John Smith, his Catalogue Raisonné of the Works of the Most Eminent Dutch, Flemish, and French Painters (1829–1842) and the ‘stigma of PICTURE DEALER’

Antoinette Friedenthal

I. Introduction

From today’s point of view, the history of the catalogue raisonné, though multi-faceted, emerges as a relatively coherent, self-contained process. When looked at from a greater distance, the making of this genre of art historical literature indeed reveals correlations which were not necessarily realized by the protagonists at the

Figure 1 Moses Haughton Jr., Portrait of John Smith. Watercolour on ivory, 15.9 x 12.7 cm. © Trustees of the British Museum, London

I am grateful to Matthew Rampley for inviting me to speak on Smith at the Negotiating Boundaries – The Plural Fields of Art History conference (University of Birmingham, 1-2 July 2013), as well as to Richard Woodfield for his much-appreciated support. For critical comments and discussion I would like to thank Wolfgang Haase as well as Johannes Nathan, who also contributed to the translation of my text. Unless otherwise stated, translations from the German are my own.

time. Thus, where they may have seen themselves in intellectual harmony with those who had similar aims, we can now recognize alliances based primarily on common strategic or commercial goals; and where they may have perceived disagreements with predecessors and contemporaries, we now see continuities and shared principles.

A landmark in the history of this genre is the nine-volume Catalogue Raisonné of the Works of the Most Eminent Dutch, Flemish, and French Painters published by the London art dealer John Smith (figs 1 and 2) between 1829 and 1842.2 In the context of the history of art history, this publication is remarkable for several reasons, the most important being perhaps that Smith’s volumes effectively illustrate the turning point between the varied kinds of art literature typical of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and the development of academic forms of research in the first decades of the nineteenth century.

![Figure 2 Frontispiece and title page, from John Smith, Catalogue Raisonné, vol. 1, 1829. London: Smith and Son](image)

It would be tempting to delve more deeply into this context. It would be equally tempting to closely follow the steps of John Smith.3 We might for instance trace the making of his Catalogue Raisonné by looking at his sources and the literature at his disposal. We could also accompany him on his far-ranging travels in Great Britain and on the continent by consulting his correspondence and the many

---

notes he made in front of the originals. All this, however, would be beyond the boundaries set for the present contribution.

Instead, departing from a brief portrayal of the publication itself, this article will be devoted primarily to the reception of Smith’s work, addressing particularly his critics whose comments – as so often – are more interesting than those of his admirers. By looking at the criticism and at Smith’s defence it will become clearer how the protagonists saw themselves and how they were seen by others. Additionally, one might also perceive some outlines of networks and strategic positionings as they took shape in an increasingly academic context of art historical research. Finally, this contribution also aims to convey a better understanding of the genre of the catalogue raisonné and its current status in the discipline.

II. The structure and contents of Smith’s Catalogue Raisonné

The Catalogue Raisonné of the Works of the Most Eminent Dutch, Flemish, and French Painters appeared between 1829 and 1837 in eight volumes, the first one bearing a dedication to the then Home Secretary and future Prime Minister Robert Peel. Published by the author (‘Smith and Son’) at 137 New Bond Street, the royal octavo volumes cost 21 shillings for subscribers and 26 shillings for others; a supplementary ninth volume appeared in 1842. The publication was announced in advertisements and sold through the book market and by subscription. In spite of

---


7 For example in the weekly The Literary Gazette and Journal of Belles Lettres, Arts, Sciences, &c., No. 628, 31 January 1829, 78 (among ‘Literary Novelties’); ibid., No. 636, 28 March 1829, 215 (among ‘Books published this day’); ibid., No. 741, 2 April 1831, 222 (among ‘Books published this day’); ibid., No. 1068, 8 July 1837, 436 (among ‘New Publications’).
positive reactions it seems to have been difficult to secure subscribers initially,\(^8\) yet a list of names for over 240 subscriptions in the fourth volume of 1833 probably indicates that the project and the subsequent volumes had become financially viable at this point.\(^9\)

![Figure 3 Frontispiece and title page, from John Smith, Catalogue Raisonné, vol. 7, 1836. London: Smith and Son](image)

Except for the supplement, each volume features a lithographic frontispiece with an artist’s portrait (figs 2 and 3). Together, the volumes treat the works of 41 artists, the emphasis lying on painters of the seventeenth century and more particularly on the Dutch school, to which 34 of the catalogues are dedicated. Rembrandt’s works occupy one entire volume, and the same is true of Peter Paul Rubens who – together with Anthony van Dyck, David Teniers the Younger and Gonzales Coques – represents the Flemish school. An additional volume is dedicated to three French artists, Nicolas Poussin, Claude Lorrain and Jean-Baptiste Greuze, the latter being the only eighteenth-century painter treated by Smith. The author also paid special attention to master-pupil relationships as he appended lists of ‘Scholars’ and ‘Imitators’ to many of his 41 catalogues.

Each catalogue is built around three parts consisting of the artist’s biography, an appraisal of his stylistic significance and the list of his works. The latter are described in numbered entries arranged along a surprising variety of criteria sometimes verging on disorder. Only in the cases of Rembrandt and Poussin can the reader perceive a consistent arrangement according to subject matter. For Rembrandt, Smith adopts a system of nine classes – such as the Old Testament,

\(^8\) See among others a letter of 23 March 1829 by the auctioneer Thomas Winstanley offering to procure subscribers, as well as a letter by Isaac Paley of 12 November 1830, both in Sebag-Montefiore / Armstrong-Totten, *A Dynasty of Dealers*, Nos 81 and 119.

portraits or landscapes – which more or less follows the catalogue raisonné of Rembrandt’s prints by the Paris art dealer Edme-François Gersaint published in 1751 (fig. 4).10 In the case of Rubens, van Dyck and Adrian van der Werff, Smith roughly arranged the entries according to location. Provenance or location also form a guiding principle of parts of the other catalogues, yet this is never spelt out explicitly. Finally, in the case of Claude Lorrain the first two-hundred entries follow the Liber veritatis, while in the case of Poussin Smith exceptionally attempts to set up a chronology of the works when outlining the artist’s biography. Altogether – and setting aside the exceptions of Rembrandt and Poussin – the catalogues are arranged neither by subject matter nor according to chronology. Each catalogue does, however, offer an iconographic index which also reflects an artist’s preferences for certain subjects.

![Catalogue raisonné de toutes les pièces qui forment l’œuvre de Rembrandt](image)

Figure 4 Frontispiece and title page, from Edme-François Gersaint, Catalogue raisonné de [...] l’œuvre de Rembrandt, Paris: Hochereau, l’aîné, 1751

Turning to the actual catalogue, Smith evidently attempted to provide all the information on a given painting that was available to him, an approach that makes the entries look quite unequal. Where he only disposed over scarce indications, for instance, he opted for publishing these rather than renouncing on an entry altogether, and he similarly chose to assign individual fragments of information to

---

different entries even if they might conceivably concern one and the same picture.\textsuperscript{11}

The variety of depth among the entries is in fact due to the different sources of knowledge available to Smith. The most thorough entries are naturally those where the author was familiar with the painting and perhaps even knew that it was mentioned in earlier publications. Conversely, entries based only on indications gathered from sources and older literature, particularly auction catalogues, might occasionally be rather meagre, increasing the risk of errors. In spite of such variations, Smith naturally followed a certain scheme (fig. 5), describing each painting along a set of criteria which ideally included the following: title, description, comments on quality and style, state of preservation, signature, date,

\textsuperscript{11} See Smith, \textit{Catalogue Raisonné}, vol. 1, 1829, xxvii-xxviii; cf. ibid., ix, where Smith states with regard to his publication in general: ‘Its chief merit consists in the quantity of information, collected with a practical knowledge of the subject, and the persevering assiduity by which such knowledge was obtained.’ – Discussing the problem of attribution in the context of workshop involvement, Smith remarks with special reference to van Dyck: ‘In this dilemma, between the alternatives of OMISSION and INSERTION, he [the author] has chosen the latter as the least objectionable’ (with emphases in the original), vol. 3, 1831, xiv-xv.
dimensions, and support (namely canvas, wood or copper). Wherever he was aware of them, Smith additionally gave references to printed reproductions and previous literature and he also noted provenance and known sales prices. Finally, apart from giving the name of the actual owner and a current market estimate, Smith also stated if a work had been shown in one of the annual exhibitions of the British Gallery, also known as the British Institution.14

Figure 6 Various Entries on Works by Nicholas Berghem, from John Smith, Catalogue Raisonné, vol. 5, 1834, p. 84-85. London: Smith and Son

What seems most remarkable from today’s point of view is that Smith not only cited prices of previous sales but also published his own estimates (fig. 6). An explanation for this seemingly puzzling fact may be found in Smith’s models. The mercantile purpose of some of these, such as the eighteenth-century catalogues raisonnés of artists’ prints, was originally taken for granted. Moreover, Smith’s own profession lends plausibility to his intention of improving his audience’s

12 For comments on dimensions see Smith, Catalogue Raisonné, vol. 1, 1829, xxviii and xxx (also for abbreviations for various supports).
15 More on this further down.
awareness of values. He saw art also as a form of investment and it is in this context that Smith stressed the importance of a painting’s state of preservation, a point that was given further emphasis by his call for a responsible approach to the treatment of pictures and by his lament over incompetent cleanings and restorations, a potential detriment to the object’s value as well as to the cultural heritage.16

III. Critical reactions and self-defence

Smith’s quotes of estimates and the transparency he thereby wished to achieve did not, however, meet with his contemporaries’ full approval. One case deserves particular mention, as it illustrates the frictions that could arise from Smith’s project. It concerns a remark found in the entry on Paulus Potter’s A Farrier’s Shop by the Roadside which had been bought in 1825 from the Monté Collection in Utrecht by the art dealer Lambert Jan Nieuwenhuys who later sold it to a French collector. Smith’s comment on the price at which Nieuwenhuys reportedly bought the painting, 7,100 guilders,17 was clearly set to entail a controversy: ‘This is probably a fictitious price, created by the proprietor (a dealer), who had previously bought the collection. It was subsequently sold by Mr. Nieuwenhuys to the Count Perigaux Lafitte, in whose collection it now is.’18

The publication of this passage in volume five of Smith’s Catalogue Raisonné in 1834 was soon followed by the appearance of A Review of the Lives and Works of Some of the Most Eminent Painters: With Remarks on the Opinions and Statements of Former Writers by Christianus Johannes Nieuwenhuys, L. J. Nieuwenhuys’s son.19 Numerous passages of this book make it clear that the relationship between Smith and Nieuwenhuys was poisoned,20 something which becomes particularly apparent in the lengthy comments on Smith’s remark cited above. According to Nieuwenhuys jr., the Monté pictures were about to be sold at auction in 1825 when his father stepped in two days before the sale, acquiring the entire collection for 28,000 guilders. However, in view of prior contracts between Monté’s widow and the auctioneer, Nieuwenhuys sr. was compelled to go through with the auction, thus becoming its consignor. According to Nieuwenhuys jr., the best pictures then remained unsold, among them also the above-mentioned painting by Potter for which the bidding stopped at 7,100 guilders, below the reserve. The work thus remained in the possession of L. J. Nieuwenhuys who, according to his son’s unsubstantiated explanation, saw his cost for the picture ‘at the rate of 8,500’ guilders and was therefore not prepared to part with it.

17 As the sale took place in Rotterdam, Smith’s indication of the currency ‘fs.’ (francs) is no doubt a misprint for ‘flo.’ (guilders); this was also pointed out by Nieuwenhuys (see below).
20 Cf. also Sebag-Montefiori / Armstrong-Totten, A Dynasty of Dealers, chap. 1 and 449. William Buchanan, another art dealer, was similarly subjected to harsh criticism by Nieuwenhuys; cf. Herrmann, ‘Peel and Solly’, 95, n. 15: ‘It should be added that he [C. J. Nieuwenhuys] also goes out of his way to correct assertions made by both Buchanan and Smith in their books.’
Not only does the latter figure seem arbitrary as Nieuwenhuys was free to assign putative costs to unsold pictures; the unusual construction of this deal also lends plausibility to Smith’s comment as the figure he mentions, 7,100 guilders (corresponding to the final bid as reported by Nieuwenhuys jr.), might well have been the result of manipulation. Acting as the consignor to the sale in question, Nieuwenhuys sr. could not only set the reserve prices to his liking, thus preventing the sale of those pictures which he wanted to retain for himself – the ‘finest’ according to his son. His position would also have allowed him to collude with friends or colleagues in order to make sure that the bidding for individual lots – though remaining below the reserve – would not stop below an acceptable figure agreed on before, thus suggesting a strong interest for a given lot, yet one which would have been – in Smith’s word – ‘fictitious’. Insinuating that Smith misleads his readers out of jealousy towards his father, Nieuwenhuys concludes his remarks as follows:

Before a man takes the liberty of interfering in private affairs, he should first ascertain all the facts; and as Mr. Smith speaks, throughout his catalogue, of real prices and fictitious prices, I have been led, by esteem of this fine work of art [the painting by Potter], both in justice to myself and for the satisfaction of the present proprietor, to give this plain statement.21

Other critics of Smith’s practice to publish estimates, among them subscribers to his Catalogue Raisonné, remained anonymous, yet they were probably owners of pictures or fellow art dealers. Their motives are likely to be reflected by the remarks which Smith felt compelled to publish in volume seven of 1836 where, referring to himself in the third person, he explains:

experience has taught him the difficulty, and, it might be added, onerous task of fixing a definite value on a fine work of art, a question in which no two persons will exactly agree; in fact, its value is, to a certain extent, arbitrary, and the possessor has an undoubted right of putting his own estimation on it.22

Smith had in fact already given in to the pressure, for while he originally published his estimates for paintings that were both in private and in public collections, he only gave estimates for the latter from volume six of 1835 onwards – exceptions being solely made in those cases where Smith felt that paintings from private collections had been sold considerably below their value.23 Nevertheless, the information provided by Smith on estimates and pricing was obviously considered helpful. As late as 1865, for instance, Charles Eastlake, director of the National Gallery, still used it for orientation on the art market of his time.24

24 See David Robertson, Sir Charles Eastlake and the Victorian Art World, Princeton 1978, 228 (referring to Eastlake’s letter of 9 May 1865 to Ralph Nicholas Wornum now in the Archive of the National Gallery, London). Smith’s Catalogue Raisonné was in Eastlake’s possession as is evident from the catalogue of
Two German connoisseurs, however, turned a more fundamental critique against Smith. Their voices were heard in Britain because their texts were both translated into English, the first of these by Elizabeth Rigby, the future wife of Charles Eastlake. In his *Kunstreise* written in 1831 and published in English in 1836 as *Tour of a German Artist in England*, Johann David Passavant writes the following on John Smith’s *Catalogue Raisonné*:

> in order to give some idea of the real value of the pictures mentioned, he has annexed to each that nominal price which it would be likely to fetch in England. The power, however, of adjudging a fair estimate, and of deciding impartially upon the originality of such pictures, requires a situation in life less fettered than that of an English picture dealer, whose credit with his wealthy amateur patrons is at stake: and the restraint incidental to such a position is consequently visible in the frequent substitution of copies for originals – the only defect in a work otherwise of great merit.

These words are supplemented by a compromising anecdote whose purpose is to illustrate ‘how little these inaccuracies are to be ascribed to ignorance of the subject’ – a passage also noted by Francis Haskell who commented on it in the following terms: ‘For the first, but by no means the last, time German scholarship was to clash with English commerce over the attributing of Old Master paintings.’ Indeed, only two years later, in the preface to his *Works of Art and Artists in England*, Gustav Friedrich Waagen was to provide a further example of such clashes:

> Though it is not without various errors and repetitions, the idea of giving *Catalogues raisonnés* of all the existing paintings of the greatest masters of those schools, is a very happy one, and extremely facilitates a knowledge of those masters. Every reasonable person will allow, that from the difficulty of such an enterprise, perfection is not to be attained at once, and that what is given, is to be gratefully received as a beginning, which may be improved and enlarged. Mr. Smith proves himself, in this book, to be a refined connoisseur. Many opinions on pictures, to which we cannot assent, proceed more from regard to their possessors, than from want of better judgment.

---


The fundamental critique of the art dealer has a long history. Satires on the art market had already had a heyday in eighteenth-century France and England when dubious dealers and their practices became a favourite target. Self-proclaimed experts were often said to be corrupted by personal and financial interests and dealers were accused of habitual overreaching, even of fraud. This background still resonates in the criticism which the two German connoisseurs voiced: Both Passavant and Waagen in fact exploit the common prejudice against the art dealer.

Significantly, Waagen’s critical remarks on Smith’s catalogue were prominently placed in the anonymous review of his book in *The Gentleman’s Magazine*, published promptly after the translation’s appearance in 1838. The reviewer bestows great praise on the German scholar’s ‘conscientious impartiality’, maliciously offsetting it against a paraphrase of Waagen’s observation on Smith:

> Dr. Waagen confesses that, though Mr. Smith proves himself, in his excellent Catalogue Raisonnée [sic], to be a refined connoisseur, yet that many of his opinions on pictures to which he cannot assent, proceed more from regard to their possessors, than from want of better judgment.

Waagen’s unsubstantiated accusations could hardly be ignored by Smith even if they were pronounced with a certain measure of approval. In his supplement to the *Catalogue Raisonné* of 1842 Smith quoted the passage from the ‘popular and highly interesting work […]’ by Dr. Waagen and then went on to retort:

> This charge, being of a personal nature, and coming from so respectable and highly gifted a writer, is much too serious to remain unnoticed; and the author therefore avails himself of this opportunity positively and unequivocally to disavow the insinuation, and to assure the doctor and his readers that no inducement of a personal consideration could ever influence him to forfeit that confidence which above all things he most highly values, and which alone can give interest and stability to his work.

In a footnote Smith further adds a concise review of Waagen’s book which, though full of praise, ends with the following bittersweet remarks:

> But an author, however talented, should surely have paused before pronouncing opinions on works of art of the highest importance calculated to injure valuable property; – both the names of painters of high-class pictures are changed to those of inferior masters, and the state of preservation of many fine pictures is seriously misrepresented. Can lack of...

---

29 Among the many satires of the eighteenth century one might mention William Hogarth’s engraving *The Battle of the Pictures of 1745*; Samuel Foote’s play *Taste. A Comedy, of Two Acts*, London: T. Lowndes and W. Nicoll 1752 (and later editions); as well as the anonymously published *La confessio publique du brocanteur*, Amsterdam: no publisher, 1776.


31 Smith, *Catalogue Raisonné*, vol. 9, 1842, vi-vii and viii (with emphasis in the original).
time or convenient means justify immatured opinions, so hastily and
injudiciously pronounced, and so wholly uncalled for?

And Smith concludes:

With all these defects [...] it must be candidly acknowledged that the work
throughout is evidently written with intentions dictated by the purest
integrity, and evinces in numerous passages the amiable character of the
author, – qualities opposed to every idea of a sinister motive in the opinions
and criticisms contained in the work.32

Smith’s reply to Waagen’s attack not only illustrates how he saw his Catalogue
Raisonné, it also reflects on the persona of the art dealer. It appears that Smith’s
discourse, here and elsewhere, is deliberately ambivalent. Thus, the introduction to
his first volume of 1829 begins with the following words: ‘The present work was
commenced rather as an amusement, and for the gratification of the writer’s
curiosity, than with any intention of presenting it to the public.’33 The topical flavour
of this understatement is further illustrated by a letter written in the summer of 1834
to his wife and family, where Smith refers to his catalogue as a ‘hobby’ – even
though he had designated himself on the title page of the first and all subsequent
volumes as ‘dealer in pictures’ (figs 2 and 3).34

Indeed, further down in the introduction to the first volume, one soon
encounters the attitude of a full-blown professional whose purpose it is

to rescue the respectable part of the profession from the disgrace of being
classed with fraudulent charlatans, and to prevent, as much as possible, the
loss which the arts must suffer when amateurs cease to purchase, the writer
has ventured to point out some of the most prominent tricks of those who
disgrace the commerce of pictures.35

In other words, Smith is all too aware of the ‘stigma of PICTURE DEALER’ as he
calls it elsewhere in his text,36 and it is precisely against the tricks and frauds that he,
‘the honest Tradesman in works of Art’,37 wishes to erect the bastion of his Catalogue
Raisonné. According to Smith, his work is based on an intimate knowledge
attainable only by many years of experience in the trade.38 Though such expertise

32 Smith, Catalogue Raisonné, vol. 9, 1842, vii-viii (footnote). Smith substantiates his criticism with some
examples. Cf. Gaskell, ‘Tradesmen as Scholars’, 153-155, who also cites this exchange between Waagen
and Smith without, however, referring to the review in the Gentleman’s Magazine.
33 Smith, Catalogue Raisonné, vol. 1, 1829, ix.
34 Letter from Hamburg, dated 7 July 1834, see Sebag-Montefiore / Armstrong-Totten, A Dynasty of
Dealers, No. 174.
35 Smith, Catalogue Raisonné, vol. 1, 1829, xvii (with emphasis in the original).
36 Smith, Catalogue Raisonné, vol. 1, 1829, xix, note (with emphasis in the original).
37 Smith, Catalogue Raisonné, vol. 1, 1829, vi. The fact that the third person singular refers to Smith
himself is evident from the immediate context, the dedication of his book ‘to the Right Hon. Robert
Peel’. On the same page, Smith addresses Peel with the following words: ‘...your approbation of my
conduct as a Tradesman during the twenty years I have been employed in your service’. Also
cf. additional terms used to qualify the honourable art dealer, namely ‘his knowledge and integrity’.
38 See Smith, Catalogue Raisonné, vol. 1, 1829, ix-x.
cannot be conveyed in a book, Smith nevertheless aims to enlighten the reader and to educate his eye; and, after pointing to some older publications by Richardson, Reynolds, Füssli and Bryan, Smith adds with undisguised pride: ‘but there is no work, in the English Language, similar to the present.’

Literally speaking, Smith is correct on this point. Nevertheless he would not have been able to sustain a claim for the invention of the catalogue raisonné as it was the growing market for prints which had much earlier given shape to this genre, bringing it to a first flowering already in the eighteenth century. These catalogues provided collectors with the welcome instruments to identify and order their own possessions and to compare them with offers available on the art market – be it local, regional or international. No attempts were made to disguise the commercial purpose of these publications, not even in cases where the author was neither a dealer nor an auctioneer. On the contrary: with his catalogue raisonné of the prints of Anthony Waterlo of 1795, for instance, Adam Bartsch, curator of the print collection at the imperial library in Vienna, was aiming to provide a reliable resource for vendors and collectors alike,

since sellers and buyers, if separated by larger distances, had always greatest difficulties to give and obtain clear indications and directions concerning the offered or the required sheets. A catalogue, providing common reference, was therefore greatly wanted by all those who traficked in whatever manner with Waterlo’s engravings. – The elimination of this want is the final purpose of this catalogue which is here submitted to the art loving public.

However, it is neither these eighteenth-century predecessors nor John Smith’s Catalogue Raisonné which Charles Eastlake names as precedents for Passavant’s Rafael von Urbino und sein Vater Giovanni Santi of 1839 when reviewing the latter in 1840. Instead, Eastlake cites the work of Luigi Pungileoni, the Italian cleric who in

39 See Smith, Catalogue Raisonné, vol. 1, 1829, xx-xxi; Smith here refers to ‘Richardson’s excellent, Treatise on Art; Sir Joshua Reynold’s Tour in Flanders; and to the late Mr. Fuseli’s admirable Discourses on Art.’ He also speaks of ‘Dictionaries of the Lives of the Painters’, stating in a footnote that ‘BRYAN’s Dictionary is decidedly the best’ (with emphasis in the original).
40 Smith, Catalogue Raisonné, vol. 1, 1829, xxi.
41 See Friedenthal, ‘Defining the Œuvre, Shaping the Catalogue Raisonné’ and previous publications by the author.
42 Adam Bartsch, Anton Waterlo’s Kupferstiche. Ausführlich beschrieben, Vienna: A. Blumauer, 1795, 10-11: ‘so hatten Verkäufer und Käufer, wenn sie von einander entfernt waren, immer die größte Mühe, jene, über ihre angebothenen, diese, über die verlangten Blätter, sich bestimmte und deutliche Anzeigen, und Aufträge zu ertheilen. Ein Verzeichniss, worauf man sich hätte berufen können, war also lange schon für alle diejenigen, die mit Waterlo’s Kupferstichen was immer für einen Verkehr hatten, ein Hülfsmittel, das sie hart vermisset haben. – Diesem Mangel abzuholen, ist der Endzweck des Verzeichnisses, welches hiermit dem kunstliebenden Publico vorgelegt wird.’
1817 published a biography of Correggio based on archival research, supplemented with information on the artist’s works and a chronology;44 Eastlake further mentions the Italienische Forschungen (1827-31) of Carl Friedrich von Rumohr,45 who ‘in his lifetime [...] was considered to be one of the greatest historians of art after Winckelmann’.46 In the last of his three-volume survey on Italian art from late antiquity until 1600 Rumohr published an extensive chapter entitled Ueber Raphael von Urbino und dessen nähere Zeitgenossen where he discusses the artist’s work in chronological sequence. However, neither this nor Pungileoni’s publication may be counted as catalogues raisonnés.47

It might reasonably be objected here that the definition of the genre, as far as it concerned paintings, was still in flux at the time of Eastlake’s writing. In search of the right form for the study of an artist, contemporary thought was also looking back to the artist’s vita as exemplified by Giorgio Vasari as well as reflecting on modern forms of the artist’s biography and the artist’s monograph.48 Moreover, as he was reviewing a publication on the works of Raphael, Eastlake might naturally have looked for previous studies of Italian art only, leaving aside those on artists from the north. Yet it nevertheless seems surprising that Eastlake does not mention his friend Waagen’s study Ueber Hubert und Johann van Eyck of 1822, a book which the entry in the Dictionary of Art cites as ‘perhaps the first catalogue raisonné of a painter’s (or, in this case, brother painters’) work’.49 More remarkably still, Eastlake’s review of Passavant ignored the market’s share in the making of the catalogue raisonné, a symptom typical of contemporary art history as it became increasingly institutionalized. Indeed, he discredits the foreseeable critique of Passavant’s rejection of many works ‘by those interested in the decision’.50 thus

---

44 Luigi Pungileoni, Memorie istoriche di Antonio Allegri, detto Il Correggio, Parma: Stamperia Ducale, 1817-1821, 3 vols; see Eastlake, ‘Life of Raphael’, 183. Eastlake also mentions Pungileoni’s ‘two small pamphlets’ on Raphael and his father, where he published documents found during his archival researches.


47 Avery-Quash, ‘The Eastlake Library’, 9-10, points out that Eastlake actually owned the texts by Pungileoni and Rumohr; also cf. the catalogue of Eastlake’s library published in 1872 by Green, available on http://memofonte.it; unfortunately, the catalogue does not give information on the date of accession of individual books.


49 Alex Ross, s. v. Catalogue, Dictionary of Art, vol. 6, 1996, 78; Gustav Friedrich Waagen, Ueber Hubert und Johann van Eyck, Breslau: Josef Max und Komp., 1822; on Waagen’s study see also Gabriele Bickendorf, Der Beginn der Kunstgeschichtsschreibung unter dem Paradigma ‘Geschichte’. Gustav Friedrich Waagens Frühschrift ‘Ueber Hubert und Johann van Eyck’, Worms: Werner’sche Verlaganstalt, 1985. – As might be expected, Waagen’s book was also in Eastlake’s library: see the catalogue published in 1872 by Green, available on http://memofonte.it.

again emphasizing the distance between supposedly impartial scholarship and financial interests.

Significantly, Eastlake particularly recommends volume two of Passavant’s *Rafael* featuring three separate catalogues of the paintings, drawings and prints (fig. 7): ‘The second volume’, Eastlake writes, ‘will be found eminently useful, and, with very little correction, may serve as a model for future compilations of the kind’.\(^{51}\) Such positive reactions by the contemporaries are indicative of the role which Passavant’s *Rafael* played for the author’s career. In 1840 he was made ‘Inspektor’ of the Städelisches Kunstinstitut in Frankfurt, a decision no doubt prompted by the broad knowledge of collections and the trade reflected by his catalogue raisonné.\(^{52}\)

Passavant’s trip through England had been made in preparation of his *Rafael* and the severity of his above-cited remark on Smith suggests that he saw the dealer as a competitor, especially as the latter had himself originally planned to extend his catalogues raisonnés to Italian artists. When Smith officially renounced on this

---

\(^{51}\) Eastlake, ‘Life of Raphael’, 185. – For modern studies on Passavant’s *Rafael*, I would like to limit my references to Guercio, *The Identity of the Artist*. This and additional literature will be discussed in my forthcoming book.

intention in volume eight of 1837, he did so by expressing the hope that experts of
the Italian schools might team up for a project of this kind, given that ‘such
publication would not only be an interesting historical record of fine Italian works
of Art, but also of inestimable value to the amateur.’

IV. Demarcating boundaries

While Smith was evidently confronted with certain discriminations on the part of
connoisseurs from outside the trade, the latter had themselves to contend with some
forms of discrimination. In 1830 Waagen had become director of the newly founded
Bildergalerie of the Königliches Museum in Berlin but he had to deal with
considerable opposition from his superiors within the Prussian administration
throughout his long tenure. In his obituary of 1868 Bruno Meyer indeed described
him as a prophet who was not accepted in his own country. In England, by
contrast, Waagen was held in great esteem. Not only did he stand in close contact
with the Eastlakes, the support which Waagen received from the Prince Consort had
also secured him a considerable position in the preparation of the Manchester Art
Treasures Exhibition of 1857. According to Francis Haskell, however, ‘the
prominence within the art world of England of Passavant, Waagen, Scharf and the
Prince Consort gave rise to a ferocious wave of xenophobia’, and it is likely that
this sentiment also put an end to the idea that Waagen might become director of the
National Gallery. In the *Art Journal* of 1 July 1854, for instance, one reads: ‘A
foreigner, however enlightened, as director and superintendent of our national “Art
Treasures” would be a stigma upon the whole body of our artists and
connoisseurs.’

And there are more boundaries. In 1881, Anton Springer, professor of art
history in Leipzig, judged Waagen in the following terms: ‘For a certain time,
Waagen was considered a European authority on connoisseurship. But whenever he
set his pen to strictly historical observations, he soon came to the limits of his

53 Smith, *Catalogue Raisonné*, vol. 8, 1837, vii-viii.
20/21, 1980, 397-419; Irene Geismeier, ‘Gustav Friedrich Waagen – Museumsdirektor in der
2 August 1868, reprinted in idem, *Studien und Kritiken*, Stuttgart: Verlag von W. Spemann, 1877, 186-
205, here 205.
56 See Giles Waterfield with Florian Illies, ‘Waagen in England’, *Jahrbuch der Berliner Museen*, N. F., 37,
1995, 47-59.
57 See Florian Illies, ‘Gustav Friedrich Waagen, Prinz Albert und die Manchester Art Treasures
Exhibition von 1857’, in Franz Bosbach and Frank Büttner (eds), *Künstlerische Beziehungen zwischen
England und Deutschland in der viktorianischen Epoche. Art in Britain and Germany in the Age of Queen
Victoria and Prince Albert*, Munich: Saur, 1998 (=Prinz-Albert-Studien, 15), 129-144; Elizabeth A. Pergam,
The Manchester Art Treasures Exhibition of 1857: Entrepreneurs, Connoisseurs and the Public*, Farnham:
Ashgate, 2011.
58 Haskell, ‘The Growth of British Art History and its Debts to Europe’, 212. For George Scharf, later
director of the National Portrait Gallery in London, see Valerie Vaughan, s. v. Scharf, Sir George, in *The
Antoinette Friedenthal  John Smith ... and the ‘stigma of PICTURE DEALER’

abilities.’\(^60\) Entitled ‘Kunstkenner und Kunsthistoriker’ (‘Connoisseurs and Art Historians’), the essay from which this quote stems is not concerned with what the two groups have in common, but rather with what separates them. Springer declares \textit{ex cathedra} that

connoisseurship and art history are two fundamentally different fields. […] The connoisseur’s efforts undeniably form the basis of the art historian’s work. […] It cannot, however, substitute the latter, as little as even the most thorough archival research can substitute the historian’s task. […] In some cases, when working on a monograph, the art historian must prove his worth also as a connoisseur, yet connoisseurship always remains an activity of merely preparatory nature.\(^61\)

Consequently, Springer sees the catalogue raisonné among the ‘childhood diseases and youthful follies’\(^62\) of a discipline still in its fledgling state and he warns against the danger of confusing

the art historical task with the purpose of a catalogue raisonné. The art historian’s account only considers works which reveal the essential nature and the development of an artist of merit. Their assessment has to be embedded in the biography which must consequently be treated more thoroughly than is usually done. The faults of the currently prevailing method become obvious when one randomly thumbs through its products: even if we start with the end and finish with the beginning, even if we consult volume three before looking at volume two, we will not perceive the slightest difference to a proper consultation and we will not forfeit any insight. The individual chapters of these works are merely held together by that most superficial of historical adhesives, the chronological sequence.\(^63\)


\(^{62}\) Springer, ‘Kunstkenner und Kunsthistoriker’, 396 (‘Jugendsünden und Entwicklungskrankheiten’).

Clad in polemics, Springer’s vociferous plea to cleanse academic art history of such supposedly inferior practices may well have been nurtured by the condescension which he himself had to endure from exponents of older, more established disciplines, above all from the historians. Significantly, the essay just quoted concludes that ‘we must force the historians to accept the legitimacy of art history, their supposed bastard sister, by demonstrating that we in fact use their very methods, that it is their own flesh and blood.’

V. Conclusion

Since Springer’s time many new approaches and methods have come and gone. Concerning Smith’s work it may be noted that it was in high demand at the beginning of the twentieth century. A reprint appeared in 1908, the year which also saw the appearance of the first volume of the English edition of Cornelis Hofstede de Groot’s work, *A Catalogue Raisonné of the Works of the Most Eminent Artists*.

---


Smith’s “Catalogue Raisonné […]:” A Memoir of the Author by his Grandson’, 216.

Dutch Painters of the Seventeenth Century Based on the Work of John Smith [my emphasis] (fig. 8).67

More recently, the comeback of the category of authorship has brought a boom of biographies in many disciplines – not least in art history, where monographic exhibitions are also blossoming more than ever. Both phenomena centre on the individual artist, as does the catalogue raisonné which, mined as a common database by most participants of the ‘art system’, continues to thrive as a genre. Setting this into the wider context of a sociology of knowledge, one might raise questions as to who fulfills the functions of a gatekeeper for the artist’s œuvre and how this is done – questions which are, however, beyond the scope of the present contribution.

The critical fortune of the catalogue raisonné has not only gone through different phases, its substance can also be separated into different threads. This contribution has particularly delved into the critique that originated from the nexus between the catalogue raisonné and the art market. Thus, the reception of Smith’s work activated old resentments against the art dealer, tendencies to which Smith alluded by speaking of ‘the stigma of PICTURE DEALER’. As far as can be ascertained, this is the first time that criticism of the market’s involvement in this genre makes itself heard. Contrary to the meagre attention it has received by the historians of our discipline, Smith’s work in fact represents a landmark in the establishment of catalogues raisonnés for paintings, and the contemporaries soon seem to have realized the powers associated with this new form. Transcending the more limited jurisdiction of a critical catalogue of prints, the verdicts of a catalogue raisonné of paintings concern higher values and thus carry more weight. Not only does the making of such a catalogue require more resources, it also has to contend with higher expectations. Significantly, it is precisely at this juncture that one may observe the appearance of a new group of authors who place the origins and commercial functions of the catalogue raisonné under the paradigm of contamination. This entails a certain paradox as the art market in fact possesses the earliest rights to the catalogue raisonné and continues to play an important role in the making of such works even today.

Finally, one might mention yet another paradox. In spite of the rapidly rising number of studies on the history of the art trade and its protagonists, by now forming a veritable branch of art history, the market’s significance for the emergence and the history of art history has remained a taboo if one may use this

---

67 Cornelis Hofstede de Groot, A Catalogue Raisonné of the Works of the Most Eminent Dutch Painters of the Seventeenth Century Based on the Work of John Smith, translated and edited by Edward G. Hawke, London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1908-1927, 8 vols; the first volume of the German edition, published a year earlier, was entitled Beschreibendes und kritisches Verzeichnis der Werke der hervorragendsten holländischen Maler des XVII. Jahrhunderts. Nach dem Muster von John Smith’s Catalogue Raisonné, Esslingen am Neckar: Paul Neff Verlag and Paris: F. Kleinberger, 1907-1928, 10 vols. – These few hints must suffice here for the rich after-life of Smith’s work; indeed, the secondary literature on the artists covered by Smith is bristling with evidence for the impact of his Catalogue Raisonné. – Cf. also Gaskell, ‘Tradesmen as Scholars’, 155; among the (indirect) outcome of Smith’s opus Gaskell counts such institutions as the Rijksbureau voor Kunsthistorische Documentatie in the Hague and the Rubenianum Research Institute in Antwerp, as well as such massive publication projects as the Corpus Rubenianum Ludwig Burchard and the Rembrandt Research Project.
tough but appropriate word – a state of affairs which a few independent voices have not been able to change.\textsuperscript{68}

By denouncing the art market’s inherent bias in the assessment of art, one might simply hope to gloss over the academic community’s own biases and to claim a supposed position of disinterestedness and objectivity. An understanding of the history of the catalogue raisonné conveys a better grasp of the market’s share in the establishment of art historical categories and classification systems. It is evident, moreover, that the remnants of the nineteenth-century conflicts are still alive as the catalogue raisonné continues to fulfil its much-decried commercial functions. It still serves two masters who find it extremely difficult to acknowledge that they share deep common bonds.

\textbf{Antoinette Friedenthal} is an independent scholar, based in Potsdam, Germany. She received her doctorate from the Free University, Berlin for a dissertation on self-portraiture in Italian Renaissance Art and was research assistant at the Bibliotheca Hertziana, Rome as well as research scholar at the Max-Planck-Institute for the History of Science, Berlin. She was an editor of The Enduring Instant. Time and the Spectator in the Visual Arts (Berlin 2003) and is currently writing a critical study on The Catalogue Raisonné in Art History – Provenance and Practice, a subject on which she has already published several articles.

\texttt{antoinette.friedenthal@gmx.net}

\textsuperscript{68} Among them Gaskell, ‘Tradesmen as Scholars’, cf. 158-159 (summary).