that has built through the momentum of a developing art historical establishment around Turner, inflected by the insular politics of the Thatcher/Major years.

Understood as I suppose Kriz would wish, *alibi* none the less implies missing a call posed by issues of visual representation and the conditions of public art. *Alibi* figures as abdication of responsibility for society's stake in a common artistic culture. In showing how the exemplary ethical goals of history painting were translated/traduced into criteria of national character invested in landscape depiction, and in tracing the integration of privately supported art into a market economy, Kriz identifies questions that were fundamental for the period and are, by

extension, for our own. The tendency of current free-market arguments to undermine all forms of public support for the arts in Canada is implicitly delegitimated by her demonstration of a similar ideological campaign at the threshold of the nineteenth century.

Kriz partially accounts for her method in developing the case that leads to this conclusion. Acknowledging a debt to Foucault's analysis of discursive formations, she expresses the reservation that his assumptions and procedures do not allow a role for human agency in history. Interrogation of material conditions of the production, circulation and reception of art is tacitly understood as colliding with discourse conceived as a self-sufficient signifying system. Discourse in its engagement with other dimensions of social reality figures prominently throughout the discussion. Strategic reasons may be divined for not declaring a materialist position, including the likelihood of raising associations around the antinomian opposition of materialism to idealism and its political matrix. Without affixing ideological labels, Kriz prefers to instantiate the pertinence of the layered analysis she favours.

Similarly *sans affichage* is the feminist bearing of her study. Yet that dimension of the book is intrinsic to its argument. Kriz makes a signal contribution in tracing structural connections between elevation of the native landscape genius, defined as male, and gendered construction of the subject (artist or viewer), as well as regulation of the female role of amateur. Treatment of these issues as integral to a major reorientation of art criticism and practice around 1800 marks an advance in scholarship for the period and is valuable for feminist research in its heuristic capability. While women in the formation of an art public in Britain have been studied by Ann Bermingham and Ann Pullan,[8] feminist art history of the time is under-cultivated in the comparison with that of the Victorian era and the twentieth century. The period of the late eighteenth/early nineteenth centuries was, however, the first in which women emerged as published critics of art in Britain (and elsewhere), instanced by Barbara Hofland who wrote the text to *River Scenery, by Turner and Girtin* (1827) and Maria Graham, author of the first monograph in English on Poussin (1820). The relation of such presences to female amateurism and to formations of discourse around professional practice is but one of the nearly untouched areas of inquiry that may well be encouraged by the stimulating example of Kay Dian Kriz's book.

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Notes

1 Gertrud Bing, "A.M. Warburg," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 28 (1965), 305.
2 John Barrell, *The Political Theory of Painting from Reynolds to Hazlitt: The Body of the Public* (London and New Haven, 1986); David Solkin, *Painting for Money: The Visual Arts and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth Century England* (London and New Haven, 1993).
3 Morris Eaves, *The Counter-Arts Conspiracy: Art and Industry in the Age of Blake* (Ithaca and London, 1992).
4 [Francis Jeffrey], review of Archibald Alison, *Essays on the Nature and Principles of Taste, Edinburgh Review*, 18 (May 1811), 1–46.
5 Peter de Bolla, *The Discourse of the Sublime: History, Aesthetics and the Subject* (Oxford, 1989).
6 Adele M. Holcomb, "'Indistinctness is my fault': A Letter about Turner from C.R. Leslie to James Lenox," *Burlington Magazine*, 114 (Aug. 1972), 557–58.
7 Charles Harrison, "The Effects of Landscape" in *Landscape and Power*, W.J.T. Mitchell, ed. (Chicago and London, 1994), 209–10.
8 See, for example, Ann Bermingham, "The Aesthetics of Ignorance: The Accomplished Woman in the Culture of Connoisseurship," *Oxford Art Journal*, 16, no. 2 (1993), 3-20; and Ann Pullan, "'Conversations on the Arts': Writing a Space for the Female Viewer in the *Repository of Arts* 1809–15," *Oxford Art Journal*, 15, no. 2 (1992), 15–26.

CATHERINE M. SOUSSLOFF, *The Absolute Artist: The Historiography of a Concept*. Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1997, 204 pp., 8 illus.

Let me begin as favourable reviews often do: Catherine M. Soussloff has written an important book about which much is going to be said; *The Absolute Artist: The Historiography of a Concept* is a significant work because it undertakes an analysis of one of art history's central notions through one of its foundational genres (p. 3). What Soussloff explores is how our concept of the artist has been constructed through the genre of the artist's biography, especially in its early forms. In undertaking this task, she also examines why the idea of the artist more readily escaped the kind of critical attention that has been recently devoted to other cardinal art historical concepts. Soussloff's book will be useful because of the topics that it raises and the arguments that it outlines; however, it will be consequential because the arguments that it advances are contentious, and will demand further discussion.

What Soussloff in general intends to accomplish is set out in the first sentences of the text: "This book locates the artist in the discourse of history. By doing so, it seeks a richer and more nuanced understanding of the artist, a cultural figure whose significance cannot be disputed, but whose meaning has rarely