in a Jamestown well, and many other personal goods in what look to have been storage pits dating to the same period, is interpreted by Horning as deliberate dumping by the remaining colonists, an extreme response to extreme stress, possibly an act of cleansing by those who remained alive. She also shows that towards the end of this hard period, some of the Jamestown settlers were reliant upon Native groups for their survival, moving to live with them. One wonders if, perhaps, there was some Native influence on the deposition of so much alien material.

In terms of presentation, for an archaeologist the historical tradition seems to prevail. There are copious footnotes, informative, appropriate and providing enough material to develop several articles, but while they give full details of the sources used, a traditional (for archaeology) end-of-text bibliography would have been welcome. For a study that makes such good use of the evidence available from material things, be they plaster ceilings or tobacco pipes, the level of illustration is disappointing. It is, however, decidedly better than the picture-free texts of thirty years ago. The nine figures and twenty-four plates are in general over-reduced, confined by the page size; yet they do repay careful study, with a magnifying glass if necessary. It would help, too, to have consistently informative captions and illustration references in the text; the caption for Figure 9, for example, does not indicate that the site plan shown is from Jamestown. Plate 14 is better captioned than plate 16, while the detail of the latter is elucidated in the text some four pages on from where it has been placed. In a second edition, it should not be too difficult to deal with these aspects, and to give the illustrations greater prominence and better integration with the text, thereby realising their undoubted potential.

Ireland in the Virginian Sea is a meticulous, detailed study providing ample evidence for the character and course of the early colonising ventures in the two main study areas. From it, there emerge many insights into the nature of migration and colonisation at other times and in other regions of the world. The North American chapters in particular demonstrate the rewards of integrating archaeology and history, leading to a convincing argument for the need to develop the same in Ireland; in fact, it is clear from this book that the process is already underway. It is not always an easy read, and occasionally the comparisons between the two study areas break rather abruptly into the narrative, but in the course of the book the argument strengthens, and in the Conclusion Horning digs deep to expose trends of wider significance, something that could not have been done so convincingly had there not been the meticulous deployment and discussion of the evidence in the foregoing pages. She argues in particular that the connections between Ireland and America date more to the eighteenth century and later, not to the time of the early colonial ventures, and thus the relevance of the Plantation period for subsequent Irish history has become distorted or misunderstood. The overall result is an exciting and thought-provoking book that shakes up ideas about a particular past and the past in general. There is much here for all the different disciplines concerned with our human past, in whatever period or region and, as the author writes in her closing sentence (p 367), 'the greatest relevance of comparative study of Ireland and America from 1550 to 1650 may not be what it tells of the past, but what it means in the present – and where it may lead in the future'.

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Benjamin West and the Struggle to be Modern. By LOYD GROSSMAN. 260mm. Pp 256, 125 col ills. Merrell Publishers, London, 2015. ISBN 9781858946412. £35 (hbk).

Loyd Grossman makes a valuable contribution to British art studies with his book about Benjamin West's 'game-changer', *The Death of General Wolfe* (1770). By placing the painting in the contexts of West's career, academic theory, philosophical history, empire, social change and new attitudes to war, Grossman makes a convincing case for the picture as a 'modern' work of art in the Foucauldian sense of 'heroizing the present'.

Following an introductory chapter that sets out the argument and considers West's gamble in choosing his subject, Grossman investigates the background to the painting with chapters on the artist's early education in Pennsylvania (Chapter Two) and his development in Italy (Chapter Three). Chapters Four and Five place *Wolfe* in the contexts of various intellectual developments to show how the artist developed a new, more democratic form of *exemplum virtutis* (p 128). West's turn to contemporary subject matter is seen as a symptom of the new 'historical

consciousness' also witnessed in the writing of 'philosophical history'. The picture challenged established expectations of history painting, which was undergoing a 'crisis of representation' in the period. By depicting his heroes in modern dress and adapting the iconography of a Lamentation, West was involved in the 'sacralization of the everyday' (p 112): proclaiming the present to have equal value to the ancient past. This also provided a solution to the problematic concept of heroism (brought about by changing British attitudes to war) by engaging spectators in a shared emotional experience (p 128). This idea is developed in Chapter Six, in which Grossman argues that *Wolfe* celebrated the 'collective effort' of victory (p 167). Both as a large oil painting at Buckingham House, and in printed form, the picture is found to speak to patriotic sentiments. Grossman rejects various 'coded messages' about politics, colonialism, gender and sexuality identified by previous art historians, arguing instead that, in their admiration, both elite and aspiring-elite spectators were 'validating beliefs and behaviours to which they already subscribed' (p 171). The final chapter concludes with a consideration of *Wolfe*'s influence on later paintings of contemporary events. While acknowledging that the revolution in history painting would have happened without West, Grossman nevertheless asserts that the artist 'put something vital and persistent into the bloodstream of art' by encouraging a tendency to combine 'an insistence on the importance of the present with the need to satisfy the immemorial human demand for epic narrative' (p 201).

Grossman makes a good case for the modernity of *Wolfe*, not only by linking it to developments in thought, culture and society in a period of rapid change, but also by adopting Foucault's concept of 'modernity as an attitude': 'the will to "heroize" the present' (Foucault 1991, 40). While this idea is central to his argument, he delays elaborating upon it until the final chapter, by which point the discussion of Baudelaire and Marx is perhaps unnecessary, Grossman having already made a convincing case. A little more interrogation of Foucault's text in the opening chapter might have added theoretical weight.

The temporal and geographical scope of this book is wide-ranging. While Grossman's focus is on *Wolfe*'s background and reception in the London of the 1770s, he has laid the groundwork for further investigation into its changing status in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and into its reception in America, Canada and France, three countries that are all implicated in the subject matter. A particular strength of this book is the breadth of contextual evidence. A wide range of writings from the period is drawn upon in order to analyse West's work in relation to the intellectual climate of the period, which has the additional benefit of providing a useful introduction to several topics, especially history painting and the rise of historical consciousness.

The author has a knack for well-chosen visual comparisons and tends to let his illustrations do the talking. It is a shame, however, that some of these works are not discussed at greater length, as Grossman's visual analysis is consistently illuminating and enjoyable. One picture that I felt deserved more attention was Gillray's *The Death of the Great Wolf* (1795), a print that not only attests to how familiar *Wolfe* was by the 1790s, but might also suggest the possibility of more sceptical interpretations of West's picture. Might not the depiction of the general as a dying Christ have struck some viewers as a little ridiculous?

A consideration of print culture also brings us to the question of *Wolfe*'s audience. Grossman's estimation that those who saw the painting and bought the print consisted of some 4,000 to 5,000 of the nation's wealthiest families (p 162) is perhaps over cautious, at least in terms of the print, which would have been prominently displayed in print-shop windows as well as being available in cheaper pirated versions. While there is no written evidence about what members of this wider class of spectators might have thought about the image, an acknowledgement of their existence would nevertheless have opened up the possibility for the coexistence of a less stable, perhaps less sentimental and loyalist reading of the picture than the one that Grossman argues would have been typical among elite and aspiring-elite spectators.

This is the first book-length study of *The Death of General Wolfe* since that of Ann Uhry Abrams (Abrams 1985). Grossman covers some of the same ground, and even follows a similar chapter structure to Abrams. However, with a greater appreciation of social factors in the art world and a multidisciplinary understanding of the period, Grossman is aligned to a more recent historiographical approach (for which see, most recently, Solkin 2015). With his concern for the modern, Grossman is aligned to this approach. His discussion of history painting and British imperial history also contributes to a revival of interest in these areas, exemplified by recent exhibitions at Tate Britain (*Fighting History*, and *Artists and Empire*, both 2015), while his

transatlantic perspective is in keeping with recent scholarly trends (eg Hemingway and Wallach 2015). West is a subject of several recently completed PhD theses (Caffey 2008; Weber 2013; Gilroy-Ware 2013; Fox 2014; Grossman 2014; Ardill 2016), but this book, with its engaging narrative and pacey style, is likely to introduce the artist to a wider readership beyond academia.

Abrams, A U 1985. *The Valiant Hero: Benjamin West and grand-style history painting*, Smithsonian Institute Press, Washington DC

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Caffey, S M 2008. '"An Heroics of Empire": Benjamin West and Anglophone history painting, 1764–1774', unpublished PhD thesis, University of Texas at Austin

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Fox, A J 2014. '"The Great House of Benjamin West": family, workshop, and identity in late Georgian England', unpublished PhD thesis, University of Maryland

Gilroy-Ware, C 2013. 'Marmorealities: classical nakedness in British sculpture and historical painting, 1798–1840', unpublished PhD thesis, University of York

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Hemingway, A and Wallach, A (eds) 2015. *Transatlantic Romanticism: British and American art and literature, 1790–1860*, University of Massachusetts Press, Amherst, MA

Solkin, D 2015. *Art in Britain, 1660–1815*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London

Weber, K H 2013. 'The studio and collection of the "American Raphael": Benjamin West, P.R.A. (1738–1820)', unpublished PhD thesis, University of Glasgow

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'Remember Now Thy Creator': Scottish girls' samplers, 1700–1872. By NAOMI E A TARRANT. 305mm. Pp v + 227, more than 200 col ills. Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, Edinburgh, 2014. ISBN 9781908332073. £20 (hbk).

We have a sampler in our sitting room inherited from my family with the quotation from Ecclesiastes 12:1 'Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth while the evil days come not nor the years draw nigh when thou shalt say I have no pleasure in them'. This was embroidered by Sally Crossland aged fifteen in 1813, and I have often wondered how and why such a quotation was chosen by her or for her. Although we will never know how and why, I now have a far better understanding of the circumstances in which such samplers with such quotations were worked in Scotland from the above publication by Naomi Tarrant, who is a former Curator of Costume and Textiles at the Royal Scottish Museum, now the National Museum of Scotland.

These samplers are a revelation of the life of young girls and their handiwork in Scotland in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, a period when we know so very little about the life of young girls and what occupied their hearts and their hands. The author has dedicated her study to the sampler makers, known and unknown, who laboured to produce these 'efforts of an infant hand' and infants they sometimes were. Sally Crossland was one of the older ones among the many names commemorated on samplers, some of them younger than twelve and a few of them as young as seven or eight. Who were they and from what sort of families did they come? The author has spent a great deal of her time and research work on which this book is based investigating the family background of the girls and their social and educational position. Mostly the girls were from the families of professional classes, daughters of lawyers, merchants or burgesses, who lived in the larger towns and cities such as Edinburgh, Glasgow, Perth and Aberdeen, although the evidence indicates that by the later part of the eighteenth century the social background was widening. The education of girls is part of the explanation for the growing numbers of samplers throughout the period, although surprisingly there are very few surviving samplers which were worked by daughters of the nobility, even though these children might be expected to have had the opportunity of a good education.

An important chapter (Two) places the making of samplers within the context of