

RESEARCH ARTICLE

The formation of a taste judgement: how Benjamin R. Haydon came to value, observe and evaluate the Elgin Marbles

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Abstract

What are taste judgements? Do they have a claim to knowledge? This article addresses these questions by revisiting the long-eighteenth-century debate on taste judgements and examining the case of a judgement that was unusually explicit about its formation. The painter Benjamin R. Haydon (1786–1846) encountered the Parthenon sculptures in 1808, studied them for several years, and recorded how he came to pronounce them ‘the finest things on earth’. I describe the maturation of Haydon’s judgement, presenting the process as revealing of the nature of taste judgements. I argue that taste judgements are a distinct form of knowledge that involve expertise in three experiential aspects: valuation (prizing an artwork), observation (discriminating referential features in an artwork), and evaluation (assigning a specific worth to an artwork). From a methodological standpoint, Haydon’s judgement draws attention to individual resources for the stabilization of knowledge and invites reflection on the status of the case as a unit of analysis in the history of science.

One morning in early 1808, Benjamin R. Haydon stood in his London studio perplexed and anguished. A young painter of twenty-two, Haydon faced his first commissioned painting, a large canvas depicting the tragic death of a Roman tribune. Haydon envisioned the tribune as a heroic idealized figure, but no matter what he did, the figure on the canvas seemed wrong. As he suffered this ‘critical agony of anxiety’, a friend encouraged him to visit some antique sculptures at Lord Elgin’s residence.¹ Thomas Bruce, 7th Earl of Elgin, had acquired them in Athens while serving as ambassador to the Ottoman Empire. Haydon expected little of the sculptures, but all changed the moment he entered the courtyard where they were placed (Figure 1):

The first thing I fixed my eyes on was the wrist of a figure in one of the female groups, in which were visible ... the radius and ulna ... [W]hen I turned to the Theseus and saw that every form was altered by action or repose ... and again, when in the figure of the fighting metope I saw the muscle shown under the one arm-pit in that instantaneous action of darting out ... when I saw, in fact, the most heroic style of art combined with

1 Benjamin R. Haydon, *The Autobiography and Journals of Benjamin Robert Haydon* (ed. Malcolm Elwin), London: MacDonald, 1950, p. 75.

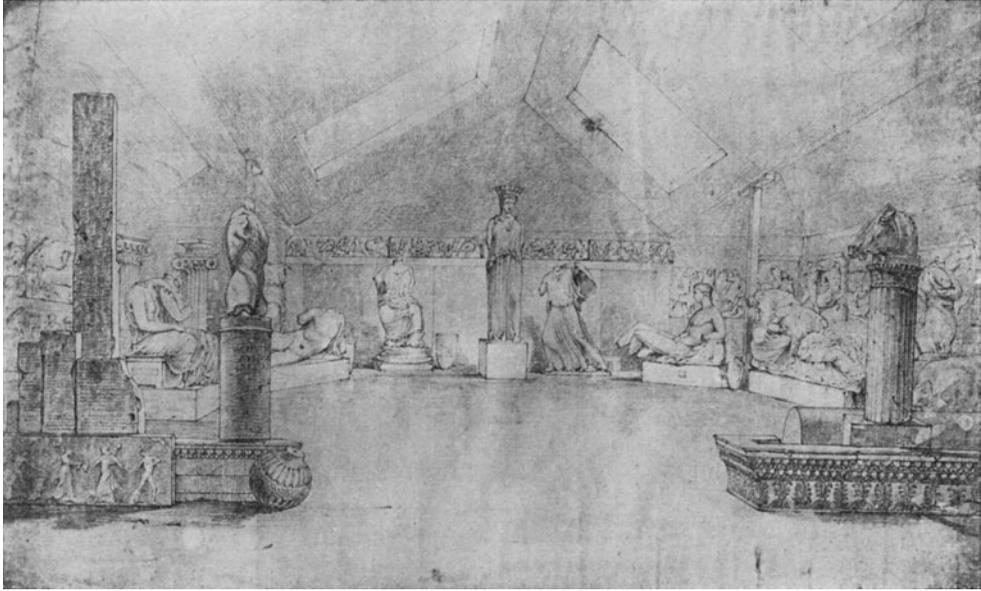


Figure 1. The Elgin Marbles at Park Lane from a sketch by Charles R. Cockerell, early 1810. From A. Smith, 'Lord Elgin and his collection', *Journal of Hellenic Studies* (1916) 36, 163–372, Figure 10. © The Society for the Promotion of Hellenic Studies 1916.

all the essential detail of actual life, the thing was done at once and for ever ... I felt the future, I foretold that they would prove themselves the finest things on earth ... I felt as if a divine truth had blazed inwardly upon my mind.²

Haydon instantly notices anatomical details in several sculptures. He immediately identifies the sculptures as idealized figures rendered in 'the most heroic style'. And so acute and ineffable is the feeling they provoke, that he can only describe it as a blazing 'divine truth'. This, however, is not what happened that morning. The description of his first encounter with the Parthenon sculptures, then known as Elgin Marbles, appears in his autobiography, which he began writing in 1839. Haydon did not fabricate the encounter, but he foreshortened it. It took him nearly eight years to judge the marbles 'the finest things on earth'. In 1816, in fact, Haydon insisted in public that he had investigated the marbles extensively and painstakingly.³

Haydon's inconsistency is not an idiosyncrasy. It represents with clarity discrepancies that characterized taste judgements in the long eighteenth century, when processes that led to pronouncements such as 'This painting is beautiful!' or 'I like this sculpture!' became objects of scrutiny.⁴ At issue was their epistemic status. For many commentators, instantaneousness of operation and intense immediacy defined taste judgements.⁵ They put taste judgements outside reason's deliberation, reducing them to feeling. They made taste judgements escape will's control, suggesting the existence of an internal

² Haydon, *op. cit.* (1), p. 77–8.

³ Benjamin R. Haydon, 'On the judgment of connoisseurs being preferred to that of professional men, – Elgin Marbles, &c.', *Examiner* (17 March 1816) 429, pp. 162–4, 163.

⁴ Taste judgements had varied objects. I restrict them to artworks to analyse this subcategory in its specificity.

⁵ They were emphasized in contexts so disparate as to constitute an 'almost pre-theoretical feature' of the discourse. James Noggle, *The Temporality of Taste in Eighteenth-Century British Writing*, Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2012, p. 6.

sense, as natural as the external sense in the tongue.⁶ Taste judgements could precipitate down the epistemic slope, for the analogy to the tongue implied proximity to mere sensual pleasure.⁷ The slope could be tilted the other way too, however. Another reason for the comparison to gustatory taste was its ability to discriminate between flavors. Likewise, taste judgements identified subtle beauties in artworks.⁸ Feeling could assess beauty with precision, achieving imperceptibly what reason attained slowly, and step by step.⁹ For the Scottish philosopher Dugald Stewart, taste judgements were acquired in a protracted ‘process of *natural induction*’ that also yielded laws of nature.¹⁰ Rather than subjective, the opposite of objective truth judgements, taste judgements appeared semi-objective, and even objective.¹¹

These stances mark the long eighteenth century – and Haydon’s judgment as a focalizing node – rich contexts for asking, what are taste judgments? Do they have a claim to knowledge?¹² Certain interpretive tendencies have overdetermined our understanding of taste judgements and precluded the examination of these questions. In an influential account, the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu taught us that taste judgements are dictated by a subject’s position in a social structure. Not deterministically. *Habitus*, a collection of behaviors learned over a lifetime but not exactly replicated, negotiates the distance between subjects and their social positions. Crucially, it enables taste judgements to conceal their ultimate function: the preservation of those positions.¹³ Many historians of the long eighteenth century have adopted a hermeneutics of suspicion to identify similar functions. This is a methodological attitude that is wary of subjects’ statements on taste judgements and that counts as valid those explanations that uncover interests, anxieties or ideologies obscured by them.¹⁴ Haydon’s judgement, too, has been explained as promoting his professional standing.¹⁵ This hermeneutics has given a particular shape to the concept of taste judgements: a thick circumference with well-known behavioural properties, and a core that remains opaque.

There are some means for analyzing this core. Cultural sociologists have produced model ethnographies of communities of connoisseurs that give weight to their

6 Francis Hutcheson, *An Inquiry into the Original of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue in Two Treatises*, 2nd edn, Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2004 (first published 1726), pp. 23–6.

7 On the depreciation (and unstable rehabilitation) of gustatory taste see Viktoria von Hoffmann, *From Gluttony to Enlightenment: The World of Taste in Early Modern Europe*, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2016.

8 David Hume, ‘Of the standard of taste’, in Hume, *Four Dissertations*, London: A. Millar, 1757, pp. 216–18.

9 Jeffrey Barnouw, ‘Feeling in Enlightenment aesthetics’, *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture* (1989) 18(1), pp. 323–42, 325–8.

10 Dugald Stewart, *Philosophical Essays*, Edinburgh: George Ramsay and Company, 1810, pp. 451–4, esp. 454, emphasis in the original.

11 Władysław Tatarkiewicz, ‘Objectivity and subjectivity in the history of aesthetics’, *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* (1963) 24(2), pp. 157–73, offers a good typology of positions. Here I use ‘subjective’ and ‘objective’ in their ordinary-language meanings, respectively as private, solipsistic and erratic versus referring to things in the world and involving emotional detachment. They acquired these meanings in the early nineteenth century. Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison, *Objectivity*, New York: Zone Books, pp. 29–33.

12 Steven Shapin identified this potential of eighteenth-century discourse on taste and the challenge that I describe in ‘The sciences of subjectivity’, *Social Studies of Science* (2011) 42(2), pp. 170–84.

13 Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* (tr. Richard Nice), London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986.

14 Noggle, op. cit. (5), offers in the introduction a good overview of this approach and the relevant bibliography. On hermeneutics of suspicion see Paul Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation* (tr. Denis Savage), New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 1970, pp. 32–6.

15 Cora Gilroy-Ware, *The Classical Body in Romantic Britain*, London: Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, 2020, pp. 169–93, takes Haydon’s concern with his ‘subject position’ (p. 179) as the ultimate *explanans* of his conclusions. Of course, to point this out does not imply that her study and others that adopt this explanatory logic are not valuable.

experiences and statements.¹⁶ Inspired in part by these ethnographies, the art historian Charlotte Guichard has shown that eighteenth-century Parisian *amateurs* grounded taste judgements on shared visual and tactile practices towards objects.¹⁷ These practices, Guichard and other art historians have recognized, were premised on the cognitive content of taste judgements, often theorized using philosophical empiricism.¹⁸ Historians of science, for their part, have argued that affective aspects of taste judgements were crucial for knowledge making in natural history, anatomy and beyond. For several seventeenth-century Royal Society members, Alexander Wragge-Morley has demonstrated, taking pleasure in plants served as a measure of one's knowledge of them, and inducing that pleasure in others established an epistemic community.¹⁹ Cumulatively, these studies demonstrate the value of a hermeneutics of faith: an interpretive approach that aims to describe well and restore the meanings that taste judgements had.²⁰ But they also illustrate the challenges involved in recuperating past meanings.²¹ To recover the role of affect in knowledge making, Wragge-Morley has used eighteenth-century discourse on taste as a resource for formulating questions that seventeenth-century actors left implicit. To capture tacit practices informed by aesthetic considerations in the creation of anatomical specimens in eighteenth-century Leiden, Marieke Hendriksen has forged a new analytical category, *aesthesis*.²²

This study takes the value and challenges of a hermeneutics of faith as premises and presents an argument that operates on two levels. On the first level, what follows is a description of the formation of Haydon's judgement, based on which I make a normative claim. Haydon's judgement is suited for a description because it constitutes an 'exceptional normal': it is representative of the period's positions on taste judgement, while providing an unusually detailed account of its maturation.²³ The reasons for this anomaly will be addressed, but suffice here to mention that Haydon kept a diary, in which he reflected deeply on his practices and experience. The first section considers why it was difficult for Haydon to instantaneously notice anatomical details and idealized figures among the Elgin Marbles. The second section delineates how Haydon used drawing and anatomical

16 Claudio Benzecry, *The Opera Fanatic: Ethnography of an Obsession*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2011; Antoine Hennion, 'Those things that hold us together: taste and sociology', *Cultural Sociology* (2007) 1(1), pp. 97–114.

17 Charlotte Guichard, 'Taste communities: the rise of the *amateur* in eighteenth-century Paris', *Eighteenth-Century Studies* (2012) 45(4), pp. 519–47. See also Guichard, *Les amateurs d'art à Paris au XVIIIe siècle*, Seyssel: Champ Vallon, 2008.

18 Guichard, 'Taste communities', op. cit. (17); Daniela Bleichmar, 'Learning to look: visual expertise across art and science in eighteenth-century France', *Eighteenth-Century Studies* (2012) 46(1), pp. 85–111. On the influence of empiricism on connoisseurship see Carol Gibson-Wood, *Jonathan Richardson: Art Theorist of the English Enlightenment*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000; Kristel Smentek, *Mariette and the Science of the Connoisseur in Eighteenth-Century Europe*, Farnham and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2014.

19 Alexander Wragge-Morley, *Aesthetic Science: Representing Nature in the Royal Society of London, 1650–1720*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2020.

20 On hermeneutics of faith see Ricoeur, op. cit. (14), pp. 28–32. Although not denoted by this term, hermeneutics of faith has been central to the history of science because of a positive imperative to understand historical actors on their own terms and a negative imperative to avoid Whig history of science. Obviously, hermeneutics of suspicion has been adopted too. I emphasize here hermeneutics of faith to counterbalance interpretive trends on taste.

21 Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (tr. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald Marshall), London and New York: Continuum, 1989, esp. pp. 363–71, has examined the intricacies of historical interpretation (and any genuine hermeneutic experience).

22 Marieke Hendriksen, *Elegant Anatomy: The Eighteenth-Century Leiden Anatomical Collections*, Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2015.

23 I borrow the term from microhistory. Carlo Ginzburg, 'Microhistory: two or three things that I know about it', *Critical Inquiry* (1993) 20(1), pp. 10–35, 33.

knowledge to see and interpret the surface anatomy of the marbles. The last section outlines comparisons Haydon made between the marbles, human bodies and figures in various media to eventually judge the marbles ‘the finest things on earth’. My description is analytical. I attempt to draw a physiognomy out of the apparent contingency of Haydon’s trajectory.²⁴ ‘Ladder’ is a metaphor I use to make salient rungs on which Haydon stood, his movement to the next rung, and motivators that impelled each movement. Taste judgements, I argue, are a distinct form of knowledge that involve expertise in three experiential aspects: valuation (prizing an artwork, responding with intense feeling to it), observation (quickly discriminating referential features in an artwork), and evaluation (confidently assigning to an artwork a specific worth in a hierarchical scale). For years Haydon struggled, but thanks to the nature of this struggle, he achieved great facility in all of these aspects by 1815.

On the second level, the argument is methodological. This article aims to complement the analytical focus on communities in recent studies of taste in art history and the history of science. To foreground that taste judgements involved collective practices and shared affective experiences is not only to make substantive arguments about what taste was in the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries. It is also to take the theoretical position that the establishment of communities and intersubjectivity are crucial sources for the stabilization of taste and knowledge. Haydon, by contrast, presents a case of the individuation of judgement: the process whereby judgements come to be experienced as solely one’s own, as subjective, and yet have epistemic validity because of this fact. In addition, this study argues for the continued usefulness of the case as a unit of analysis. As several historians of science have noted, case studies, microstudies and microhistories have functioned primarily to reveal the local nature of scientific knowledge. Their very success has impeded our ‘big-picture’ understanding of science, fragmented our disciplinary conversation and raised worries that the case has run its course.²⁵ Here, I highlight another function of the case: its ability to prompt questions about the ultimate ends of common history-of-science explanations and bring these ends into sharp focus.

A first moment of valuation

When Benjamin Haydon first saw the Parthenon sculptures in 1808, they were fragmented objects of uncertain aesthetic value, and he was a ‘tyro of taste’.²⁶ Centuries-long Ottoman rule had limited European travel to Greece. Occasional visitors to Athens wrote little about the Parthenon, and some identified its sculptures as Roman, rather than Greek.

²⁴ Terrall has used similarly unusual records by an eighteenth-century naturalist to ‘spy on scientific observation in action’. She shows that observation was haphazard and open-ended, requiring patience, ingenuity and conjecture. Mary Terrall, ‘Frogs on the mantelpiece: the practice of observation in daily life’, in Lorraine Daston and Elizabeth Lunbeck (eds.), *Histories of Scientific Observation*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2011, pp. 185–205, 187. My point is that, in the absence of well-delineated methods (of observation, experimentation and so on), there is more than just contingency. To capture what I call ‘physiognomy’, I adopt a phenomenological idiom for my description. I take attentiveness to structures and temporalities of experience to be one important lesson of Martin Heidegger’s *Being and Time* (tr. Joan Stambaugh), Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996 (first published 1927). My models include Hubert L. Dreyfus and Stuart E. Dreyfus, ‘Towards a phenomenology of ethical expertise’, *Human Studies* (1991) 14(4), pp. 229–50; Ludwik Fleck, *Genesis and Development of a Scientific Fact* (ed. Thaddeus J. Trenn and Robert K. Merton, tr. Fred Bradley and Thaddeus J. Trenn), Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1979 (first published 1935).

²⁵ James Secord, ‘The big picture’, *British Journal for the History of Science* (1993) 26(4), pp. 387–9 (see additional articles in the same issue); Robert Kohler, ‘A generalist’s vision’, *Isis* (2005) 96(2), pp. 224–9; Peter Galison, ‘Ten problems in history and philosophy of science’, *Isis* (2008) 99(1), pp. 111–24, 119–22.

²⁶ Shee’s term for a novice. Martin Archer Shee, *Elements of Art: A Poem in Six Cantos*, London: William Miller, W. Bulmer and Co., 1809, p. xi.

A few eighteenth-century antiquarian expeditions to Greece had introduced to European audiences the images of the Parthenon, but because the sculptures were considered architectural ornaments, their nature had not been conveyed adequately. The study of the Parthenon and of antique Greek sculpture more generally had remained restricted.²⁷ Haydon, who was born in Plymouth, had been a student at the Royal Academy of Arts Schools in London for less than three years. His ambition was great. It was reflected in the size of his canvases and his pursuit of historical painting, the highest genre in the academic hierarchy. But both the ‘essential details of actual life’ and the ‘heroic style’ he claimed to have discerned at once in the Elgin Marbles eluded him and left him sleepless. Haydon’s state was inexperience: not a blank slate, but a matrix of half-knowledge and uneven vision, determinations that faltered into indecisions, promising orientations that became treacherous directions, and hope that abruptly turned into despair. Out of this matrix crystallized the first rung on which he stepped to judge the marbles.

So acutely aware was Haydon of the difficulty of observing details of the surface of the human body that he was ‘mad’ at Joshua Reynolds. The first president of the Royal Academy – and through his *Discourses*, the first theoretical teacher of Haydon – attributed the knowledge Greeks had of the body to the scantiness of their clothing.²⁸ But Haydon considered overwhelming the innumerable particulars even an easily observable body presented, ‘a thousand ... little accidental markings, a thousand little bits of fat, a thousand little wrinkles of skin, varying in every body without end.’²⁹ Their configurations were as impossible to grasp as the ‘momentary beauties of a shooting star’.³⁰ Shifting and fleeting as they were, the fluid and irregular contours of the body had made even Michelangelo appear an inventor of anatomical forms.³¹ Details and configurations of details were not only hard to see and interpret. They were also dangerous; to be dreaded, not cherished. Encountering them too early made impressionable young students like Haydon too attached to the wrong objects. William Blake stated forebodingly what was wrong with particulars of the living body: veer too close to them, he warned artists, and your figures will smell ‘of mortality’.³²

The real objects of artistic desire were loftier and more permanent, at least according to the art theories Haydon was absorbing. A mixture of proto-Aristotelian and proto-Platonic conceptions of beauty guided artists’ aspiration away from ever-changing appearances and towards the general, the ideal. The imperative to depict the enduring essence of the human figure – ‘ideal beauty’, of which ‘heroic style’ was one manifestation – was so compact and common that historians often describe it as dictum or maxim. There was a distinct tension, however, between the obviousness of the imperative and its imprecision. Platonic conceptions construed ideal beauty as emanating from the mind of God, whereas theories like Reynolds’s placed its origin in nature.³³ The latter obliged the artist

27 For a synthesis of the scholarly literature on the subject see my ‘“The finest things on earth”: the Elgin Marbles and the sciences of taste’, PhD dissertation, Harvard University, 2017, pp. 38–54. Our understanding of early modern attitudes to the Parthenon, including Ottoman ones, is expanding. See Elizabeth Key Fowden, ‘The Parthenon, Pericles and King Solomon: a case study of Ottoman archaeological imagination in Greece’, *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* (2018) 42(2), pp. 261–74.

28 Benjamin Robert Haydon, *The Diary of Benjamin Robert Haydon* (ed. Willard Bissell Pope), 5 vols., Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960–3, 28 September 1811, vol. 1, p. 212.

29 Haydon, op. cit. (28), vol. 2, p. 512.

30 Haydon, op. cit. (28), 23 January 1809, vol. 1, p. 49.

31 James Elkins, ‘Michelangelo and the human form: his knowledge and use of anatomy’, *Art History* (1984) 7 (2), pp. 176–86.

32 Quoted in Roger Murray, ‘Working Sir Joshua: Blake’s marginalia in Reynolds’, *British Journal of Aesthetics* (1977) 17(1), pp. 82–91, 83.

33 The classical treatment of the subject is Erwin Panofsky’s *Idea: A Concept in Art Theory*, Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1968. See also Charles Cramer, *Abstraction and the Classical Ideal, 1760–1920*, Newark:

to choose between two alternatives: synthesizing ideal beauty by combining beautiful parts from different bodies, or abstracting particulars to create a generic human form. Each option presented challenges. For if the ideal was an amalgam of actual parts, how was one to decide which were beautiful? Abstraction demanded the elimination of ‘accidental deficiencies’ that the artist observed in nature.³⁴ But, ‘if you know not what is accident and what essence’ prior to observing nature, ‘how can you distinguish’ them in nature?’³⁵ The paucity of guidance made Haydon despair. In ‘all the treatises on the Ideal Beauty, the authors ... exhaust their powers in useless [deliberations and leave the student] as uninformed as he began’.³⁶

Antique sculptures promised a way out of the labyrinth. A specific set, more precisely. Unearthed in the vicinities of Rome in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and reproduced in bronze and plaster for the nobility and art academies throughout the early modern period, the Apollo of Belvedere, the Farnese Hercules, the Laocoön, the Belvedere Torso, the Borghese Gladiator, the Medici Venus, and a few other sculptures had become central to the education of the artist.³⁷ Two important developments, however, problematized Haydon’s reliance on this antique canon for the discovery of ideal beauty. In 1764, Johann Joachim Winckelmann published *Geschichte der Kunst des Alterthums*, a systematic history of the progress and decline of ancient art that elevated fifth- to fourth-century BCE Greek art as an apogee and demoted Roman art as derivative. Winckelmann attempted to synthesize available textual evidence with a visual analysis of material remains, but the latter could not be firmly linked to particular ages.³⁸ As his systematicity invited more systematicity, antiquarians became convinced that what Winckelmann had regarded as the best productions of the Greek classical age – the Apollo of Belvedere, among others – were not originals but Roman copies.³⁹ The emergence of new notions of authenticity lent incendiary effect to these ideas. Before the eighteenth century, connoisseurs had included studio productions as part of an artist’s style. But the conception of artistic authorship became narrower, so that new weight was given to the artist’s hand, ‘a signature set of manual and mental habits’.⁴⁰ The copy became suspect, and the sorting out of the two increasingly crucial.

The more difficult it became for Haydon to rely on the antique canon, the more certain consequences emerged as pernicious. Because he came to believe that Roman art was plagued by ‘affectation’, nothing seemed to him ‘more disgusting than to see young men square out their forms with all the Pedantry of knowledge’ that Roman copies

University of Delaware Press, 2006; Walter J. Hipple Jr, ‘General and particular in the Discourses of Sir Joshua Reynolds: a study in method’, *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* (1953) 11(3), pp. 231–47.

34 Joshua Reynolds, *Sir Joshua Reynolds’s Discourses on Art* (ed. Edward Gilpin Johnson), Chicago: A.C. McClurg and Company, 1891, p. 86.

35 Haydon, op. cit. (28), 1 June 1812, vol. 1, p. 235.

36 Benjamin Robert Haydon (1786–1846) Papers, *Journals*, Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA, fMS Eng 1331(2), 10 November 1807, vol. Ia, fol. 6.

37 Francis Haskell and Nicholas Penny, *The Taste for the Antique: The Lure of Classical Sculpture, 1500–1900*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1981; Adriano Aymonino, *Drawn from the Antique: Artists and the Classical Ideal*, London: Sir John Soane’s Museum, 2015.

38 *Geschichte* was not translated in English until 1849, but Haydon became acquainted with its ideas particularly through conversations with Henry Fuseli.

39 Alex Potts, ‘Greek sculpture and Roman copies I: Anton Raphael Mengs and the eighteenth century’, *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* (1980) 43, pp. 150–73; Miranda Marvin, *The Language of the Muses: The Dialogue between Roman and Greek Sculpture*, Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2008, pp. 125–7.

40 Smentek, op. cit. (18), pp. 6–7. Charlotte Guichard, ‘Signatures, authorship and *autographie* in eighteenth-century French painting’, *Art History* (2018) 41(2), pp. 266–91, calls this the ‘autographic conception’ of art and notes that the older regime of authenticity continued to exist.

displayed.⁴¹ Another problem was that their quality was uneven. Certain aspects of canonical statues such as the Apollo of Belvedere could constitute beauties, parts of the essential, but certain other aspects faults, accidentals. Not knowing which were beauties and which faults defied the function that canonical statues were supposed to fulfil in the first place; that is, as exemplars that taught the student how to make those distinctions. The process required that the student rely on them unhesitatingly, even blindly. But such a reliance became untenable in Haydon's opinion. It was blind faith that enabled Michelangelo to learn from the Belvedere Torso, but it was this faith that 'ruined Michelangelo in his taste' because it committed him to the Torso's mistakes.⁴²

The condition in which Haydon found himself in 1808 turned him to the Elgin Marbles in a specific way. The cracks that had appeared in the solidity of the canon loosened Haydon's determination to learn from these sculptures and made looking for guidance elsewhere a logical possibility. The Elgin Marbles could be that elsewhere because Phidias, one of the greatest sculptors of antiquity, according to textual sources, was associated with them. But the name of Phidias could both orient and disorient. There was scant knowledge about the nature of his greatness, and the attribution of his name to the Elgin Marbles was contested. All the problems and dangers associated with learning from the canon surged the moment Haydon considered committing to the Elgin Marbles. For his painting of the Roman tribune, in fact, Haydon only borrowed postures from the Elgin Marbles for two marginal figures. The principal figure intended to embody the 'heroic style' is a mosaic of the Belvedere Torso and the Borghese Gladiator.⁴³ Haydon's present was unstable. All that he had learned in the past outpoured as possibilities that he could not distance himself from and that pulled and repelled him equally strongly.⁴⁴ He lived in a 'mixture of torture and hope'.⁴⁵ This difficult balancing act meant, however, that Haydon was already looking forward, already stepping on a rung, already compelled towards the formation of a taste judgement. That was less because he identified this *telos* than because of the need to steady his vacillations. That need Haydon felt to his bones, for between figures too close to living bodies and too close to Roman copies, between the smell of mortality and the 'smell of stone', one wrong step could have irredeemable consequences.⁴⁶ The higher the stakes, the greater the urge to press ahead. Haydon's valuation of the marbles thus began as an unsteady but necessary orientation towards them. It arose not out of a flux of experience, but out of a structured 'state of experience'.⁴⁷

Observing the marbles

If we know what we know about Haydon's states of experience, it is because the self was a matter of intense concern for him and his contemporaries. This concern and its modalities – introspection and reflection – were cultivated in the eighteenth century but became pronounced among Romantic poets Haydon admired.⁴⁸ This was a moment

41 Haydon, op. cit. (28), 1 March 1809, vol. 1, pp. 54–5.

42 Haydon, op. cit. (28), 29 September 1816, vol. 2, p. 47.

43 Frederick Cummings, 'Nature and the antique in B.R. Haydon's "Assassination of Dentatus"', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* (1962) 25(1–2), pp. 147–57.

44 As Fleck, op. cit. (24), p. 95, puts it for an analogous state, in 'the moment of scientific genesis, the research worker personifies the totality of his physical and intellectual ancestors, and of all his friends and enemies'.

45 Haydon, op. cit. (1), p. 78.

46 The latter phrase belongs to Rubens. Steven Cody, 'Rubens and the "smell of stone": the translation of the antique and the emulation of Michelangelo', *Arion: A Journal of Humanities and the Classics* (2013) 20(3), pp. 39–55.

47 Fleck, op. cit. (24), pp. 94, 95, makes this specification to capture distinct combinations of 'feeling, will, and intellect' acting together at various moments during the acquisition of a thought style.

48 Jerrold Seigel, *The Idea of the Self: Thought and Experience in Western Europe since the Seventeenth Century*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005, Chapters 3, 4, 5, 13. On the reasons for the turn to the self

when terms were coined to describe kinds of consciousnesses and when William Wordsworth re-envisioned the epic poem as the history of the ‘growth of a poet’s mind’.⁴⁹ For Haydon, the diary became a medium in which to decipher feelings, assess progress and form resolutions – a record of the growth of an artist’s mind. But we know a great deal about Haydon’s judgement also because he drew extensively and kept his drawings for future use.⁵⁰ Standing on the first rung of his judgement, Haydon embarked on a vigilant search of wide latitude, directing his scrutiny to the antique canon, the marbles, dead bodies, and living ones. He frantically deployed all the tools and tactics at his disposal to observe surface anatomy details and configurations. In time, his discernment and experience of these features changed qualitatively, and former perils became fecund promises. As he shed the ill-at-easiness of the novice, he projected more defined paths of action and a vision of himself as a special kind of artist.

Haydon obtained permission to draw the Elgin Marbles in May 1808 and visited them intermittently for several years.⁵¹ An analysis of his sketchbooks and drawing manuals of the period indicates that he used drawing not just as a record of his observations but as an instrument for exploring the surface of the marbles.⁵² Drawing manuals encouraged amateur drawers and artists to ‘Mind frequently or compare [their] Copy with the Original, tak [ing] particular Notice of what is amiss’.⁵³ Apart from instilling a habit of frequent and close attention to objects, drawing fostered an analytical approach: objects were to be considered first in their entirety and then inspected in their minutiae. These virtues were the reason drawing was promoted as a means for educating the senses, for turning passive seeing into active looking. Natural historians, who made observation a fundamental form of knowledge acquisition, appropriated drawing in order to school a ‘peculiar economy of attention’ that was ‘pointillist, magnifying’, and that atomized the object ‘into a mosaic of details’.⁵⁴ The sequential method of education in art academies reinforced this style of attention. The student began by copying isolated body parts from manuals or prints of Old Master paintings, and proceeded to draw fragments of antique sculptures, then a full antique cast, and finally the life model. Haydon’s sketchbooks evince these habits of attention. Although they include some full-figure drawings, most consist of fragments of the Elgin Marbles. To discover subtle hints and complicated arrangements of muscles, Haydon deployed a variety of tactics. He drew the same figure from multiple angles. In one of the drawings of the Theseus, for instance, Haydon could clearly discern the external shape of the *latissimus dorsi* as it merged with the thoracolumbar *fascia* and the external abdominal oblique (Figure 2). Sometimes, Haydon drew from perspectives that produced acute foreshortening, accentuating certain undulations into

among Romantic poets see Jerome McGann, *The Romantic Ideology: A Critical Investigation*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1983, Chapters 6, 8.

49 William Wordsworth, *The Prelude; or, Growth of a Poet’s Mind: An Autobiographical Poem*, London: Edward Moxon, Dover Street, 1850. Wordsworth began the poem in 1799.

50 Guichard, op. cit. (40), p. 275, notes that autographic conceptions of art made the conservation of drawings (as imprints of artistic individuality) important.

51 Lord Mulgrave to Lord Elgin, 21 May 1808, Elgin Papers, Broomhall Estate, Scotland, vol. IV, Letters from Artists and Connoisseurs, fol. 62r–v.

52 Haydon’s two drawing sketchbooks are held in the British Museum, 1881.0709.82–344; 1881.0709.345–571.

53 Bernard Lens, *For the Curious Young Gentleman and Ladies ... a New and Complete Drawing-Book*, London: Carington Bowles, 1766, p. 2. On English drawing manuals see Ann Bermingham, *Learning to Draw: Studies in the Cultural History of a Polite and Useful Art*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000. On drawing practices at the Royal Academy and beyond see Kimberly Mae Sloan, ‘The teaching of non-professional artists in eighteenth-century England’, PhD dissertation, University of London, 1986.

54 Lorraine Daston, ‘Empire of observation, 1600–1800’, in Daston and Lunbeck, op. cit. (24), p. 99. See also Guichard, op. cit. (17), pp. 537–9.



Figure 2. Study of the Theseus from the Parthenon sculptures, Benjamin R. Haydon, sketchbook, black chalk heightened with white on brown paper, 413 × 524 mm. © Trustees of the British Museum, London. The parts indicated are (A) *latissimus dorsi*, (B) *thoracolumbar fascia* and (C) *external abdominal oblique*.

salient contours.⁵⁵ Other times, he would move his ‘solitary candle about, above, and underneath’ the marbles to make some features prominent by the shadow they cast.⁵⁶

Haydon also took advantage of the characteristics of the drawing medium.⁵⁷ His drawings are exploratory, each style bringing out an aspect of the marbles. Note his drawings of a Lapith foot (Figure 3). They are less evocative of marble and more of living flesh, as Haydon uses *chiaroscuro* to emphasize the bulge of the big toe, making it appear more like ‘flesh [that] must rise up all about the nail’.⁵⁸ Other drawings seem schematic linear indications of shape.⁵⁹ The line had been long thematized as fundamental for representation, but in the eighteenth century it became more fully theorized as capable of grasping three-dimensional truths and more real in and of itself.⁶⁰ It was William Hogarth who articulated these ideas more clearly. He encouraged artists to think of objects as thin shells consisting of closely connected threads. Exercised continually, ‘the imagination will naturally enter into the vacant space within this shell, and there at once, as from a center, view the whole form within, and mark the opposite corresponding parts so strongly as to retain the idea of the whole’. This ‘conceit’ of Hogarth that subjected the world to a linear analysis seems to undergird some of Haydon’s sketches, where every suggestion of volume is suppressed in favor of what appear abstract conceptualizations.⁶¹

What Haydon was after was details of surface anatomy. Artists’ study of anatomy was a matter that divided opinions and even brothers. Samuel Northcote encouraged Haydon to

55 See Haydon’s drawing of a Lapith, British Museum, 1881,0709.375, recto.

56 Haydon, *Lectures on Painting and Design*, London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1846, vol. 2, p. 220. For an example see Haydon’s sketchbook, British Museum, 1881,0709.437.

57 For a historicization of the drawing medium that takes into account actors’ views on techniques and on materiality and its agency see Ewa Lajer-Burcharth, ‘Drawing time’, *October* (2015) 151, pp. 3–42.

58 Haydon, *op. cit.* (28), 16 December 1808, vol. 1, p. 39.

59 Haydon’s album, British Museum, 1881,0709.383.

60 David Rosand, *Drawing Acts: Studies in Graphic Expression and Representation*, Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002, pp. 265–328. On the emergence of drawing as an autonomous medium more generally see Ewa Lajer-Burcharth and Elizabeth M. Rudy (eds.), *Drawing: The Invention of a Modern Medium*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard Art Museums, 2017.

61 William Hogarth, ‘Introduction’, in Hogarth, *The Analysis of Beauty, Written with a View of Fixing the Fluctuating Ideas of Taste*, London: J. Reeves, 1753. See Rosand, *op. cit.* (60), pp. 271–4, on this passage.



Figure 3. Benjamin R. Haydon, 19 October 1811, black chalk, heightened with white, on brown paper, 251 × 415 mm. © Trustees of the British Museum, London. The three drawings on the left are studies of feet from the Parthenon sculptures.

seek it, but the painter James Northcote declared it useless.⁶² Many Royal Academy students and professors shared the latter's view, but Haydon heeded the former, convinced that the greatness of ancient Greek and Renaissance Italian artists depended on deep knowledge of anatomy.⁶³ Before he studied the marbles, Haydon had gone a long way to pursue such knowledge. He had procured Bernhard Albinus's *Tables of Anatomy* (1754) while still in his hometown and 'hugg[ed]' John Bell's *The Anatomy of the Human Body* (1797) as soon as he arrived in London in 1805.⁶⁴ In the Royal Academy library he would have encountered additional anatomical atlases.⁶⁵ Focusing on myology and osteology, atlases divided the body into parts, classified the bones and the muscles, pointing out origins and insertions of muscles, offering Haydon information he learned by heart, 'like boys at schools'.⁶⁶ From their images and from additional ones he produced, Haydon learned to discern anatomical parts better. Several anatomical atlases used an iconography that exaggerated the musculature to render constituent parts more visible.⁶⁷ In his own anatomical album Haydon copied many of Albinus's plates, adding his own notes and observations.⁶⁸ He also clarified difficult features by numbering anatomical parts, eliminating visual clutter, and even reducing some drawings to diagrams (Figure 4).

Dissection proved more enlightening for Haydon. One of the features that makes the observation of surface muscles difficult is that they end abruptly and continue as thin tendons. Haydon was ecstatic, therefore, when he gained access to a cadaver in 1805, for a real body 'exposed the secrets of all the markings'.⁶⁹ Exploring with a knife allowed

62 Haydon, op. cit. (1), p. 10, 23.

63 Haydon, op. cit. (1), p. 10.

64 Haydon, op. cit. (1), p. 21.

65 *A Catalogue of Books in the Library of the Royal Academy of Arts*, London: Royal Academy of Arts, 1802, pp. 19–20. On anatomy teaching at the Royal Academy see Anne Darlington, 'The Royal Academy of Arts and its anatomical teachings; with an examination of the art-anatomy practices during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in Britain', PhD dissertation, University of London, 1990. See also Boris Röhrh, *History and Bibliography of Artistic Anatomy: Didactics for Depicting the Human Figure*, Hildesheim: Olms, 2000.

66 Benjamin R. Haydon, *Lectures on Painting and Design*, London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1844, vol. 1, p. 80.

67 James Elkins, 'Two conceptions of the human form: Bernhard Siegfried Albinus and Andreas Vesalius', *Artibus et Historiae* (1986) 7(14), pp. 91–106. Lyle Massey, 'Against the "statue anatomized": the "art" of eighteenth-century anatomy on trial', *Art History* (2017) 40(1), pp. 68–103, analyses John Bell's turn to contingent aspects of dissection in his images.

68 Haydon's anatomical album is now held at the Royal Academy of Arts in London.

69 Haydon, op. cit. (1), p. 34.



Figure 4. Anatomical drawing of the bones and muscles of the lower leg. Benjamin R. Haydon, anatomical album, 5 June 1805, pen and black ink with red, light brown and grey wash on off-white laid paper, 465 × 302 mm. © Royal Academy of Arts, London. Photographer: Prudence Cuming Associates Limited.

Haydon to ascertain the natural boundaries of muscles, tendons and bones. What must have clearly helped him was feeling these parts with his hands – the virtues of tactile examination were extolled by contemporary anatomists, particularly Charles Bell, a surgeon and anatomist whose private course Haydon took in 1806.⁷⁰ Apart from matching what he saw on the surface of the body with what lay underneath, Haydon also learned to identify certain parts as anchors of vision. The *vertebra prominens* was ‘literally ... a lighthouse’, whereas the ‘point of the coccygis and the two processes of the ilium’ he found ‘excellent guides’.⁷¹ Anatomy instilled a ‘spirit of minute observation’ and provided an interpretive frame for organizing his perception.⁷² It directed attention to the essential detail, enabled him to grasp patterns, and bestowed an ability to see apparently ‘unmeaning variations in the outline’ of the Elgin Marbles as meaningful parts.⁷³

Such parts became more meaningful as Haydon studied nature in action. In September 1810, he engaged a life model named Wilson to draw in various poses. Wilson was a black sailor from Boston whose physique was admired by a number of artists, but Haydon outdid

70 J. Susan C. Lawrence, ‘Educating the senses: students, teachers and medical rhetoric in eighteenth-century London’, in W.F. Bynum and Roy Porter (eds.), *Medicine and the Five Senses*, Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004, pp. 154–79. On Bell’s pedagogy see Carin Berkowitz, *Charles Bell and the Anatomy of Reform*, Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2015, Chapter 2.

71 Haydon, op. cit. (66), 76, 80.

72 Charles Bell, *Essays on the Anatomy of Expression in Painting*, London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, and Orme, 1806, p. 13.

73 Bell, op. cit. (72), p. 13. On these aspects of trained vision see Lorraine Daston, ‘On scientific observation’, *Isis* (2008) 99(1), pp. 97–110; T. Kenny Fountain, *Rhetoric in the Flesh: Trained Vision, Technical Expertise, and the Gross Anatomy Lab*, New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2014.

all of them in enthusiasm.⁷⁴ So eager was he to study Wilson's figure that he undertook an adventurous enterprise to obtain his full body cast. The resulting mold captured his figure 'with all the purity of a shell' and included the wrinkled skin under Wilson's left armpit.⁷⁵ When Haydon later checked the Elgin Marbles, he recognized with great 'delight' the same feature in the sculpture he identified as Jupiter.⁷⁶ Wilson's figure helped Haydon in other ways. Haydon observed that Wilson had 'all the markings' of the canonical antique sculptures, but they varied as he moved.⁷⁷ What was more, the moment these alterations took place, 'his intentions were evident'.⁷⁸ He had previously studied similar 'variations of form' in the Elgin Marbles.⁷⁹ Now Haydon felt a 'great principle [of form] ... more strongly impressed than ever on my mind'.⁸⁰ Form, or the outer contours of the body, was the main vehicle for communicating meaning in life and art. Unlike colour, which conveyed 'a mysterious sentiment', form spoke with the clarity of language.⁸¹ Like words, each marking had meaning; like sentences, particular configurations conveyed more. They indicated the movements of specific muscles and bones and therefore actions (such as raising an arm), the quality of actions (such as vigorousness), their intentions (such as exhortation), and passions (such as anger). The body was as expressive as the face.⁸²

In these years of agitated circumspection (1808–11), Haydon's overall movement was characterized by to and fro.⁸³ But Haydon, this movement and the Elgin Marbles also changed qualitatively. Haydon's observational tactics augmented his senses – his eyes were endowed with tactile capacities and his hands with visual ones, as Charles Bell, who envisioned the eye and the hand as analogous organs, taught Haydon.⁸⁴ These tactics introduced some distance from the academic canon of antiquities, the Elgin Marbles and nature. Whereas before they had tugged and repelled Haydon with equal force, the amplitude of that force diminished. Instead, anatomical details and their configurations, or markings, arose as central heuristic entities for negotiating the relation between them. Markings were not any more accidentals to be dreaded (the opposite of idealized features, essentials) but indexes of the dynamic movement of the body and thus of other legible meanings. They became the direct objects of Haydon's observation – discernible, reassuring, even attractive. He detected anatomical 'beauties' that had 'passed unheeded before him'.⁸⁵ The 'complicated' surface of the body turned into a familiar map.⁸⁶ Moreover, anatomical beauties 'affected' Haydon, impressed him emotively.⁸⁷ Thus transformed, markings changed Haydon's valuation of the Elgin Marbles. The more he detected 'little exquisite truths of nature' in them, the more eagerly he sought others.⁸⁸ They functioned

74 Francis Chantry, Richard Westmacott, Thomas Lawrence and George Dawe – all deployed Wilson as a model. Jan Marsh (ed.), *Black Victorians: Black People in British Art 1800–1900*, Aldershot and Burlington, VT: Lund Humphries, 2005, pp. 18–19; Hugh Honour, 'Studies', in David Bindman and Henry Louis Gates Jr (eds.), *The Image of the Black in Western Art: From the American Revolution to World War I*, vol. 4, part 2: *Black Models and White Myths*, London and Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2012, pp. 24–33.

75 Haydon, op. cit. (1), p. 124.

76 Haydon, op. cit. (28), 30 August 1811, vol. 1, p. 211.

77 Haydon, op. cit. (28), 9 September 1810, vol. 1, p. 183.

78 Haydon, op. cit. (28), 9 September 1810, vol. 1, p. 185.

79 Haydon, op. cit. (28), 9 December 1809, vol. 1, p. 111.

80 Haydon, op. cit. (28), 9 September 1810, vol. 1, p. 185.

81 Haydon, op. cit. (66), p. 8.

82 Charles Bell, op. cit. (72), p. 178, had expressed a similar conception of the expressivity of the body.

83 Witness Haydon's 1810 'thinking' profile returning to a 1809 diary page, op. cit. (36), 4, fol. 55.

84 Berkowitz, op. cit. (70), Chapter 2.

85 Haydon, op. cit. (28), 23 January 1809, vol. 1, p. 51.

86 Haydon, op. cit. (66), p. 132.

87 Haydon, op. cit. (28), 23 January 1809, vol. 1, p. 51.

88 Haydon, op. cit. (28), 20 August 1811, vol. 1, p. 211, emphasis in the original.

as hooks that more stably compelled him towards the marbles, over the canon and nature. The marbles became a reliable reservoir of markings whose correctness Haydon did not have to certify in every individual instance. '[E]very muscle that *ought* to move', he decided, 'trembled on the marble[s]'.⁸⁹ It hardly mattered that they were fragmented. Even toes (Figure 3) promised to eliminate uncertainties he experienced and decisions he had to make.⁹⁰ In other words, if valuation as an unsteady orientation had initially incited Haydon to observe, his observations led to a more precise identification of distinct features of the Elgin Marbles, grounding his judgement in referential aspects. But observation as such grounding also led to an intensified valuation of those aspects that involved affect, not just orientation. A feedback loop mutually potentiated and refined his observation and valuation of markings.

Having reached a new rung of his judgement and attained more clarity about his present, Haydon could assess his past with more discernment and look to the future with more assurance. Disagreements with the Royal Academy over artistic pedagogy had forced Haydon to forge an idiosyncratic path. Haydon had not simply studied anatomy alongside medical students while other artists barely looked at anatomical atlases. He had left no 'atom ... uninvestigated' and veered close to transgression.⁹¹ Obtaining Wilson's cast had been risky. Too eager in his zeal, Haydon had allowed the plaster to set around Wilson's lungs and almost killed him.⁹² Haydon now knew that he had been right to study anatomy. He was an exceptional artist ready to go to extraordinary lengths. Moreover, he could plan more definite future movements. As authorizing entities for markings, the Elgin Marbles appeared to him a dense forest of almost imperceptible signs – 'every muscle that ought to move *trembled*' there.⁹³ This suggested to him clear tasks. To remedy the haphazardness of situations that revealed details like Jupiter's wrinkled skin, Haydon created 'artifices [to keep] his attention ever on alert', keeping the 'productions' of the Greeks 'in every part of his house' so that they could 'catch his eye, and entrap him into reflection'.⁹⁴ Second, it enabled Haydon to delineate the nature of knowledge he wished to acquire. A precise catalogue of markings would make 'all nature [appear] laid open, all animated being [ready] at [his] disposal'.⁹⁵ The totality of knowledge of surface anatomy he cast as a landscape viewed from a moving and zooming viewpoint that made everything surveyable and retrievable. But Haydon marked this knowledge as destined to become inarticulate. For if bodies were instruments of expression, each anatomical marking had to be known as a 'vehicle'.⁹⁶ Vehicles do not draw attention to themselves, but by becoming exactly precise, they became absolutely unobtrusive and therefore effectively expressive. This was knowledge that would become tacit in a mature judgement but whose precondition for tacitness was perfect articulateness.

Evaluating the marbles

It mattered that Haydon organized his observations of markings under the 'principle of form'. Like rules and precepts, principles represented synthesized forms of knowledge

89 Haydon, op. cit. (28), December 1809, vol. 1, p. 114, emphasis added.

90 Haydon, op. cit. (66), p. 86, 'Elgin feet... teem[] with life, skin trembling, and blood circulating'.

91 Haydon, op. cit. (28), December 1809, vol. 1, p. 114.

92 Haydon, op. cit. (1), p. 124.

93 Haydon, op. cit. (28), December 1809, vol. 1, p. 114, emphasis added.

94 Haydon, op. cit. (66), p. 70. This is advice Haydon later gives to students, presumably based on his own practice.

95 Haydon, op. cit. (28), December 1809, vol. 1, p. 115.

96 Haydon, op. cit. (28), January 1813, vol. 1, p. 280.

that enabled its transmission but were more generative than them.⁹⁷ It was the principle of the ideal human body that was believed to have endowed Greek art with its power. This principle, too, Haydon wanted to find. The dense connections he envisioned between body and mind convinced him that form indexed not only changing features guided by the principle of form but also permanent ones dictated by the principle of 'ideal beauty', 'ideal form', 'standard figure' – Haydon used them interchangeably. This principle was lost. The treatise of the Greek artist Polykleitos, who articulated a version, had not survived.⁹⁸ But, as Winckelmann wrote, the moderns were like a lover seeing off her beloved – 'we ... have ... only a shadowy outline of the subject of our desires ... But this arouses so much the greater longing for what is lost'.⁹⁹ Haydon's longing was more concrete and the principle of ideal beauty a more proximate object.¹⁰⁰ But he hesitated for some time to rely on the marbles for their identification. Instead, alongside his observations, he conducted another restless and broad search, comparing canonical sculptures, the marbles, living bodies and animals. These comparisons enabled him to evaluate the marbles – he determined their aesthetic difference and placed them securely at the top of a hierarchical scale. Haydon came to realize that the marbles were more important than principles. They made his eye and mind swift and induced an affective receptivity he had not imagined possible.

In late 1809, Haydon examined the proportions of the Apollo of Belvedere, the Farnese Hercules and Paris, a statue unearthed in eighteenth-century Rome.¹⁰¹ He concluded that there were several principles for different proportions that produced idealized figures embodying strength (while guarding from heaviness), or gracefulness (while avoiding feebleness).¹⁰² These derived from the principle of the standard figure, but what was the standard?¹⁰³ His conjectures took a different turn in February 1810. Having procured a lioness to dissect, he studied its bones and muscles and was struck by its similarities with humans. He put the lioness on its heels (Figure 5) and then saw 'the whole system': since the lioness could not stand erect on the same bones as a human, a comparison of their construction would reveal their differences 'as marks of brutality on the lion's part, [and] as indication of humanity on that of man'.¹⁰⁴ This was the principle he sought: ideal beauty consisted in what was strictly peculiar to humans and the furthest from animals. When in September 1810 he drew Wilson, he developed these ideas. He found that, although Wilson's proportions were the same as a European's, he displayed 'the radical deficiencies of the lion's construction'.¹⁰⁵ 'His deltoid was too short', his feet were 'flatter than the European's and [this was] a link to ... animal Nature'.¹⁰⁶ To fix the ideal figure, all he had

97 On the status of rules and precepts see François Quiviger, 'Renaissance art theories', in Paul Smith and Carolyn Wilde (eds.), *A Companion to Art Theory*, Oxford: Blackwell, 2002, pp. 49–60; Paul Duro, *The Academy and the Limits of Painting in Seventeenth-Century France*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997, pp. 107–43.

98 Warren G. Moon, *Polykleitos, the Doryphoros, and the Tradition*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995.

99 Johann Joachim Winckelmann, *History of the Art of Antiquity*, Los Angeles: The Getty Research Institute, 2006, p. 351. For an analysis of this important passage see Whitney Davis, 'Winckelmann divided: mourning the death of art history', in Donald Preziosi (ed.), *The Art of Art History: A Critical Anthology*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009, pp. 35–44, 42–3.

100 Because Winckelmann had failed to see the potential of the Parthenon sculptures like Haydon, he became a 'useless rhapsodist'. Haydon, op. cit. (28), 8 November 1809, vol. 1, p. 95.

101 Haydon, op. cit. (36), 9 December 1809, 4, fol. 55.

102 Haydon, op. cit. (28), November 1809, vol. 1, pp. 104–6. There was a long tradition of measuring proportions of ancient sculptures for deriving principles for idealization. Aymonino, op. cit. (37), pp. 28, 45–50. Haydon would have been most immediately familiar with Gérard Audran's *Les proportions du corps humain, mesurées sur les plus belles figures de l'antiquité*, Paris: G. Audran, 1683.

103 Haydon, op. cit. (28), December 1809, vol. 1, pp. 112–13.

104 Haydon, op. cit. (1), p. 122.

105 Haydon, op. cit. (1), pp. 125–6.

106 Haydon, op. cit. (28), 9 September 1810, vol. 1, p. 186.

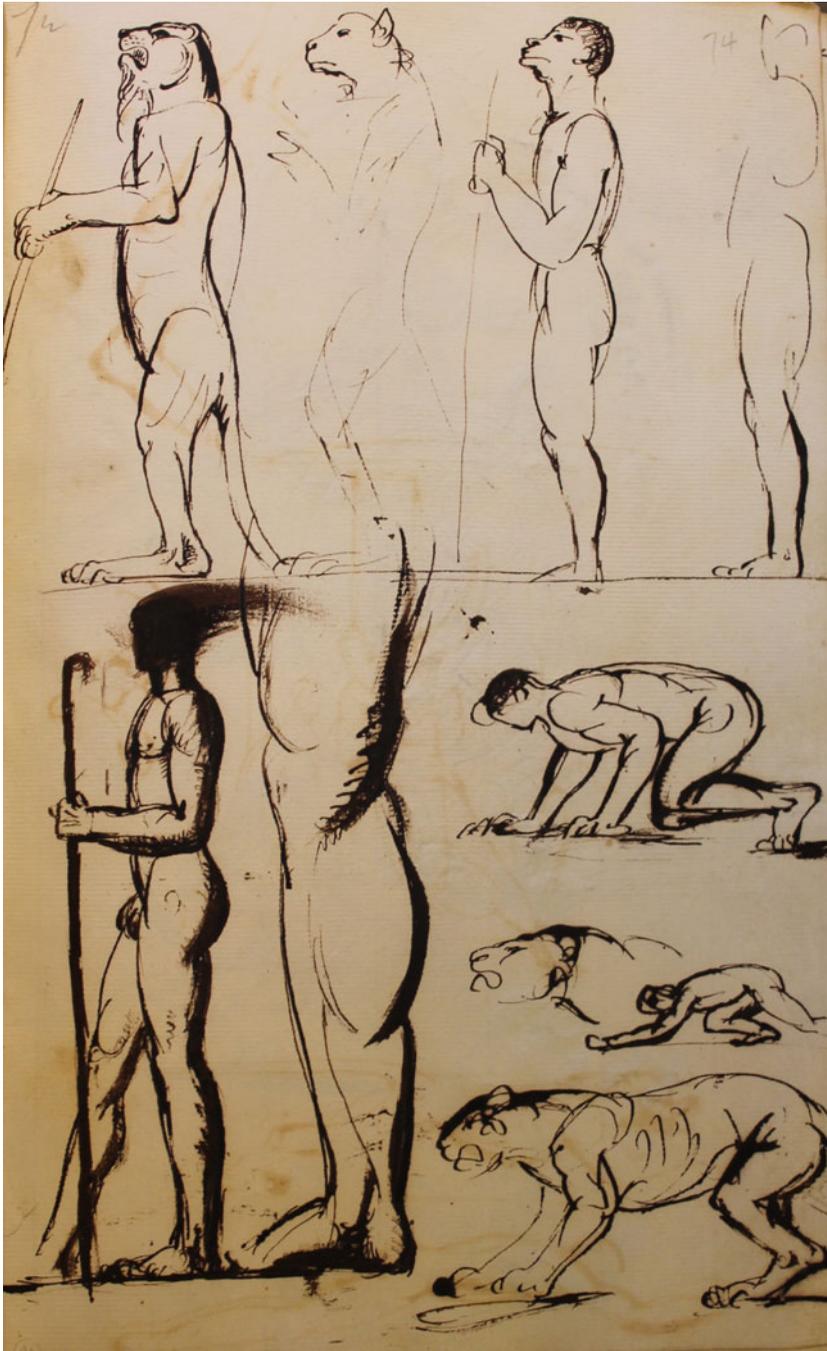


Figure 5. Sketches. Benjamin R. Haydon, *Journals*, February 1810, Houghton Library, Harvard University, fMS Eng 1331(5), fol. 74. Haydon visually tested his hypothesis of a lion standing erect and a human walking as a quadruped.

to do was to ‘reverse ... the deficiencies of the lion’ and of Wilson.¹⁰⁷ When Haydon consulted the Elgin Marbles, he realized that ‘the principles of a standard figure were so

¹⁰⁷ Haydon, op. cit. (1), vol. 1, p. 126; 9 September 1810, vol. 1, p. 186.

distinct' in them, that it was impossible that they were 'developed ... without intention and ... knowledge'.¹⁰⁸ Clearly, the Greeks had derived the principles from comparisons like Haydon's.

The logical slippages are patent even in Haydon's sketches (Figure 5), yet he was convinced he was correct. That had to do in part with the nature and content of the sources he drew from. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, human variation was tethered on anatomical structure.¹⁰⁹ A conception of organic form as interconnected – responding in concert to partial modifications – had generated a search for the part that best revealed essential differences between nations. The Dutch anatomist Petrus Camper identified it as the cranium profile, presenting his discovery with widely reproduced images that placed two apes, a 'negro', a 'Calmuck', a European and the Apollo of Belvedere in an order of increasing facial angle.¹¹⁰ To Charles White, an anatomist Haydon read closely, the order on the page suggested an actual order in nature, a chain of being whose gradations were fixed. The gradations were also hard to discern, so White extended comparison to the entire body and extolled comparing 'extremes' – the 'African' and the 'European' – for inferring other imperceptible gradations.¹¹¹ He also pegged mental capacities on the morphology of the cranium. For the anatomist Charles Bell, Haydon's teacher, Camper's inclusion of the Apollo was necessary because art was 'a science' for the Greeks.¹¹² Like Bell, the Greeks had discovered that animals lacked the muscles that enabled the expression of passions and had outdone Camper in 'revers[ing]' all the peculiar features of animals to obtain the ideal human form.¹¹³ This is why Haydon compared the morphology of the lion, Wilson and the Elgin Marbles; took their positions to be fixed and distanced enough to make the comparison illuminating; assumed a teleological view of the body that made permanent features in human form (including the bones and muscles that enabled humans to stand erect) indexes of 'intellect' and therefore ideal beauty; and even used his sketches to make consequential inferences. His certainty was an interstitial effect, produced by the movement of concepts and images between (Greek) art, (anatomical) science, and back to art. This endowed the Greeks, anatomy, and images with epistemic authority and transmuted Haydon's speculations into proofs. Moreover, Haydon was no passive recipient of ideas. By his estimation, he had made an original contribution to anatomical debates by identifying the Elgin Marbles as bearers of the principle of ideal beauty.¹¹⁴

108 Haydon, op. cit. (66), p. 15.

109 See Andrew Curran, *The Anatomy of Blackness: Science & Slavery in an Age of Enlightenment*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011; David Bindman, *Ape to Apollo: Aesthetics and the Idea of Race in the Eighteenth Century*, London: Reaktion Books, 2002.

110 Petrus Camper, *The Works of the Late Professor Camper on the Connexion between the Science of Anatomy and the Arts of Drawing, Painting, Statuary, etc.* (tr. T. Cogan), London: C. Dilly, 1794, Plates I, II. Miriam Claude Meijer, 'Bones, law, and order, in Amsterdam: Petrus Camper's morphological insights', in Klaas van Berkel and Bart Ramakers (eds.), *Petrus Camper in Context: Science, the Arts, and Society in the Eighteenth-Century Dutch Republic*, Hilversum: Verloren, 2015, pp. 187–213, 191–2. See also Meijer, *Race and Aesthetics in the Anthropology of Petrus Camper (1722–1789)*, Amsterdam and Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 1999. Meijer shows that Camper meant to provide artists with a practical guide for the correct representation of different nations rather than suggest the existence of races.

111 Charles White, *An Account of the Regular Gradation in Man, and in Different Animals and Vegetables*, London: C. Dilly, 1799, p. 42. Aris Sarafianos, 'B.R. Haydon and racial science: the politics of the human figure and the art profession in the early nineteenth century', *Visual Culture in Britain* (2006) 7(1), pp. 79–26, 81–91, emphasizes White's influence on Haydon and the importance of osteology as a secure tool for analysing variation in both.

112 Bell, op. cit. (72), p. 40. Bell taught Haydon to focus on myology for morphological comparisons, rather than just osteology, as Sarafianos, op. cit. (111), argues.

113 Bell, op. cit. (72), pp. 34–5, 39. By 'revers[ing]' Bell meant such things as reducing the distance between the ears and eyes.

114 Gilroy-Ware, op. cit. (15), pp. 169–93, also offers a good analysis of Haydon's engagement with 'racial science'.

Standing on the second rung of his judgment with his principles at hand, Haydon did not rest satisfied. Instead, he kept returning to the marbles so that their 'essence' could 'be interwoven about my soul ... be mingled in my blood and circulate through my being'.¹¹⁵ He also made other evaluations. Many art theorists maintained that the only way to determine whether a work was good, bad or the best was through comparisons. One corollary was that the judgement of a particular artwork became more precise the more artworks it was compared with, which is why extensive travel was recommended for artists and connoisseurs and comparison was adopted as a display principle in private and public collections.¹¹⁶ Haydon had the benefit of Continental art come to him. Collecting paintings and antique statuary had been limited in Britain, but several factors had combined to bring parts of European collections to London by the early nineteenth century.¹¹⁷ Haydon himself amassed a collection of casts, and drawings and engravings of Old Master paintings.¹¹⁸ In 1814, he ventured to France to see the Louvre and other collections.¹¹⁹ As Haydon compared, he noticed errors everywhere. The painter Henry Fuseli always marked the muscles of the chest in the same way.¹²⁰ In June 1810, Haydon studied Sebastiano del Piombo's *The Rising of Lazarus*. He knew that Michelangelo might have drawn Lazarus, but he was disappointed to find that the shoulder muscles of the figure were 'parcel[s] of little unmeaning marking'.¹²¹ Even the Apollo of Belvedere increasingly appeared to him 'marbly, puffed',¹²² his flesh 'like puckered silk stuffed & stitched down'.¹²³ Haydon's conviction on the signficatory power of correct anatomical markings turned 'errors' into his chief heuristic tool of comparison. This had further implications. First, errors enhanced the value of the Elgin Marbles because each error committed in ancient and modern artworks was an error *not* made in the marbles. The totality of errors served as an almost quantifiable measure of the superiority of the marbles and their aesthetic distance from other artworks. Second, noticing errors made Haydon realize that his 'mind' was reaching 'a new & truer turn'.¹²⁴ Third, it was absorbing the 'essence' of the marbles that enhanced his mind and eye. 'The Elgin Marbles have so refined my eye', he noted in February 1813, 'that errors strike it instantly'.¹²⁵

Haydon's exercises gradually gave him independence from the material conditions that enabled them. The facility in detecting errors was also thanks to the comparanda becoming objects in his mind – returning from France, he felt 'greatly enlarged in everything'.¹²⁶ There were concepts that shaped this experience. The taste of genius, as Haydon took himself to be, was thought to have integrative powers that Joseph Wright of Derby foregrounded in a 1770 painting (Figure 6).¹²⁷ Unlike the figures on the right, still bound to

115 Haydon, op. cit. (28), May 1811, vol. 1, p. 201.

116 Andrew McClellan, *Inventing the Louvre: Art, Politics, and the Origins of the Modern Museum in Eighteenth-Century Paris*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994, pp. 13–48. Carole Paul, *The Borghese Collections and the Display of Art in the Age of Grand Tour*, Aldershot and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008, pp. 13–18.

117 Francis Haskell, *The Ephemeral Museum: Old Master Paintings and the Rise of the Art Exhibition*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000; Vicky Coltman, *Classical Sculpture and the Culture of Collecting in Britain since 1760*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.

118 Frederick Cummings, 'Benjamin R. Haydon's school', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* (1963) 26 (3–4), pp. 367–80, 369–70.

119 His French visit lasted from May to July 1814. Haydon, op. cit. (28), vol. 1, pp. 352–79.

120 Haydon, op. cit. (28), October 1809, vol. 1, p. 91.

121 Haydon, op. cit. (28), 20 June 1810, vol. 1, pp. 164–5.

122 Haydon, op. cit. (28), 4 October 1812, vol. 1, pp. 247–8.

123 Haydon, op. cit. (28), 31 January 1819, vol. 2, p. 217.

124 Haydon, op. cit. (28), 9 January 1814, vol. 1, p. 336.

125 Haydon, op. cit. (28), 20 February 1813, vol. 1, p. 292.

126 Haydon, op. cit. (28), 27 June 1814, vol. 1, p. 375.

127 Haydon's obsession with his own genius is evident in his diary.

the concreteness of drawing and prints, or the leftmost figure, representing taste that only observes and admires, the protagonist genius looks away, his collection closed in hand, a sculpture behind him, part of his mind's collection.¹²⁸ With this collection, the philosopher Dugald Stewart told Haydon, the mind became a 'laboratory' where one could perform 'experiments' by the 'power of Imagination alone', generating 'ideal trials at will'.¹²⁹ These endowed taste judgements with a 'celerity unknown in our operations on Matter' and made the 'mind tremblingly alive' to artworks.¹³⁰ By November 1815, Haydon's aliveness to the Elgin Marbles had reached a new pitch. Looking at a Lapith figure, he

dwelt on it with more intensity than ever. Its beauty, its divinity, came over my soul like the influence of an angelic spirit ... I never was so acutely impressed before. I thank God my feelings are ripening ... Its influence came over me stronger & stronger & stronger till I could scarcely bear it. I felt as if a supernatural being was directing the beam of a burning lens to fire my soul.¹³¹

The Elgin Marbles had become 'the finest things on earth'.

Haydon's experience on this last rung appeared removed from knowing and shared experience. What he felt could be described only evocatively. But if this state was subjective, it was also a knowledgeable accomplishment. Whereas Haydon's observations had made the anatomical markings of the marbles first visible and then affecting beauties, his evaluations – comparisons for establishing relative worth – now propelled the marbles into the highest evaluative category, the 'finest ... on earth'. This was not a generic phrase. The scope of Haydon's comparisons was vast. His focus on form as the crucial communicative tool of art made form a capacious net that captured living bodies and dead ones, painted figures and drawn ones. The accumulation of artworks in London turned the capital into a synecdoche for the world and made the marbles 'the finest ... on earth'. Haydon's peculiar mobility, his will to interlace various concepts and venture into diverse cultural spaces, wove a connective tissue between disparate comparanda. It solidified, furthermore, the superlativeness of his judgement. For it was the realization that the marbles encapsulated the principle of ideal beauty that launched them into vertiginous evaluative heights. The certainty he experienced by deeming his discovery scientific fixed the marbles there. It is for these reasons that Haydon recast their 'beauty' as 'divinity'. Only sublime art could be called divine because the sublime was the truly superlative aesthetic category.¹³² The sublime was also what induced the 'strongest emotion ... the mind is capable of feeling'.¹³³ Haydon felt the sublimity of the marbles once all the particular experiences were folded up to operate subliminally, once all the vacillations and deliberations left the place to 'ripened feelings', not just capable of detecting individual beauties,

128 This interpretation is informed by Andrew Graciano's 'Observation, imitation, and emulation in "An Academy by Lamplight" by Joseph Wright of Derby (1734–97)', *British Art Journal* (2013–14) 14(3), pp. 36–41, with the difference that Graciano considers genius to be the opposite of taste. On the taste of genius see Stewart, op. cit. (10), p. 461. On the mind's collection see Pascal Griener, *La république de l'oeil: L'expérience de l'art au siècle des Lumières*, Paris: Jacob, 2010, pp. 75–83.

129 Stewart, op. cit. (10), p. 453. For evidence that Haydon read Stewart see Haydon, op. cit. (28), 5 February 1813, vol. 1, p. 290.

130 Stewart, op. cit. (10), pp. 455, 473.

131 Haydon, op. cit. (28), 10 November 1815, vol. 1, p. 479.

132 'All the different Degrees of Goodness in Painting ... may be reduc'd to ... Mediocre ... the Excellent, and the Sublime'. Jonathan Richardson, quoted and analysed in Gibson-Wood, op. cit. (18), p. 176.

133 Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, Basel, 1792 (first published 1757), p. 5.



Figure 6. Joseph Wright of Derby (1734–97), *An Academy by Lamplight*, 1770, oil on canvas, 1270 × 1010 mm. Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection, public domain.

but receptive to an almost mystical influence.¹³⁴ This was the strongest emotion, but it was also calm. Haydon did not fear, as he had in the past, that he could be wrong. A valuation that had begun as uncertain orientation had now turned into an intense and stable emotion that knew that the marbles were the finest on earth. And Haydon would

¹³⁴ Taste had been associated with mystical knowing before. See Hoffmann op. cit. (7), pp. 101–22.

challenge anyone who thought this was ‘merely ... enthusiasm’. He stood ready to demonstrate he was one who ‘knows & feels & can prove’.¹³⁵

Haydon shared with William Wordsworth this understanding of transformed states of experience too. As James Chandler has shown, Haydon’s admired poet modified the term ‘sensibility’ on similar grounds. Wordsworth defined poetry as the ‘spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings’, but both spontaneity and the power of feelings were products of life-long meditation, a continuous molding of ‘influxes of feeling’.¹³⁶ The result was an ‘achieved sensibility’.¹³⁷ The stakes in attaining such states were great. ‘High is our calling’, Wordsworth wrote to Haydon in 1815.¹³⁸ For Wordsworth, the poet was a special kind of knower summoned to confront a crisis: the sensibility he had achieved in solitude would subtly enable readers to break a ‘state of almost savage torpor’ induced by new conditions of life.¹³⁹ Haydon too felt the calling. With his own achieved sensibility, he identified the marbles as exemplars that would change the art of the nation. The marbles would reduce canonical sculptures like Apollo to the ‘old antique’, becoming themselves, paradoxically, the new antique.¹⁴⁰ As artworks ‘unmixed in excellence’, they would ‘impregnate the minds of the rising Students’.¹⁴¹ In 1815, Haydon established a school to rival the Royal Academy and used his drawings of marbles as central pedagogical tools.¹⁴² In 1817, the Elgin Marbles were placed in the British Museum, and as the art historian Elizabeth Prettejohn has argued, they did ‘serve as a school’ for an art with a new temporality – modern art.¹⁴³ Turned to the future with a far-reaching gaze and a sense of his self as a seer, Haydon could have well said in 1815, ‘I foretell’ the glory of marbles and proclaim ‘I foretell’ such fate.¹⁴⁴

Conclusions

The features that appear to make taste judgements subjective are the result of a long and structured process. Valuation as an intense affective response to an artwork, observation as rapid discrimination of referential subtleties, and evaluation as assured assignment of aesthetic rank – all that Haydon reminisced as his first response to the marbles – were effortful accomplishments. These features are necessary (though not sufficient) elements that qualify (rather than disqualify) individual taste judgements as candidates for knowledge. The incorporation of these features makes taste judgements a distinct form of

135 Haydon, op. cit. (28), 6 May 1815, vol. 1, p. 434.

136 William Wordsworth, *Lyrical Ballads, with Other Poems*, 2nd edn, 2 vols., London: Longman and Rees, 1800, vol. 1, Preface, p. xiv.

137 This is James Chandler’s analytical phrase in ‘The question of sensibility’, *New Literary History* (2018) 49(4), pp. 467–92. The similarities between Haydon’s and Wordsworth’s positions have not been noted in the scholarly literature on Haydon.

138 See Haydon, op. cit. (28), vol. 1, p. 491 n. 1.

139 Wordsworth, op. cit. (136), p. xviii. See Chandler, op. cit. (137), for an analysis of this crisis and Wordsworth’s proposed solution.

140 Haydon starts using ‘old antique’ already in Haydon, op. cit. (28), November 1809, vol. 1, p. 95. See also Haydon, op. cit. (66), p. 18.

141 Haydon, op. cit. (28), 21 November 1811, vol. 1, p. 219. As Barrell has argued, British art theory was peculiarly ‘preoccupied with the public and the political’, although he downplays Haydon’s political commitment. John Barrell, *The Political Theory of Painting from Reynolds to Hazlitt*, New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 1986, pp. 340, 308–14. Haydon’s position on the relation between principles and exemplars is one among a range explored in the period. See James Chandler, ‘The Pope controversy: Romantic poetics and the English canon’, *Critical Inquiry* (1984) 10(3), pp. 481–509.

142 Cummings, op. cit. (118).

143 Elizabeth Prettejohn, *The Modernity of Ancient Sculpture: Greek Sculpture and Modern Art from Winkelmann to Picasso*, London and New York: Tauris, 2012, pp. 60–72, 72.

144 Haydon, op. cit. (1), emphases added.

knowledge. Lorraine Daston has singled out *coup d'oeil* as a specific mode of understanding for similar reasons. *Coup d'oeil* grasps an object as a whole, reveals structural connections, occurs immediately, and is inscrutable. These characteristics were conjoined around 1750–1850 to describe skills of military engineers that recalled the glance of the connoisseur.¹⁴⁵ Like taste judgements, *coup d'oeil* was often construed as the opposite of discursive knowledge, procedural reasoning and painstaking investigation. The ladder that Haydon had to climb shows that these were in fact propaedeutic to mature taste judgements. It is the fate of the ladder to become invisible, however, and of taste judgements to appear suspended in air. As Denis Diderot wrote, when all the ‘minute experiences’ that cultivated judgement ‘dropped out of view’, judgement seemed instinct.¹⁴⁶ Haydon’s and Wordsworth’s claims that their transformed subjectivities were useful for others could be depreciated by a phrase like ‘the egotistical sublime’.¹⁴⁷ Theirs was no more than a solipsistic consciousness. The long eighteenth century produced a range of positions on the nature of taste judgements that also allowed the movement of arguments across cultural domains – Dugald Stewart enlisted the military *coup d'oeil* to make taste judgements epistemically solid.¹⁴⁸ But that range and the inconsistencies it introduced had consequences. The existence of the ladder did not become an established meta-fact about taste.¹⁴⁹

Yet it is useful to make the ladder conspicuous so that we may, in addition, appreciate individual resources for knowledge stabilization. Communal resources have garnered considerable attention. For eighteenth-century *amateurs*, Guichard has emphasized, taste was a shared passion capable of creating new communities around objects that temporarily suspended social hierarchies.¹⁵⁰ The art historian Kristel Smentek has stressed eighteenth-century connoisseurs’ ‘self-consciously collaborative practices’ to show that connoisseurship was a science.¹⁵¹ As Steven Shapin saw it, we have methodologically repaired the subjectivity of taste judgements – and deflated objectivity – by making them more intersubjective.¹⁵² Intersubjectivity matters, but so does subjectivity. Guichard and Smentek do recognize this. They examine how sensory epistemologies were used to generate practices for training the connoisseur’s eye.¹⁵³ But there is more to connoisseurial expertise than a trained eye and mind. Mature taste judgements constitute not only skill acquisition but skilful becoming, a holistic transformation.¹⁵⁴ In 1815, Haydon’s judgement of the marbles was a full compelled involvement – perceptual, cognitive and affective. And this was achieved in three ways. First, valuation, observation and evaluation tethered and reinforced each other in feedback loops. Second, Haydon’s was a self with pronounced reflectivity – a self with introspective habits, with a keenness to acquire autonomy from materiality and to turn shared experiences into experiences

145 This mode had a long life, with antecedents and subsequent instantiations. Lorraine Daston, ‘The coup d’oeil: on a mode of understanding’, *Critical Inquiry* (2019) 45(2), pp. 307–31.

146 Paraphrased in Barnouw, op. cit. (9), p. 332.

147 John Keats to Richard Woodhouse, 27 October 1818, in *Letters of John Keats* (ed. Robert Gittings), Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970, p. 157.

148 Stewart, op. cit. (10), p. 432.

149 There is another argument that I cannot develop here because of space limitations but needs specification: Haydon’s chain of inferences shows that taste judgements are a species of ‘thinking in cases’, as Forrester identified it. John Forrester, *Thinking in Cases*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2017.

150 Guichard, op. cit. (17), p. 532–4.

151 Smentek, op. cit. (18), p. 2.

152 Shapin, op. cit. (12) p. 176.

153 See especially Smentek, op. cit. (18), Chapter 3.

154 Aristotle understood this well. The development of ethical judgement, he argued, involved becoming virtuous, which he distinguished from the acquisition of technical skill. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* (tr. David Ross), Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1103a–1107a.

that felt uniquely his own.¹⁵⁵ (This reflectivity has an analogue in the linguistic function of the indexical ‘I’, which marks communal meanings as individual utterances with intended private meanings.¹⁵⁶) Third, the formation of his judgement involved identifiable tools, exercises and their repetition, but, crucially, particular profiles or states of experience that served as preconditions for Haydon’s final state of experience.

I have for these reasons argued not just that taste judgements *were* for Haydon a form of knowledge but that they *are* a form of knowledge. A hermeneutics of faith adopted to describe Haydon’s judgement and recover its meaning led me to a normative claim about knowledge. This is a common explanatory arc in the history of science, although it is not explicitly identified as such. When historians of science examined early modern European artisans’ engagements with nature, they showed ‘how deeply embedded in making is the sense of knowing’.¹⁵⁷ When historians of science insist that Islamicate forms of empiricism are ‘science’, they affirm them as legitimate epistemic methods.¹⁵⁸ But yielded by Haydon’s case, this explanatory arc obliges us to ask, if we take Haydon’s judgement to count as knowledge, does it imply that we accept his conclusions on Wilson? Do we dismiss his judgement as wrong-headed, but keep the category of taste judgements as potentially valid knowledge? Or do we revert to the simple historicist claim that Haydon’s judgement counted as knowledge in the period? The literary scholar André Jolles has argued that the case presents questions that cannot be avoided, that point to a conflict between higher norms in a domain, and that force a weighing of them.¹⁵⁹ I highlight this function of Haydon’s case to suggest that the case is not a limited unit of analysis. The proliferation of case studies of single episodes, controversies and locales has made several historians of science wonder, what do these particulars tell us about the general history and meaning of science? Can they transcend their singularity?¹⁶⁰ Haydon’s judgement is a singular, but it necessarily foregrounds a general issue: that the relationship between the descriptive and the normative in our explanations may need more clarification.¹⁶¹ We do more than history, or historical epistemology, whenever the *telos* of our explanation is to appreciate past forms of knowledge as valid, whenever we restore as legitimate epistemic practices obscured by dominant epistemologies. It is worth weighing again what this means and what kinds of scepticism our normative claims need beyond a hermeneutics of suspicion that undermines description.¹⁶²

155 Seigel, op. cit. (48), Chapter 1, has called attention to reflectivity as a crucial axis for analysing the self, alongside bodily (or material) and relational (or communal) dimensions.

156 Paul Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning*, Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1979, pp. 12–14.

157 Pamela Smith, Amy R.W. Meyers and Harold J. Cook (eds.), *Ways of Making and Knowing: The Material Culture of Empirical Knowledge*, New York: Bard Graduate Center, 2017 (first published 2014), p. 9, emphasis added.

158 These claims were strongly made in the Current Trends in the History of Science in Muslim Societies: Debates, Approaches, and Stakes workshop, NYU Abu Dhabi Institute, New York, 11–12 December 2019.

159 André Jolles, *Simple Forms* (tr. Peter J. Shwartz), London and New York: Verso, pp. 137–61.

160 See note 25 above. For other suggestions on how to transcend the particularity of the case see Kohler, op. cit. (25); Soraya de Chadarevian, ‘Microstudies versus big picture accounts?’, *Studies in History and Philosophy of Biological and Biomedical Sciences* (2009) 40(1), pp. 13–19.

161 Dominique Pestre, ‘Thirty years of science studies: knowledge, society, and the political’, *History and Technology: An International Journal* (2004) 20(4), pp. 351–69, has identified similar strains of the descriptive and the normative in science studies, although she has in mind not the epistemic but the moral and the political normative.

162 For a recent such exercise see Pietro Daniel Omodeo, *Political Epistemology: The Problem of Ideology in Science Studies*, Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2019.

Acknowledgements. I would like to thank my teachers Katharine Park and Steven Shapin, as well as James Delbourgo, Daniela Helbig, John Brewer and James Chandler for their insightful feedback. I have also benefited from discussions with colleagues at Columbia University's Society of Fellows and the Huntington Library and, in particular, from the incisive comments of the two anonymous reviewers of this article. Any mistakes are my own.

Cite this article: Gjikola A (2022). The formation of a taste judgement: how Benjamin R. Haydon came to value, observe and evaluate the Elgin Marbles. *BJHS Themes* 7, 157–180. <https://doi.org/10.1017/bjt.2022.9>