Composing the Scene: Coleridge and Picturesque Aesthetics

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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

COMPOSING THE SCENE:
COLERIDGE AND PICTURESQUE AESTHETICS

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

BY
DAVID W. ROGNER

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INTRODUCTION

Relatively little attention has been paid to the impact of picturesque aesthetics on the work of Coleridge, despite the fact that the picturesque, as both an aesthetic problem and a phenomenon of the popular culture, provided an important part of the context from which his poetry and prose emerged. This neglect of the Coleridgean picturesque is symptomatic of a more general tendency on the part of romantic scholars to distance romanticism from the picturesque. As John Dixon Hunt observes: "It is a commonplace that many major artistic figures in English romanticism . . . found that they had to reject picturesque ideas and strategies" (190). Many critics, then, dismiss this "pre-romantic" aesthetic as largely irrelevant to understanding Coleridge, a romantic poet. Another reason for disassociating him from the picturesque is the belief that Coleridge's intellectual rigor would have made him particularly immune to this "infection" (to use Wordsworth's term) which permeated the popular culture.

These conclusions are based, however, upon two rather oversimplified premises. First, the romantics did not simply make a clean break with their predecessors by rejecting inherited aesthetic standards. Coleridge, while going be-
beyond the eighteenth-century understanding of the picturesque, also utilized several of its most basic principles. Second, the process of composing and evaluating landscape scenes—as embodied in the picturesque—was an aesthetically and intellectually sophisticated activity. When practiced by amateur tourists, however, it became subject to easy ridicule. Coleridge, recognizing that fact, expressed a deep ambivalence toward the picturesque, wanting to disassociate himself from the unsophisticated practices of most tourists while simultaneously acknowledging that art could enhance an observer's understanding and enjoyment of the natural world.

Those who have investigated the impact of the picturesque on Coleridge tend to minimize its importance. Harold D. Baker, in a recent essay, states that "Coleridge does not waste his energy in explicit attacks on the picturesque" (652), as if the entire subject were beneath him. Malcolm Andrews discusses Coleridge briefly in The Search for the Picturesque (1989), again to show how unlike the picturesque his descriptions are. William Ruddick, in an essay on Coleridge's fell-walking, acknowledges a sort of debt to the picturesque but stresses how Coleridge transcended the norms of picturesque touring. Each of these critics, while making valuable observations, over-emphasizes the uniqueness of Coleridge's approach to the landscape in order to separate Coleridge from the picturesque tradition.
In a somewhat different vein, John R. Watson, in his chapter on Coleridge in *Picturesque Landscape and English Romantic Poetry* (1970) acknowledges that Coleridge "took the picturesque seriously" (109); Watson also identifies many of the examples which illustrate Coleridge's interest in this phenomenon. At the end of his study, however, Watson argues that the romantic poets chose to "feel" a landscape rather than "view" it (as their eighteenth-century predecessors had)--an assertion which again emphasizes the "unromantic" quality of the picturesque. The most thorough critical treatment of the Coleridgean picturesque--and the one which most accurately acknowledges his debt to this aesthetic--appears in Raimonda Modiano's *Coleridge and the Concept of Nature* (1985), where she devotes a chapter to the subject. She attributes his reluctance to criticize the picturesque not to disdain for the entire subject but to a curious interest in it. She rightly argues that he "is original, not by turning against the picturesque, but by being more doggedly picturesque in his perceptions of landscape than many of his contemporaries" (12). Her purpose is to explain Coleridge's period of fascination with picturesque landscapes as one example (among many) of his ambivalence toward nature, particularly his doubts about the value of giving oneself over to the enjoyment of material objects. Modiano perceptively analyzes the comments and allusions Coleridge makes to the picturesque, basing her conclusions
primarily upon evidence from his notebooks. While I strongly concur with her assertions about Coleridge's understanding of the picturesque, I see Coleridge's experience with "picture-making" as an evolving, multi-dimensional encounter which began first in his poetry, then manifested itself in his prose description, and finally expanded to include his analysis of the visual arts. Other scholars have identified picturesque elements either in particular poems or in notebook entries, but none has adequately traced the course of all its manifestations. By doing so I intend to draw, as it were, a more complete picture of Coleridge's fascination with composing scenes.

As a cultural phenomenon, the picturesque has experienced a renewal of critical interest in recent years, particularly from New Historicists concerned with the political ideology concealed in the picturesque's focus on form. Alan Liu calls the picturesque the "idea of bureaucracy as 'natural'" (100) and sees it as a "form of social control" and a "shadow government" (90). Sidney Robinson identifies the picturesque concern for "balance" as a manifestation of the political struggle in England to achieve a balanced sense of "liberty" between the extremes of license and tyranny. Although arguments of this kind add a valuable dimension to our understanding of the picturesque, they run the risk of over-politicizing the picturesque and thereby oversimplifying the complex aesthetic questions involved. The
picturesque deserves study not only as a manifestation of political tension but also as an historical example of a basic hermeneutical problem: the question of the audience's role (whether reader or viewer) in the creation or realization of an aesthetic experience. The picturesque shows how a group of early nineteenth century poets, artists, and thinkers struggled to understand the subject's role in "composing the scene," an activity analogous to the struggle of contemporary literary critics to understand how the imaginative contributions of readers--and the "cultural baggage" they bring to texts--make them co-creators of the texts they read. Rather than employing a Marxist or Foucauldian historicism, I will focus on the primary aesthetic texts of the late eighteenth-century (and on the practice of tourism) to construct a cultural/aesthetic history which contextualizes Coleridge's own picture-making.

Coleridge undoubtedly recognized that the picturesque theorists raised aesthetic questions with which he also struggled, particularly how the active, imaginative mind reacted when faced with perceptual or textual data. Although some have characterized the picturesque as tyrannical and unimaginative, it made the audience active participants in (and contributors to) the aesthetic experience--an act congruent with Coleridge's conception of the
active, composing imagination.¹ In this sense, then, the picturesque historicizes current debates about "readerly texts" and "active readers," providing both an illustrative example of audience-based aesthetics and an illuminating, historical model for reading Coleridge.

It would be misleading to suggest that the picturesque is a subject of constant interest for Coleridge, for he wrote about the subject directly only a few times, and never at great length. His lists of aesthetic terms generally include the word "picturesque," however, and he applies the term fairly often to landscape scenes in his notebooks. Even when not using the term, he employs the language and the viewing techniques of picturesque composers, both in his poetry and in his prose description. Manifestations of the picturesque are thus often visible (though perhaps partially concealed) even when he does not explicitly name them as such—and when he may not even be conscious of using them. I intend to define what the picturesque meant to Coleridge (using his own statements on the subject), and then to focus

¹Harold D. Baker, for instance, argues that the picturesque "suppress[ed] the viewer's creative role" and resulted in the "endless repetition of a single model" (651). Although rules for landscape certainly characterized the picturesque, the audience functions actively and creatively in finding vantage points for composition and altering the scene to "improve" it—even if the "improvement" is based on established principles. The "single model" argument also seems like an oversimplification; descriptions and illustrations in William Gilpin's guidebooks, for instance, reveal that a variety of scenes could be created within his guidelines.
on a decade of Coleridge's life—from 1796 to 1807—to show how the picturesque is manifested first in his poetry, then in notebook descriptions, and finally in his discussions of art. To account for his affinity for the picturesque, I will argue not only that he was influenced by its ubiquitous presence in the popular culture but also that he felt it exemplified two central Coleridgean principles: the pursuit of a "middle-ground" which partakes of polar opposites, and the opportunity for a perceiving subject to exercise the shaping power of the imagination. My analysis, therefore, will reveal that the picturesque is a cultural and aesthetic context which should not be so readily dismissed in our attempt to understand Coleridge.
When Coleridge joined Dorothy and William Wordsworth for a tour of Scotland in August, 1803, the three travelers took with them—as part of their "baggage"—a complex set of cultural norms about landscape viewing known as the "picturesque." Even though William would repudiate this "infection of the age"—the fixation on picturesque "rules of mimic art" (Prelude 12.111-13)—we see in Dorothy's account of the journey just how strongly this paradigm influenced the way these tourists observed the landscape. Dorothy notes in her journal that, while walking along Loch Lomond:

... at a sudden turning, looking to the left, we saw a very craggy-topped mountain amongst other smooth ones; the rocks on the summit distinct in shape as if they were buildings raised up by man, or uncouth images of some strange creature. We called out with one voice, "That's what we wanted!" alluding to the frame-like uniformity of the side-screens of the lake for the last five or six miles. (1:255-56)

Their unison exclamation can only be understood as satisfaction at finding a scene which measured up to a preconceived "standard," surpassing the tedious series of preceding pictures. The rugged shapes, by adding greater variety to the "side-screens," created a better "picture"—better, at least, in terms of the norms internalized by these landscape
connoisseurs, for whom evaluating landscapes seemed to occur quite naturally. Although Dorothy recorded the incident, Coleridge's alleged participation in their "pronouncement" implicates him at least as an accomplice to picturesque "scene-seeking"—an activity which (by this time) had become subject to parody, especially as practiced by unsophisticated tourists enslaved to guidebooks. This incident (along with several others) compels us to look more carefully at the extent to which Coleridge was affected by these models of picturesque travel and scenic evaluation.

To evaluate its impact on Coleridge, we must first identify the central tenets of picturesque aesthetics and recognize the importance of this "movement" in late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century Britain. The picturesque radically altered the way the English viewed both painting and natural landscape by introducing painting as a mediating device through which natural scenery could be understood, appreciated, and improved. Rules derived from painting were adopted as standards for the evaluation of actual landscape, which travelers viewed with a new curiosity and an increasingly critical eye. Although enthusiasm for picturesque scenery and travel reached a height between 1760 and 1780, aestheticians debated the finer points of

2John R. Nabholtz argues, in "Dorothy Wordsworth and the Picturesque" (Studies in Romanticism, 1964), that Dorothy Wordsworth's descriptions were strongly influenced by the picturesque, which she saw not as a tyrannical set of rules but as a vehicle for exercising the imagination.
picturesque theory in a series of treatises which appeared primarily in the 1790's: William Gilpin's *Three Essays* (1792), Uvedale Price's *An Essay on the Picturesque* (1794), and Richard Payne Knight's poem *The Landscape* (1794). These works spawned a series of replies, attacks, and counter-attacks which carried the debate into the nineteenth century, culminating in Price's *A Dialogue on the Distinct Characters of the Picturesque and the Beautiful* (1801) and Knight's *An Analytical Inquiry Into the Principles of Taste* (1805). This decade of debate over picturesque theory corresponds almost exactly to the period in which Coleridge wrote most of his significant poetry and also toured Germany, England, and Scotland, filling his notebooks with landscape descriptions. Coleridge not only wrote during a time of great "picturesque" enthusiasm; he also expressed familiarity (at least to some degree) with the work of the three central participants in the debate--Gilpin, Price, and Knight. It should not surprise us, then, that Coleridge's understanding of the picturesque reveals a significant debt to these popular aestheticians. By formulating a Coleridgean definition of the picturesque (based on his own remarks about the subject), I will show how his picturesque both reflects and builds upon the fundamental aesthetic principles of his contemporaries.

Coleridge never wrote at length about Gilpin, Price, or Knight, but he did demonstrate a familiarity with their
work. His failure to say more may result from the ambiva-
lence I discussed earlier, for any attraction to the pictur-
esque "vision" of these aestheticians would undoubtedly have
been tempered by an aversion to the intellectual sloppiness
of their unsophisticated adherents. His references to Gil-
pin reflect this anxiety. In a journal entry of July, 1800,
Coleridge writes: "Ladies reading Gilpin &c while passing by
the very places instead of looking at the places" (CN 1:
760), expressing his amusement at how the popular "misuse"
of guidebooks often placed a barrier between the audience
and the landscape. We know Coleridge had read Gilpin’s
Cumberland and Westmoreland volume (1786), because he noted
in November, 1803 that a certain cataract had been "extrava-
gantly exaggerated by West & Gilpin" (CN 1:1207). Although
he seems critical of Gilpin in these two instances,
Coleridge does not hesitate to use terminology popularized
by Gilpin ("side-screens" and "distances", for instance)
when describing landscapes; these terms had become an almost
unavoidable part of the language of landscape.

Coleridge refers directly to Uvedale Price only once,
and his remark demonstrates (as with Gilpin) an ambivalent
interest in his work. His 1803 journal notation initially
seems highly significant:

128 Blank Pages remaining in this Pocket-book. Nov. 21,
1803 Monday Morning, 4 o’clock--: which I propose to
fill with Notes &c on the Picturesque, & the Pleasures
of natural scenery--/ from Garve, Price, &c--These I
have paged.-- (CN 1:1676)
The Price mentioned here is Uvedale Price, whose Essay on the Picturesque Coleridge owned; a letter of Dorothy Wordsworth to Sara Coleridge in 1806 requests that she send Coleridge's copy of Price's book (Letters: Middle Years 1:2-3).3 On the one hand Coleridge sounds enthusiastic about the Pricean picturesque, planning to fill an entire book with notes on the topic; on the other hand he only admits to having "paged" Price, hardly a show of intense interest. Even more importantly, the intent to fill the blank pages (like so many Coleridge plans) never materialized. No clear reason for this change in plans is recorded. His failure to follow through on a topic about which he expressed such enthusiasm (although hardly unusual for Coleridge) may in this case reveal his ambivalence toward it.4

Of these three picturesque theorists, Richard Payne Knight was the only one Coleridge actually met. Through a letter of introduction from his friend Sir George Beaumont, Coleridge met Knight and viewed his collection of bronzes shortly before leaving for Malta in 1804. In a letter about the incident, Coleridge tells Beaumont he was much more impressed by Knight's bronzes than he was by Knight (CL

3In a discussion of the 1803 notebook descriptions in chapter 3, I explore the possible influences of the German philosopher Christian Garve on Coleridge's thinking about the picturesque.

4Years later, in his 1808 lecture series, he made similar unfulfilled promises to define the picturesque. He also mentioned it in his Genial Criticism essays as an aesthetic term worth defining, but provided no definition.
Coleridge annotated the third edition of Knight’s *An Analytical Inquiry Into the Principles of Taste* (1806), but the true source of these annotations has invited a fair amount of speculation. All but two of the 41 marginal notes are in Wordsworth’s handwriting, despite the fact that the volume belonged to Coleridge (see Shearer 63-64). These notes, whether dictated by Coleridge or written by Wordsworth based on their discussions, indicate Coleridge’s general disagreement with Knight’s aesthetic system. He frequently criticizes Knight’s assertions about the sublime, but the annotations do not specifically address Knight’s beliefs about the picturesque. Coleridge again seems to avoid a direct discussion of the subject.

Although he offers few concrete reactions to Gilpin, Price, and Knight, Coleridge echoes their ideas in defining the picturesque and applying its principles. I will focus on four interrelated generalizations about picturesque aes-

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*Kathleen Coburn comments that Coleridge, who referred to Knight in critical ways on a number of occasions in lectures and notebooks, objected to Knight’s "crude associationism, and especially his failure to provide for imagination, aesthetic or moral" (CN 2:1963n). His familiarity with Knight and the picturesque controversy may also be evidenced in an anonymous review from the November, 1796 Critical Review, which David V. Erdman has attributed to Coleridge. This article reviews A Sketch from the Landscape, a Didactic Poem addressed to P. Knight, Esq; the poem parodies Knight’s poem The Landscape. Erdman points out that the reviewer expresses surprise at the political, vitriolic nature of the disagreements over gardening, which the reviewer had previously believed to be "one of those quiet and elegant occupations" (516). If the review is by Coleridge, it shows him to be--as Erdman claims--a relative newcomer to the picturesque debate in 1796.*
thetics which emerge from the works of Gilpin, Price, and Knight and find their way into Coleridgean discussions of the picturesque. The first is the most abstract and general: that the picturesque is an intrusion of art upon the understanding of nature--and of artforms upon each other--resulting in an intertwining of art and nature and a reduction of rigid boundaries between them. Second, picturesque-ness results from a mixture of various objects characterized by roughness (as, for instance, in a landscape), which come together to please the viewer by their intricacy. Third, the term "picturesque" exists in an ill-defined but undeniable relationship with the formal aesthetic terms "beautiful" and "sublime," owing its existence--at least in part--to the limitations of those other terms. Finally, picturesque aesthetics emphasizes the act of composition--the importance of arranging elements spatially in relationship to each other, of creating this arrangement within a bounded area, and of integrating these parts into a unified whole. Although these characteristics can be separated for the sake of argument and analysis, they are intertwined and causally related to each other, united (at least in part) by their focus on the audience. To some extent, each of these gener-

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6For the most part I will avoid analyzing the differences in the views of Gilpin, Price, and Knight--even though they are extensive--because they are largely irrelevant to this study. Walter J. Hipple offers a thorough analysis of the differences in The Beautiful, the Sublime, and the Picturesque in Eighteenth-Century British Aesthetic Theory (1957).
alizations hinges on the role played by the audience in responding to and creating the aesthetic experience. For Coleridge, this emphasis on the audience undoubtedly contributed to making the picturesque a worthy topic of study.

The first generalization—that the picturesque reverses a mimetic understanding of art and "entangles" art and nature in complex ways—lies (aesthetically speaking) at the core of traditional interpretations of the picturesque. Christopher Hussey begins his seminal 1927 study on the picturesque by characterizing it as a cultural-aesthetic movement in which "poetry, painting, gardening, architecture, and the art of travel may be said to have fused into the single 'art of landscape,'" the sum of which can be called the picturesque (4). James A. W. Heffernan, in a more recent study, similarly observes that the picturesque, "hovering somewhere in the space between pictures and natural scenery . . . was just one manifestation of the extent to which nature and art became entangled in the eighteenth century" (6). This entanglement of art and nature can be seen even in the word "landscape," which originally referred to a natural scene depicted in a painting, but eventually came to be applied to the physical terrain itself, apart

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7In addition to Hussey's *The Picturesque: Studies in a Point of View* (1927), two of the most important traditional studies of the picturesque are Elizabeth Manwaring's *Italian Landscape in Eighteenth-Century England* (1925) and Walter J. Hipple's *The Beautiful, the Sublime, and the Picturesque in Eighteenth-Century British Aesthetic Theory* (1957).
from its depiction in a painting. To get to the root of the picturesque, we must go to seventeenth-century Italy, where foreign artists working in Rome developed a painting style which paid homage to the Italian countryside and its remnants of antiquity. According to art historian R. H. Wilenski, painters like Nicholas Poussin and Claude Lorrain first created a "picturesque-classical" style which later gave way to "picturesque-genre" style--seen in Wouverman--and finally to the "picturesque-romantic" of Salvator Rosa (Wilenski 89). As the English became more familiar with these landscape painters in the eighteenth century, largely as a result of the paintings and prints brought back to England by travelers on the Grand Tour, people of taste began applying the principles extracted from this style of painting to the observation and evaluation of the English landscape.

This interest in landscape painting--and the "good taste" which a knowledge of it exemplified--led to a boom in the fad of picturesque travel: tours on which travelers could find scenes reminiscent of their favorite paintings. The result was a sort of mimetic reversal. For the tourist, as James Buzard says, "the 'original' becomes itself when __________

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8For a discussion of this topic, see John Barrell's The Idea of Landscape and the Sense of Place, 1730-1840.

9Elizabeth Manwaring discusses at length the way in which exposure to landscape painting created the taste for English landscape in Italian Landscape in Eighteenth Century England (1925).
the viewer perceives that it suits its representations" (36). Travel writers—led by William Gilpin, England's great popularizer of picturesque travel—fed the new taste for travel with a diet of guide books designed to help tourists locate the best views. When these scenes proved inadequate for one reason or another, the picturesque devotee could offer suggestions for "improving" the scene, based on compositional principles learned from painting and guidebooks.

Some picturesque tourists "improved" scenes by viewing them reflected in a "Claude glass," a convex, tinted mirror which turned the landscape into a "picture" by focusing the reflected image into a circular "frame." The tint of the glass made the image resemble a yellowed canvas of Claude Lorrain, completing the scene's transformation from nature into art. Although technically a "mirror," the Claude glass functioned less as a mimetic device and more as an "idealizing" one, allowing the viewer to compose a natural scene as if it were a painting. These scenes were also literally turned into artworks by tourists who sketched them, although tourists typically altered the actual scene to improve its composition, often using the Claude glass for inspiration. The use of the Claude glass, as John Dixon Hunt remarks, "was both an objective, cognitive activity and a private, creative one" (178). Historically, the device prefigured the camera, and as such it signaled a gradual shift away
from seeing nature as mediated by painting to seeing nature mediated by technology. In the tourist's mirror (as in the contemporary tourist's camera) nature was "composed."

Gilpin, Price, and Knight all recognized this mediation of nature by art as central to picturesque experience. Gilpin, in one of his first publications on the picturesque (his Essay on Prints of 1768) defined the picturesque as "a term expressive of that particular kind of beauty, which is agreeable in a picture" (xii). Although Gilpin refined his definition over the years, he continually recognized art as central to the definition of the picturesque. Since his guidebooks juxtaposed descriptions of the landscapes with his own aquatints of picturesque scenes, readers experienced the picturesque as both a verbal and visual construct. As Gilpin's readers traveled, they carried his guidebooks with them, using both his text and his illustrations to mediate their encounter with the landscape, often augmenting the experience by making their own sketches of the scene. Far from passive, then, the tourist played an active role in "layering" the experience of natural landscape with verbal description (either read or written) and illustration (either viewed or sketched), the fusion of

10In an more theoretical essay, his On Picturesque Beauty of 1792, Gilpin repeats this idea with a subtle difference, calling beautiful objects "those which please the eye in their natural state" but picturesque objects "those, which please from some quality, capable of being illustrated by painting" (Three Essays 3).
which produces (to use Hussey's term) a complex "art of landscape."

Uvedale Price, whose essays on the picturesque are more philosophical than Gilpin's and less interested in descriptions of specific locations, also defines the picturesque in terms of the painter's art. He confronts, in his definition, a crucial question posed by the term itself: If picturesque simply means that which is "like a picture" or "that which pleases in a picture," what prevents every "paintable" object from being called picturesque? Price responds by saying that picturesque means "not all that can be expressed with effect in painting, but that which painting can, and sculpture cannot, express" (2:xv.-xvi.). He argues that simple, disagreeable, or even offensive objects can be rendered appealing by the painter's art. Giving as an example an agreeable painting of a loaded dungcart by Wovermans, Price explains that a marble sculpture of the same scene, even "skillfully executed," would be "detestable" (2:xiv.-xv.). Picturesque scenes or objects are those which only the painter can "represent with effect" (2:xv.). In one sense, then, the medium itself transforms and improves the appearance of such objects, but Price also credits painters with superior powers of observation which enable them to create the picturesque effect. If a painter, he claims, could bestow upon a non-artist the painter's power of "distinguishing and feeling the effects and combi-
nations of form, colour, and light and shadow,—it would hardly be too much to assert that a new appearance of things, a new world would suddenly be opened to him" (1: xv.).

Richard Payne Knight, although disagreeing with Price on a number of key points, agrees that an understanding of painting is necessary to receive the full enjoyment from picturesque scenes. In his *Principles of Taste*, he declares: "By thus comparing nature and art, both the eye and the intellect acquire a higher relish for the production of each" (153), acknowledging a kind of cross-fertilization that benefits the aesthetic observer. When objects in nature have been "selected, imitated, and embellished by art, those, who before overlooked or neglected it, discern at once all its charms through this discriminating medium" (*Taste* 153). Although the artistically unschooled enjoy the visual effects of a scene, their inability to associate it with painting prevents them from being "really delighted with its real excellencies" (*Taste* 146). Knight's remark not only emphasizes the entangling of art and nature but also clarifies the purpose for the entanglement: the heightening of aesthetic pleasure. The theorizing of Price and Knight and the guidebook advice of Gilpin equally reflect the belief that understanding nature by artistic rules increases one's enjoyment of landscape viewing.

In one of Coleridge's most important statements about
the art/nature entanglement, he similarly acknowledged that art could help viewers receive greater pleasure from landscape. Coleridge interrupts a description of a Scotland landscape in September, 1803 to remark in his notebook:

Those who hold it undignified to illustrate Nature by Art--how little would the truly dignified say so--how else can we bring the forms of Nature within our voluntary memory!--The first business is to subjugate them to our Intellect & voluntary memory--then comes their Dignity by Sensation of Magnitude, Forms & Passions connected therewith. (CN 1:1489)

Far from criticizing the picturesque, Coleridge appears intent on convincing the Wordsworths (his traveling companions) of art's value for the landscape viewer. Discussing natural landscape in terms of art implies no disrespect for nature, he argues, but rather helps the viewer internalize nature's forms by bringing them under the jurisdiction of one's "Intellect and voluntary memory." Although this "subjugation" initially appears as a denial of passion, Coleridge argues that it leads to a more dignified, intellectualized pleasure. Knowledge of art helps viewers "internalize" the landscape by seeing it in formal terms--as a spatial, compositional structure readily stored in the memory. Coleridge almost certainly had picturesque landscape

"Coleridge's "intellectualization" of a passionate response mirrors the tension between passion and intellect inherent in the picturesque, a subject I explore in terms of his notebook descriptions in chapter 3. Alan Liu says the picturesque produces "a terrifically impassive 'passion' or 'enthusiastic calm.'" Liu notes how this paradoxical state can be exemplified by tourists who, when "moved" by a landscape, turn their backs on the scene and compose it in their Claude glass (65).
painting in mind here, for no other style of art requires such a high level of mental "subjugation," especially not the sublime, which requires just the opposite—a surrender of intellect.

Coleridge confirms his belief in the benefits of art's mediation of nature several months later in another notebook entry. Laboring to describe (and roughly diagram) certain sketches and paintings by his friend Sir George Beaumont, he writes:

Painting & Engravings sends us back with new Eyes to Nature—as for instance the picture of the Cottagers by Du Sart Engraved by Woollett/ the reciprocating influences of Poetry, Painting &c— and Nature. (CN 2:1907)

Since artists "see" what others do not, as Price and Knight stated, their paintings and engravings give viewers "new Eyes," enabling them to "see" in an actual landscape what they would otherwise overlook. The fact that art unavoidably alters how we see landscape could be seen as a threat to "pure" viewing, but Coleridge chooses to focus on its benefits. Enhanced enjoyment seems to be the primary result of the "reciprocating" entanglement of poetry, painting, and nature. ¹²

This mediation of nature by art (and the blurring of

¹²Both of these comments about the visual arts come within a year after Coleridge met Sir George Beaumont, the man most responsible for introducing Coleridge to painting. Although Coleridge certainly was acquainted with the phenomenon of the picturesque before meeting Beaumont, he afterwards became more consciously aware of the impact of visual art. Coleridge's relationship to Beaumont will be more thoroughly explored in chapter 4.
boundaries between artforms) served as a starting point for thinking about the picturesque, but the theorists of Coleridge's day struggled to define it in more concrete terms. A second generalization readily drawn from these theorists involves the physical or material manifestations of the picturesque: it consists of a mixture of various objects characterized by roughness which come together to please the viewer by their intricacy. This point cannot really be separated from the first, especially since picturesque objects are considered suitable for painting on the basis of their roughness or intricacy. Note, for instance, Gilpin's assertion in his essay "On Picturesque Beauty," where he not only relates roughness to painting but also anticipates the third general tenet, the separation of the picturesque from other terms of formal aesthetics:

Nay, farther, we do not scruple to assert, that roughness forms the most essential point of difference between the beautiful, and the picturesque; and it seems to be that particular quality, which makes objects chiefly pleasing in painting. (Three Essays 6)

We should first observe that Gilpin, unlike Knight, does not suggest that knowledge of painting is essential to enjoy the roughness of objects seen in nature, or that this is an acquired taste learned from painting, but that rough objects are pleasing to the sight--and that is why artists choose to paint them. This difference illustrates a crucial dilemma never resolved by the picturesque aestheticians: the entanglement of art and nature made it difficult to determine if
the picturesque experience emerged from the mind of the perceiving subject schooled in painting or inhered in the arrangement of landscape objects themselves. This tangled, hermeneutic dilemma over the role of the audience in aesthetic experience certainly intrigued Coleridge, even as it does contemporary thinkers and critics.\textsuperscript{13}

Gilpin saw how a mixture of landscape objects resulted in contrasting surface features and complex patterns of light and shade, producing the kind of "roughness" admired by painters. Deterioration or decay also produced roughness in objects and consequently heightened their picturesque-ness. Gilpin provides a practical application of his principles in his discussion of Tintern Abbey, whose "gabel-ends . . . hurt the eye with their regularity." He suggests that "a mallet judiciously used (but who durst use it?) might be of service in fracturing some of them" (River Wye 33). He also claims that had the rubble not been cleared away, the interior of the ruins would have been more picturesque "with all its rough fragments of ruin scattered round" (River Wye 35). Gilpin in his travel volumes constantly uses variety, irregularity, and roughness as criteria for a landscape's picturesqueness. He finds English landscapes particularly picturesque because they feature an "intermixture of wood

\textsuperscript{13}This is precisely the kind of question discussed by Coleridge in chapter 12 of the \textit{Biographia Literaria}, where he asserts that "All knowledge rests on the coincidence of an object with a subject" (\textit{BL} 1:252), and then debates whether priority lies in the subject or the object.
and cultivation" (visual roughness) found less often in other countries (Cumberland 1:7).

Price declared that "the two opposite qualities of roughness, and of sudden variation, joined to that of irregularity, are the most efficient causes of the picturesque" (1: 51). He condemned the "high polish and flowing lines" of landscape improvers (1: 21) and called a tree "picturesque" when it displayed irregularity, shattered limbs, unequal branches, and decay (1:77). An important Pricean term for describing these rough landscapes is "intricacy," which he defined as "that disposition of objects, which, by a partial and uncertain concealment, excites and nourishes curiosity" (1:22). By labeling the effect of an intricate scene as one of "curiosity," Price offers a more specific term than Gilpin for the kind of pleasure produced by the picturesque. Price also goes beyond Gilpin by pushing the meaning of "picturesque" to more abstract levels—and then by applying it to non-landscape phenomena. Taking "the most enlarged view possible" of the subject (1: viii.), he contends that a piece of music could be called picturesque because of qualities like "sudden, unexpected, and abrupt transitions,—from a certain playful wildness of character and appearance of irregularity" (1:46)—or that a speaker who used "unexpected turns" and employed "unthought-of agreements and contrasts," would be a picturesque conversa-
tionalist (1:341-42). By using the terms "roughness" and "variety" broadly, Price makes the picturesque not only a landscape style but an intellectual or philosophical category—an approach also used by Coleridge in his most abstract definition of the picturesque.15

Coleridge demonstrates his love of a landscape's roughness and variety by his descriptions—even though his most complete "definitions" of the picturesque do not explicitly include this criterion. On a few occasions he does explicitly attach the adjective "picturesque" to rough objects. One notebook entry reads:

Grasmere is the most sublime Crag, of a violet colour, patched here & there with islands of Heath plant--& wrinkled & guttered most picturesquely--contrasts with the Hills on my Right, which tho' in form ridgy & precipitous, are yet smooth & green. (CN 1:537)

"Wrinkled and guttered" clearly indicate a roughness which he contrasts with the smooth appearance of the adjoining landscape; the mixture of elements ("patched here and

14 Price humorously contrasts this with the "proser" who speaks "flowing common-place nothings" similar to the serpentine walks of the insipid improvers (1: 341-42). It is not difficult to see Coleridge (especially as the "sage of Highgate" in his later years) as this kind of "picturesque conversationalist."

15 Richard Payne Knight also emphasizes roughness and irregularity as picturesque elements, but he bases his argument on the history of painting. He feels that when painters abandoned hyper-realism in favor of "loose and sketchy indistinctness" (as seen in the Flemish and Dutch schools), they taught people to appreciate roughness in nature (Taste 150). Even Knight admits, however, that objects with rough outlines are "peculiarly adapted" (184) to this style of painting, so it remains unclear whether appreciation of roughness originates in the objects or in the painters.
there") combined with the roughness lead him to call the scene "picturesque." On his trip to Malta in 1804, he describes a smoke cloud as having "a very picturesque outline" (CN 2:2007), which presumably means rough or ragged. Coleridge often praises scenes which display the intricacy that comes from mixed, rough objects, as when he says of a "multiform" German landscape, "my very sight seemed incapacitated by the novelty & Complexity of the Scene" (CL 1:513). The poetry Coleridge wrote from 1795 to 1798 is filled with descriptions of rough, intricate scenes, several of which will be discussed in detail in chapter 2; one brief example will illustrate the point here. Coleridge begins his 1796 poem "To a Young Friend: On His Proposing to Domesticate With the Author" by describing a mount in its picturesque variety:

A mount, not wearisome and bare and steep,  
But a green mountain variously up-piled,  
Where o'er the jutting rocks soft mosses creep,  
Or colour'd lichens with slow oozing weep;  
Where cypress and the darker yew start wild . . .

Because the mountain is "variously up-piled," it generates sufficient interest to make its climb a curiously pleasant one, as opposed to the visually "wearisome" experience of a bare, more severe--and presumably more sublime--mount. Mixtures of contrasting objects generate interest in the surface features: sharp, dull-colored, jutting rocks are balanced by soft mosses and colored lichens; lighter cypress and darker yew trees together produce a dappled effect that
simulates roughness. His opening descriptive lines also aptly introduce the anticipated "domestication" with his friend, for the curiosity generated by viewing and climbing this mount parallels the engaging nature of the relationship he hopes to enjoy with his young friend. Coleridge seems no happier than when faced with a rough, intricate scene and an engaging, thought-provoking companion, both of which challenge his mind, "rough up" insipid smoothness (of vision or of thought), and help avert the wearisome.

If "To a Young Friend" is built on a model of picturesque description, we might rightly ask why he twice calls the mount "sublime"--a term normally used to describe a different kind of aesthetic experience. One explanation is that the "mixed" nature of the picturesque allowed it to contain elements of the sublime and the beautiful. A less satisfying but equally likely explanation is that the elusive nature of these aesthetic terms caused Coleridge (as well as his contemporaries) to apply them inconsistently; their definitions and applications often appear flexible. The struggle to define and use these formal aesthetic terms illustrates the third important generalization concerning the picturesque: it owes its existence (at least in part) to the limitations of the words "sublime" and "beautiful."

As noted above, Gilpin used the criterion of "roughness" to separate the picturesque from the beautiful; in fact, the act of labeling a landscape "picturesque" was
often a statement about what the scene was not—namely, not sublime or beautiful. Although these terms were discussed throughout the eighteenth century (as well as before), Edmund Burke popularized these concepts in his *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, first published in 1757. For Burke, sublime experiences arise from the instincts for self-preservation and avoidance of pain; the perceiving subject experiences sublimity when confronted by a potentially dangerous, overwhelming, or painful object or scene which is kept at a safe enough distance so as not to actually threaten, but rather generate a pleasing sense of awe. Objects which are great, vast, partially obscured, or powerful generate sublime emotions. The beautiful, on the other hand, is related to the desire for pleasure and self-propagation; beautiful objects are smooth, smaller in scale, gently-varied, and balanced.

What later aestheticians discovered, however, was that many objects or scenes did not fit neatly into either of these categories; not all objects were either sublime or beautiful. Samuel Monk observes that the picturesque "had to come into existence in order to give those objects that are neither beautiful or sublime (in Burke's sense of the words) a local habitation and a name" (Monk 91). Although Monk's analysis may seem overly simple, it contains an important element of truth. The picturesque exemplified a resistance to the reigning aesthetic "binary," giving aes-
theticians a fluid "middle-ground" term that allowed them to label experiences which mixed elements of the sublime/beau-
tiful polarity. Thus scenes like the one in Coleridge's "To a Young Friend" could occasionally evoke the appellation "sublime" despite being predominately picturesque. The "middle-ground" status of the picturesque also permitted its users to vary its definition widely, moving it toward either end of the continuum between the sublime and the beautiful. It acts as a sort of "sliding scale"--or, as James Heffernan calls it--a "verbal chameleon" (5).

The conception of the picturesque as a middle term is probably Uvedale Price's greatest contribution to the picturesque debate. While Gilpin used the words "picturesque beauty" in the titles of all his guide books (suggesting that the picturesque was only a type of beauty), Price tried to stake out a special terrain for the picturesque.16 As a self-professed admirer of Burke, Price expresses great re-
spect for Burke's ideas, but says in his first "Essay on the Picturesque . . .": "I felt that there were numberless ob-
jects which give great delight to the eye, and yet differ as widely from the beautiful, as from the sublime" (1:43).

16At times even Gilpin makes the picturesque seem like a separate, "middle-ground" category, however. Discussing how lake and mountain scenery inspires his drawings, he says that two kinds of scenes give him material for picturesque compositions: "sublimity, or simple grandeur; and grandeur united with beauty." The latter, he says, produces scenery of a "mixed kind" (Five Essays 167), which sounds remarkably like the picturesque reconciliation of sublime and beautiful seen in Price.
This led Price to posit the picturesque as a unique category with its own characteristics. Like Gilpin, he separates the picturesque from the purely beautiful partly on the basis of roughness, adding to this the idea of sudden variation and also the psychological associations of age and decay (as opposed to the "youth" and "freshness" associated with the beautiful) (1:68-69). Price declares that the picturesque "corrects the languor of beauty, or the tension of sublimity" (1:89), acting as a sort of neutralizing mediator. The picturesque, then, produces an effect on the audience which lies between the responses evoked by the beautiful or the sublime. Mediating between the love, pleasure, and repose of beauty and the terror, awe, and astonishment of sublimity, the picturesque evokes the intermediate psychological state of "curiosity." The mind of a picturesque observer is actually the most active (or "curious") for the sublime overwhelms the mind while the beautiful encourages passive enjoyment.

Knight disagreed strongly with Price, and their point of contention is important insofar as it illuminates one of Coleridge's most extensive remarks on the picturesque. In his 1805 *An Analytical Inquiry Into the Principles of Taste*, Knight refuted Price's claim that the picturesque constituted a separate aesthetic category. In one sense, Knight resembles Gilpin in seeing the picturesque as a type of beauty. His explanation of the relationship between the
picturesque and the beautiful, however, is different than Gilpin's, and this difference helps us understand Cole-ridge's dilemma in defining the term. Knight sees the pic-turesque as a mode of vision, declaring that:

...the great fundamental error, which prevails throughout the otherwise able and elegant Essays on the Picturesque, is seeking for distinctions in external objects, which only exist in the modes and habits of viewing and considering them. (Taste 196)

The quarrel again centers on whether "picturesqueness" inheres in objects or in the internalized schema of the viewers. Knight believes the latter, stating in a note to the second edition of his poem The Landscape (1795) that the picturesque is "merely that kind of beauty which belongs exclusively to the sense of vision; or to the imagination, guided by that sense" (qtd. in Hipple 254). Knight was trying to define the picturesque by isolating the purely visual qualities of objects. He thought it was foolish to assume, like Price, that the tendency for certain objects to give pleasure when depicted in painting could inhere in the objects themselves, since those objects did not please in nature unless one could associate them with paintings.

One of Coleridge's most important statements about the picturesque clearly reflects Price and Knight's twofold

17Hipple illustrates this rather difficult distinction by saying that "the perfect building is more beautiful than the ruin in the everyday sense of 'beauty,' though less beautiful in the purely visual sense--less suited, therefore, for painting--less suggestive of our idea of painting and paintings--less picturesque (281).
struggle: to relate the picturesque to other aesthetic categories and to determine its degree of dependence on painting. We see in this notebook entry from December, 1803 Coleridge's inability to resolve the central problem of the picturesque, which rendered him unable to define the term precisely. He records, rather, his unresolved, internalized debate:

Divide association from the Beautiful--& yet still consider it as an existing Copresence. Why does Dorothy not think a smooth race horse Beautiful [?Groom], Stables, Master, &c a distraction in short--How could she think a rough Colt beautiful? Beauty the same in me as in a Lincolnshire Farmer quoad Effect--but quoad causes, which the Permanent, die Vereinigungspunct of other possible Faculties?--What then is the real Difference & is there a real Difference between the Picturesque & the Beautiful? The causes that makes certain appearances more beautiful, at least interesting, in a Picture than in Nature/& may not Knowledge & Taste & Feeling produce these in Nature, & make a wise man, independent of Raphael, Rembrandt, and Wealth?/ (CN 1:1755)

Coleridge and Dorothy appear to be arguing (as both Coburn and Modiano have observed) about Gilpin's association of smoothness with beauty and roughness with the picturesque. Coleridge takes the standard Gilpinesque position that the smooth horse--not the rough one--is beautiful. He progresses to speculate, though, on the causes of beauty (the point on which the entry had begun) by trying to divide association from the beautiful. By saying that the beautiful creates the same "effect" in both himself and a Lincolnshire farmer, he seems to be arguing that their obvious differences in social class do not result in their seeing the beautiful differently; he wants to believe, at
least, that the apprehension of beauty transcends social class. Would it be possible, though, to define the picturesque in a similar way—as an experience divided from the mental associations of paintings? He ends the entry with a rhetorical question apparently affirming this possibility—that "Knowledge & Taste & Feeling" could allow one to see the picturesque purely in nature, apart from "Raphael, Rembrandt, and Wealth." He would like to believe in a Pricean picturesque that depends upon aesthetic criteria, not associations with paintings. He experiments, at least, with the idea that a poor person with "Knowledge & Taste & Feeling" could experience the picturesque, even without knowledge of (or access to) the wealthy man's Rembrandts and Raphaels.

Coleridge answers his own question about what separates the picturesque from the beautiful with the words "the causes that make certain appearances more beautiful, at least interesting, in a Picture than in Nature." These causes are left conspicuously unidentified. Interestingly, however, he backs off from his original assertion that objects become more beautiful in a picture, saying instead that they become more interesting. Coleridge's "interesting" closely parallels Price's "curiosity," because both suggest intellectualized responses. Although Coleridge initially doubts (in this notebook entry) that a distinction can be made between the beautiful and the picturesque, he entertains the rather Pricean idea that some quality of the
objects themselves might cause a scene to be more interesting when painted—and thus more picturesque. When he continues, though, by asserting that knowledge, taste, and feeling would still be necessary for one to apprehend the picturesque in nature, he vacillates back toward the subjective pole—the contribution made by the audience. He reveals an intellectual interest (despite his inconclusiveness) in two important questions: 1) Can the picturesque be defined as a unique aesthetic category? and 2) Does the apprehension of the picturesque require the perceiving subjects to "contribute" their knowledge of painting? His conflicting response to the second question most likely indicates that he recognizes the mutual participation of the objects perceived and the subject’s preconceptions in aesthetic apprehension. This is particularly true, Coleridge believed, of the picturesque experience.

The closest we can come to a succinct Coleridgean definition of the picturesque is a passage found not in his own writings but only in Thomas Allsop’s *Letters, Conversations, and Recollections of S. T. Coleridge*. Although it has only the status of "table talk," I believe this definition makes explicit what is implicit in the poetry, prose descriptions, and art criticism. In this definition he clearly distinguishes the picturesque from the beautiful and the sublime, defining each of the terms according to its abstract properties. As a statement made late in his life
(years after he had written the poems and prose descriptions I am focusing on in this study), it served as a recapitulation of his experience with the picturesque.

According to Allsop, he approached the definition philosophically, attempting to differentiate aesthetic experiences in terms of part/whole relationships. He defined a series of aesthetic terms, moving along a continuum from shapeliness through beauty to the formal, the grand, the majestic, the picturesque, and finally the sublime.\(^{18}\) Although he includes other terms on the scale, he clearly places the picturesque between the beautiful and the sublime. The "grand," he says, occurs when "the parts are numerous and impressive, and are predominate, so as to prevent or greatly lessen the attention to the whole." The majestic, by contrast, is experienced where "the impression of the whole, i.e. the sense of unity, predominates so as to abstract the mind from the parts." Placing the sublime at the end of the spectrum, Coleridge calls it an experience of "neither whole nor parts, but unity as boundless or endless allness" (Allsop 198-99).

Close to sublimity on the aesthetic scale—-but nevertheless between the sublime and the beautiful—-Coleridge places the picturesque. It occurs, he states, where "the parts by their harmony produce an effect of a whole, but

\(^{18}\)The aesthetic terms recall the ones so humorously confused by the tourists he met on the 1803 Scotland tour, as noted above.
where there is no seen form of a whole producing or explain­
ing the parts of it, where the parts only are seen and dis­tinquished, but the whole is felt." By saying the observer focuses on "seeing" and "distinguishing" a variety of parts, Coleridge recognizes the characteristic "intricacy" of picturesque elements (as defined by Price). To this he adds, however, a crucial element--a "hidden" sense of whole­ness not seen but only felt in the mind of the viewer (which distinguishes the picturesque from the grand, wherein "wholeness" is completely lost in the parts). The perceiv­ing subject thus contributes (via feeling) the wholeness to the scene by the act of apprehending and assembling the distinguishable parts. Coleridge makes the picturesque, moreso than the sublime or beautiful, dependent upon the subject’s active participation in and contribution to the aesthetic experience; as Modiano states, the picturesque (for Coleridge) "leaves a significant space open for the contributing action of intellect and feeling" (26). Because of this emphasis upon the audience’s interactive role, only the word "picturesque" is defined in terms of "effect." It seems to exist not as a whole but only by producing the ef­fect of one. Its very existence seems dependent upon a per­ceiving subject.

The picturesque, then, provided fertile ground for the "reconciliation" of subject and object, even as it united the opposing aesthetic categories of the beautiful and the
sublime. It seems very likely—even though Coleridge never spoke of it in these terms—that the picturesque would have appealed to him as a place where the polarity of beauty and sublimity is played out. As scholars frequently observe, few ideas intrigued Coleridge more than polarity and the reconciliation of opposites. Coleridge gradually developed a concept of polarity which embraced, as Kathleen Wheeler states, "opposition with a tendency to reunion" (Sources 52). The picturesque did not cause Coleridge's interest in polarity, but he certainly would have been attracted intellectually to an aesthetic realm that united the opposing forces of the beautiful and the sublime—and also of subject and object. His interest in polarity, in fact, seemed to develop alongside his attempts to define the picturesque. Three weeks after stating his plan to fill a notebook with notes on the picturesque (21 November 1803), he wrote in a different notebook that he would devote the remaining pages to examples of the proverb "Extremes Meet" (CN 1:1725). Although he does not specifically say so, the picturesque is such a place, an aesthetic locus where extremes meet. His reluctance to criticize the picturesque is even more understandable if we see it as a concrete example

19 James V. Baker, for instance, calls the reconciliation of opposites "one of Coleridge's dearest and most fundamental principles" (130). Owen Barfield, in What Coleridge Thought, defines polarity as "the manifestation of one power by opposite forces" (35). Kathleen Wheeler traces the development of this idea in Sources, Processes, and Methods in Coleridge's Biographia Literaria (1980).
of polarity, a philosophical principle Coleridge valued highly.

Subject and object are reconciled in the picturesque because the subject, as Coleridge says, "feels" a wholeness not really "present" in the individual parts. To explain the nature of this nebulous "felt wholeness," we must investigate the last important generalization about the picturesque, namely its emphasis upon compositional principles. What perceiving subjects "contribute" to picturesque apprehension--more than anything else--is their predisposition to see a scene as a composition. Paradoxically, the intellectual internalization of artistic rules seems to enhance the subject's ability to "feel" the scene's wholeness.²⁰ Coleridge's discussions of the picturesque probably owe more to his preoccupation with composition than to any of the other factors discussed thus far. He demonstrated particular interest in the relationship of part to whole in a composition, not only in his theoretical pronouncements but also in his own descriptions, diagrams, and poems.

His concern for compositional principles is hardly idiosyncratic, however, for Gilpin, Price, and Knight all established guidelines for composing a scene. Their preoccupation with composition turned the picturesque into what

²⁰Christopher Hussey makes a similar point when he defines the picturesque as an "interregnum between classic and romantic art [which] was necessary in order to enable the imagination to form the habit of feeling through the eyes (emphasis added) (4).
Alan Liu has called a "highly specialized experience of form" (65). This formal imperative to "compose"—whether done mentally by a tourist who finds the right vantage point or literally by an artist who sketches or paints a scene—engaged the audience's active, imaginative mind, moreso than did the beautiful or the sublime. Coleridge could not have easily resisted an aesthetic which asked the audience to play such an active role.

Gilpin, more than anyone, gave English tourists the rules for evaluating a scene's composition and the vocabulary for naming its parts.21 To create a picturesque scene—one which "unit[es] in one whole a variety of parts" (Three Essays 19)—Gilpin felt that the viewer often had to assist or alter nature, which "is seldom so correct in composition, as to produce an harmonious whole" (River Wye 18). To properly discuss and analyze landscapes, tourists needed terms to apply to the various parts of the composition. Gilpin gladly obliged, giving picturesque tourists their own landscape jargon. In his Wye Tour volume, for instance, he declares that every river scene "is composed of four grand parts: the area, which is the river itself; the two side-screens, which are the opposite banks, and mark the perspec-

21The extremes to which Gilpin carried certain compositional precepts also made him the object of ridicule and lampoon among many of his contemporaries. Pronouncements like the one that three cows form a pleasing group but two do not were ripe for parody. Manwaring aptly observes that Gilpin "has a comical fashion of treating nature as an artist of genius, but untrained and requiring correction" (187).
tive; and the front-screen, which points out the winding of the river" (River Wye 7-8). He refers to a scene's "distances" and "second-distances"--planes or levels seen one behind another as the viewer's eyes move deeper and deeper into the composition. The course of a winding river with high banks will be dominated by side-screens when seen from a low vantage point--like that of a traveler on the river. From a higher vantage point, however, and especially if the river has shorter banks, a winding river may appear as a series of screens or planes one behind another, receding into the horizon. 22 Looking at landscape in these terms turns every natural scene into a more-or-less rectangular canvas on which objects are placed on a number of planes, suggesting movement into a receding deep space. Such is the effect created by this typical Gilpin aquatint from his Cumberland volume, a guidebook Coleridge had read. Although the landscape features are different from those along the River Wye, the sense of enclosed composition remains. Artworks like this encouraged the "picturesque vision," which, according to Alan Liu, "framed [the land] in by an endlessly repeatable enclosure of pure picturicty" (94).

22 Critics have frequently associated the picturesque with the low vantage point (see, for instance, Malcolm Andrews' The Search for the Picturesque, 61-64). While this is frequently true, Gilpin's remarks on the Wye indicate that a picturesque scene could also utilize a high vantage point; in this case the composition "lies flat" as a series of receding planes rather than "rising up" in enclosing side-screens.
1. William Gilpin aquatint from his *Cumberland and Westmoreland* (photo courtesy of The Newberry Library)

Although picturesque observers could not readily manipulate nature itself to alter a scene, they made two important compositional decisions. The first was their choice of a vantage point, for a scene can be altered not just by moving the objects but also by moving oneself into a different relationship with the objects. Gilpin stresses that the landscape sketcher must begin by finding the proper viewpoint. In a larger sense, every traveller was under the same compulsion (even the non-sketcher), and the Gilpin guidebook itself enabled picture-making by directing tourists to places from which the landscapes produced the most picturesque effects. But the very notion of the landscape "producing effects" again raises the question of wherein this "production" actually lies. While landscape features
make the effect possible, the production of the effect is equally dependent on the observer's selection of the vantage point. On an even more fundamental level, no landscape can create an "effect" at all in the absence of a viewer. In this sense the picturesque mode of vision made tourists consciously aware of the contribution they made as perceiving subjects to the realization of aesthetic experience. 23

One other compositional factor was subject to at least some degree of control by the observer: the choice of what time of day to view any given scene. The picturesque aestheticians emphasized that changes in light and atmospheric conditions radically altered the composition of a scene (a point which Monet was later to demonstrate again and again in his landscape series). Gilpin observed that "different lights make so great a change even in the composition of landscape--at least in the apparent composition of it, that they create a scene perfectly new" (River Wye 43-44). England's climate also contributed to picturesque scenes, according to Gilpin, for its frequent mist, fog, and haze produced harmonizing visual effects (Cumberland 1:11). The time of preference for viewing picturesque landscape was

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23 Price does not dwell on the details of compositional arrangement in the way that Gilpin does, but he similarly emphasizes the creation of unity from a combination of parts. Because Price is particularly interested in landscape gardening, he emphasizes how an understanding of the rules of painting can help individuals create proper compositions in their own gardens. A person with such knowledge will be "better qualified to arrange, certainly, to enjoy, his own and every scenery" (Essays 1:ix.).
twilight; as Price said, twilight "connects what was before scattered" and "fills up staring, meagre vacancies" (1:153). By spreading a dominant tone (often referred to as a "gleam") across the scene, the light of sunset harmonized a composition in painterly fashion.24

A useful summary of picturesque compositional principles appears in Knight's didactic poem The Landscape, which he addressed to Price. Although Knight objected to Price's placement of the picturesque as a separate term between the beautiful and the sublime, he shares many of Price's views on composition. Knight identifies the "one principle" of scenic composition as "just congruity of parts combined / To please the sense, and satisfy the mind" (39-40). In an elaboration on this admonition, he emphasizes the compositional work of the perceiving mind:

The composition rang'd in order true,  
Brings every object fairly to the view;  
And, as the field of vision is confin'd,  
Shews all its parts collected to the mind. (253-56)

In this miniature lesson in composition, we find the parts arranged in order (suggesting Gilpin's "screens" or "distances"), the vista "confin'd" by boundaries that prevent overwhelming sublimity, and the perceiving subject engaging in an act of composition by collecting the parts "to the

24Mary Robbins Duncan has conducted a thorough investigation of twilight and its role in picturesque aesthetics in an unpublished dissertation entitled "That Uncertain Heaven"; Twilight Settings in Eighteenth-Century and Romantic Literature" (1983). She discusses how both Gilpin and Price see the harmonizing role played by such lighting effects.
mind." Knight's description of a scene as a mental "collection" of parts parallels Coleridge's claim that art helps viewers "subjugate" nature's forms to the "Intellec & voluntary memory" (CN 1:1489). Yet this intellectualization of nature's forms, for both Knight and Coleridge, simultaneously "please[s] the sense," which is an affective response--albeit a restrained one. The rules of art, it seems, help the viewer to respond with both thought and feeling.

The formal composition described here by Knight sounds almost like a scene reflected in a Claude glass, the ultimate compositional aid, which "collected" the parts of the landscape within a bounded space. The Claude glass, in fact, serves as the perfect point of entry into a discussion of Coleridgean composition, the most important of his picturesque criteria. Not only was Coleridge familiar with the Claude glass, but he undoubtedly saw it as a powerful metaphor for the imaginative mind in the act of composition. He wrote a note to himself while in Germany in 1799 to get a "Claude Lorraine & the coloured glasses" for his friend Greenough (CN 1:452) and also recorded in 1803 some experiments he made looking through a pair of colored spectacles (one lens red, one yellow). These spectacles (like the ones he mentions with the Claude glass in the 1799 entry) were designed to simulate the Claude class effect, coloring the landscape in "painterly" fashion without forcing the tourist
to bother with a mirror-image. Coleridge's interest in these devices is symptomatic of a broader fascination with visual effects, not only the ones produced by nature's twilight or mist but also those generated by mechanical apparatus. On the 1803 Scotland tour, for instance, Coleridge records a walk to "Barrancluch/a wild Terrace Garden." After briefly commenting on the views, he adds "N.B. The mirror of Steel placed/at the Top of the Room opposite the window that looks out on that vast waterfall with all its Rocks & Trees" (CN 1:1453). Although Dorothy also describes the scene, she fails to mention this visual detail which caught Coleridge's attention—a reflective device that (at least somewhat like a Claude glass) produced a "picture" with unique visual effects.

Even more reminiscent of the Claude glass is an allusion Coleridge makes in a 1795 letter to George Dyer. Discussing the pleasures of rural beauty and the moral effect such pleasures give, he tells Dyer that these divine images are "miniatured on the mind of the beholder, as a Landscape on a Convex Mirror" (CL 1:154). Although the mind may initially appear passive in this remark, the "Convex Mirror" to which he alludes—the Claude glass—both composes and colors

25Gilpin explains that the lenses of these glasses can "give the objects of nature a soft, mellow tinge" and also "give a greater depth to the shades; by which the effect is shown with more force." Despite their ability to create these effects, Gilpin does not advocating using these glasses, arguing that nature creates better effects "than any, the optician can furnish" (Highlands 1:124).
the scene it reflects, modifying and idealizing the contents. The Claude glass accurately "mirrors" the Coleridgean imaginative mind: it composes a whole out of component parts (as in Knight's "parts collected to the mind") both by arranging the components in relation to each other and by adding a "coloring" that modifies the scene and helps unify the composition.26

Coleridge directly relates the coloring and composing of landscape to the poetic imagination in the well-known opening to chapter 14 of the *Biographia*, where he writes of his poetic collaboration with Wordsworth:

... our conversations turned frequently on the two cardinal points of poetry, the power of exciting the sympathy of the reader by a faithful adherence to the truth of nature, and the power of giving the interest of novelty by the modifying colours of imagination. The sudden charm, which accidents of light and shade, which moon-light or sun-set diffused over a known and familiar landscape, appeared to present the practicability of combining both. These are the poetry of nature. (BL 2:5)

Coleridge's rhetoric seems to emerge almost directly from the language of picturesque guidebooks; the comments on lighting effects could easily have been made by Price or Gilpin. By comparing the poet's imagination to the gleams of sunset and moonlight, he likens the poet to a picturesque composer, who understood how much a scene could be altered

26Malcolm Andrews briefly mentions this connection between the Claude glass and the Coleridgean imagination, citing the letter to George Dyer, in his 1989 *The Search for the Picturesque: Landscape Aesthetics and Tourism in Britain, 1760-1800*. 
by the "novelty" of an unusual lighting effect. 27

Coleridge's "colouring of the imagination" and the "coloring" of the Claude glass are usefully juxtaposed, for the "coloring" metaphor points to the shared context of aesthetic response. The Claude glass, in fact, produces an effect similar to the one Coleridge and Wordsworth wanted from poetry, for it accurately mirrors the "truth of nature" (neither omitting or adding elements to a scene) while using the tint of the glass to produce a sense of "novelty." The reader is "charmed" by this coloring, says Coleridge, a word frequently used to describe the effect of a picturesque scene on the tourist. By calling the picturesquely colored landscape the "poetry of nature," he underscores the fact that both poetry and painting exist as unified, structured compositions. His metaphor also echoes the picturesque tendency to entangle artforms--even if only in the language used to describe them.

A scene's composition, of course, depends on more than just "coloring," for even lighting effects cannot unite a composition in which the parts fail to relate to each other or come together in a unified whole. Coleridge was especially preoccupied with how the parts of a composition related to each other, a point which even a cursory look at

27 In the process of tracing the use of twilight settings in eighteenth-century and romantic poetry, Mary Robbins Duncan also notes the similarity between the unifying effect of twilight and the coloring of the Coleridgean imagination (132-33).
his notebook descriptions will confirm. He stresses the part/whole relationship in one of his most extensive discussions of the picturesque, a notebook entry for 14 April 1804, written while he was on a ship en route to Malta. To understand this entry, however, we should see it in its context—as the culmination of a period of intense landscape travel and notebook description (the subject I explore in chapter 3). The Malta trip brought to a close a four-year phase in his life during which he visited the Lake District for the first time and then took up residence there. On his way to Malta, Coleridge analyzes not a picturesque landscape, however, but the "picturesque effect of a Ship." As he enumerates (in this lengthy entry) the seven elements or factors which contribute to the ship’s picturesque appearance, he underscores the centrality of compositional principles to picturesque aesthetics.

Three of the seven points of this list focus on the sense of tension—yet the ultimate balance—between the horizontal and vertical dimensions of the ship; the list begins with the phrase "Its height upon a flat surface," and then continues by citing examples of proportion and balance. The remaining points emphasize how a variety of parts come together to form a harmonious whole. The semicircular hull resembles the billowing sails (therefore creating unity), yet variety arises from the "permanence of the one & the contingency of the other." The analysis culminates in a
discussion of the "determinateness" of the edge lines of the sails, which "weaken[s] the sensuous beauty" and "raises it to the picturesque, giving the whole a greater facility of connecting itself with other Ships as Forms, & of forming an interesting part of a common whole" (CN 2:2012). This culminating remark, in addition to stressing composition, reinforces the idea that beauty partakes of the "sensuous" while the picturesque results from a more intellectualized response to a scene—a response requiring the mental "connecting" work of composition.

Using these observations, Coleridge draws the following conclusions about the picturesque:

nothing more administers to the Picturesque than this phantom of complete visual wholeness in an object, which visually does not form a whole, by the influence ab intra of the sense of its perfect Intellectual Beauty or Wholeness. (CN 2:2012)

In this 1804 definition, Coleridge can already be seen associating the picturesque with an effect of wholeness which is not seen but "felt"—the point he would make years later in the definition recalled by Allsop. At this point he calls it a "phantom of complete visual wholeness"—a spectral presence partly created by the perceiving subject’s unifying vision.\(^2\)

\(^2\)Raimonda Modiano rightly observes that in this long journal entry we find the essence of Coleridge’s distinction between the picturesque and the beautiful. He distinguishes between them, says Modiano, "depending on whether particular objects by themselves form a visual whole, or whether they merely hint at the presence of such a whole by combining harmoniously with one another" (24).
ject more "sensuously beautiful"; when the composing mind must assemble the parts or fill in the gaps to complete a whole the aesthetic experience becomes picturesque. Cole-
ridge may have Uvedale Price in mind, who similarly observes in his essay "On the Picturesque" that the imagination can work from "hints" to create "beauties which have no exist-
tence." Like Coleridge, Price even refers to these "beau-
ties" as "phantoms" (1:152). The imagination functions in this sense like twilight, which Price says "fills up star-
ing, meagre vacancies" (1:153).

To the end of his discussion of the "picturesque effects of the ship," Coleridge adds this important coda:

To all this must be added the Lights & Shades . . . whatever effect distance, air tints, reflected Light, and the feeling connected with the Object (for all Pas-
son unifies as it were by natural Fusion) have in bringing out, and in melting down, differences & con-
trast, accordingly as the mind finds it necessary to the completion of the idea of Beauty, to prevent sameness or discrepancy.

Again Coleridge echoes conventional attitudes about the "harmonizing tint" (as Gilpin called it) of picturesque composition. But to this list of lighting effects Coleridge adds the unifying effect of "passion," almost as though it were another atmospheric condition. The perceiving sub-
ject's passion "colors" the scene much in the same way that Coleridge said the "colouring of the imagination" allowed the poet to transform nature while still adhering to its
Equal striking in this coda to the description of the ship is Coleridge's statement that passion has the effect of "bringing out, and in melting down, differences & contrast," for the language recalls his well-known discussion in the *Biographia* of the primary and secondary imagination. His statement that the secondary imagination "dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to recreate" and that it "struggles to idealize and to unify" (*BL* 1:304) seems to imitate his own rhetoric on the picturesque effects of the ship. Although his definition of the imagination is obviously the product of his extensive reading in philosophy and aesthetics, it is hardly surprising to see him describe the imagination and the picturesque in similar ways. Coleridge's remarks on the subject all affirm that picturesque scene-making *is* an imaginative act, not a tyrannical set of rules to inhibit the imagination, as some critics claim. What he found in picturesque aesthetics was a

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29 As early as 1796, in a letter to John Thelwell, Coleridge had referred to his passion as a kind of "coloring". Describing the unity of thought and feeling in his poetry, he told Thelwell that his poetry had "a general hue of tenderness, or Passion, over it," adding that "My philosophical opinions are blended with, or deduced from, my feeling" (*CL* 1:279).

30 For an enumeration of probable sources (and a list of secondary studies on the Coleridgean imagination) see Engell and Bate's notes to chapter 13 of the *Biographia* (*BL* 1:304-305). Notable contributors to Coleridge's thinking on the subject included Locke, Vives, Tetens, Kant, Schelling, Schiller, and Leibniz.
concrete example of his emerging ideas about the imagination. The unsophisticated tourist may have annoyed him, but he saw that in the right hands the picturesque— as a tool— could enhance aesthetic pleasure. It empowered viewers to think of themselves as collaborators and paid tribute to his belief that every act of perception is imaginative, for it composes and unifies otherwise fragmentary data.

We have even more reason to associate the picturesque with the Coleridgean imagination if we look again at the picturesque as a manifestation of polarity. As Owen Barfield states, "the apprehension of polarity is itself the basic act of imagination" (36). The picturesque reconciled opposing aesthetic dimensions by an act of imagination, and Coleridge called imagination itself a "reconciling and mediatory power" ("Statesman's Manual" 29). Elsewhere in the "Statesman's Manual" he calls the imagination a "completing power" (69), which provides an interesting gloss to his description of the picturesque effects of the ship. There he said the picturesque produced a "phantom of complete visual wholeness"—a visually incomplete scene. Such a scene calls forth the "completing" power of the imagination to "realize" the scene's latent wholeness. Since Coleridge

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31 In his "Essay on the Picturesque" Price uses language very similar to Coleridge's on the imagination, saying that when natural objects are brought together within the boundaries of a painted canvas, the eye "learns how to separate, to select, and combine" (Essays 1:5).
discusses the picturesque and the imagination in such similar ways, it is impossible to accept the conclusion that he would have dismissed the picturesque as unimaginative.

Thus far I have discussed the Coleridgean picturesque almost exclusively as a visual phenomenon. Before going on to examine its manifestations in his work, however, we must also understand how Coleridge translated this concept into verbal terms. Since his definition was built upon abstract principles (part/whole relationships, felt wholeness) application to other artforms was possible, even as Price had shown in defining "picturesque music." When Coleridge called poetry "picturesque," which he did on several occasions, he had in mind a work built on many of the same principles as a picturesque scene, but not necessarily a poem like the descriptive verse of the eighteenth-century topographical tradition.

Coleridge actually denounced minute descriptive detail in poetry on several occasions, arguing that it inhibited the audience's re-creation of the "picture." In the *Biographia* he criticized Wordsworth's poetry for a "laborious minuteness and fidelity in the representation of objects" (*BL* 2:126) and declares that "It must be some strong motive . . . which would induce me to describe in a number of verses what a draftsman could present to the eye with incomparably greater satisfaction by half a dozen strokes of his pencil" (*BL* 2:127). He goes on to quote Milton's description of the
arching fig-tree branches in *Paradise Lost* (an almost "picturesque" bower) and then observes: "This is creation rather than painting, or if painting, yet such, and with such co-presence of the whole picture flash’d at once upon the eye, as the sun paints in a camera obscura" (*BL* 2:128). Not only does he clearly show what the poet must do—create a unified picture in the mirror of the mind—but he uses an optical metaphor to illustrate the point, another example of his fascination with visual effects.\(^{32}\)

He explains his point about poetic "painting" even more clearly in his lecture on *The Tempest*, in which he states that the "picturesque power of Shakespeare" did not consist of poetry "so dutchified by minute touches that the reader naturally asked why words not painting were used." He insists that "the power of Poetry is by a single word to produce that energy in the mind as compells the imagination to produce the picture" (*LOL* 1:362). As in Coleridge's discussions of the visual picturesque, he maintains that data (whether visual or verbal) must compel the mind to an imaginative act of creation. In a poem, however, the data comes sequentially to the mind over a longer period of time than in a landscape, which problematizes the production of a unified image. Yet truly effective poetry, Coleridge ar-

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\(^{32}\)William Mason, eighteenth-century poet and author of *The English Garden*, once referred to the Claude glass as "perhaps the best and most convenient substitute for a Camera Obscura, of anything that has hitherto been invented" (qtd. in Andrews 69).
gue, overcomes this barrier, for the true poet "with more than the power of the painter... gives us the liveliest image of succession with the feeling of simultaneousness" (BL 2:25) and uses images that reduce "multitude to unity, or succession to an instant" (BL 2:23). Such a picturesque poem allows the reader to spatialize the temporal, thereby composing a unified image.  

These poems of Coleridge which compel the reader to "paint" a picturesque composition are the subject of the following chapter. I will explore how certain poems, primarily those known as the "conversation poems," engage the reader in the same way a landscape did a picturesque "composer." The chapter will focus on poems written between 1796 and 1798, during which time Coleridge engaged the picturesque primarily in poetic terms. My discussion will also further explore the notion that the picturesque scene resembles what contemporary critics would call a "readerly" text, and that the way a reader negotiates these picturesque poems corroborates the claims of certain reader-response critics.

When Coleridge's greatest poetic phase ended, his interest in the picturesque was diverted to the descriptive

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33 Roy Park, in his essay on the ut pictura poesis tradition in the nineteenth century, points out that the word "picturesque" had "honorific" implications when seen in the context of the painting/sculpture dichotomy, but "pejorative" connotations when applied to the painting/poetry dichotomy. He says that for Coleridge, the "honorific" sense of the picturesque referred to something ideal and symbolic, beyond "mere particularity" (160-61)
prose of his notebooks. Between 1798 and 1804, from his first "tour" of Germany until his extended sojourn in Malta, he filled notebooks with copious descriptions (often accompanied by diagrams) of the landscapes he encountered. In these descriptions we find a picturesque turned inward; this private compositional activity, as seen in the notebooks, is the subject of my third chapter. As Coleridge began learning more about the visual arts (a process which began in 1803), he incorporated painting into his understanding of "picture-making." In chapter four I focus on the period from 1804 to 1807, when Coleridge (with the help of Beaumont and Allston) applied his analytical skills to painted scenes, not just those found in nature. To conclude, I examine two special poems which make quintessential statements on the picturesque. These "ekphrastic" poems--"The Picture" and "The Garden of Bocaccio"--deliberately entangle artforms by making a painting the subject of poetry. The sequence of chapters, then, can be likened to a series of Gilpinesque "screens" or "planes" which recede chronologically from foreground to middle-ground to distance, each containing its own distinct picturesque elements. The reading of them, however, should enable the reader--out of the various elements--to compose a unified impression of the Coleridgean picturesque.
A landscape scene or a work of art, if it is to be defined as picturesque, should produce a certain kind of effect on the viewer. As Coleridge and the picturesque aestheticians observed, the differing effects produced on the audience help distinguish the picturesque from the sublime or the beautiful. Sublimity’s evocation of awe, wonder, fear, and exhilaration differs markedly from the picturesque’s creation of a pleasurable intellectual curiosity played out in a sphere of relative safety. Sublimity’s tendency to overwhelm the perceiving subject (Coleridge’s "boundless or endless allness") contrasts sharply with the picturesque’s invitation to the audience to participate actively in the composing process. These two contrasting effects can be produced not only in a landscape viewer but in a reader of poetic texts as well. In Coleridge’s poetry, the reader can find examples of both aesthetic experiences, for the sublime and the picturesque serve as models for two contrasting bodies of Coleridgean verse.

To locate the purest manifestations of the picturesque in Coleridge’s poetry, we must deflect our vision from his best-known works, often referred to as the "mystery poems,"
and look instead at the group of poems loosely organized under the heading "conversation poems." The mystery poems--The Rime of the Ancient Mariner, "Kubla Khan," and "Christabel"--are aesthetically allied with the sublime. These poems employ images of vastness and grandeur (the Mariner's "wide, wide sea" and the dreaming Coleridge's "sunny pleasure domes with caves of ice") and induce feelings of uncertainty, wonder, or terror. They tend to set up barriers for the reader which inhibit easy entry into the text. Instead of being composed within a bounded space, "Christabel" and "Kubla Khan" defy boundaries by their fragmentary nature and seeming lack of structure. Ancient Mariner, although it employs a narrative "framing device," gives the reader a puzzling combination of verse and gloss, or marginal commentary, emphasizing throughout the stark images of the vast, open sea and the terrifying nature of the Mariner's experience. Similar emotions are evoked by the demonic Geraldine and even by the semi-divine poet figure in "Kubla Khan," from whom we are asked to avert our eyes in "holy dread." ¹

These mystery poems, although they are certainly the ones for which Coleridge is best known, make up a numerical-

¹G. M. Harper similarly claims that in the mystery poems, "the spellbound reader sees visions and hears music which float in from a magic realm and float out again into unfathomable space" (189), stressing the reader's passive, trance-like participation in the poem and also the unbounded sense of space.
ly small part of his total poetic output. As Walter Jackson Bate observes, these poems "are not at all in the mode or style in which he habitually wrote verse" (41). Neither do the mystery poems constitute a unified phase in his poetic career, for Coleridge wrote them while simultaneously producing verse of a totally different character. These other poems, I believe, are indebted in part to the cultural fascination with landscape viewing, "picturicity," and the audience's role in the composing process; they are the verbal analogue to the picturesque landscape, even as the mystery poems are the poetic counterpart of the visual sublimity of an Alpine landscape or a painting by Salvator Rosa, John Martin, or J. M. W. Turner. Both aesthetic experiences interested Coleridge, and the poems play out a tension between his attraction to sublime grandeur (which he often associates with truly "great" poetry) and his interest in the security of a quieter, more structured, interactive experience, as found both in picturesque landscape and the conversation poem.

Although picturesque aesthetics provides a significant part of the context from which these poems emerge, it obviously is not the only context. Coleridge had a long tradition of meditative, topographical verse upon which to draw, characterized by poems such as John Dyer's "Grongar Hill" and William Cowper's "The Task." While drawing upon this tradition, Coleridge also strove to go beyond what he felt
was sometimes mere "copying" of the landscape—a devotion to detail for the sake of detail. As Patricia Ball observes, Coleridge’s "impassioned perception involv[ed] the union of subject and object" in a way that surpassed "the careful eye of the topographical observer" (7). Coleridge criticized the poetry of Erasmus Darwin, for instance, for being merely a "succession of Landscapes or Paintings" which "arrests the attention too often" and "makes the great little" (CN 1: 132). The poet, Coleridge felt, must contribute something to the landscape scene so that its poetic rendering rises above mere verbal copying.

Since the poet, then, must actively transform the raw data of visual materials, the poet’s activity parallels that of the picturesque observer, who contributes the feeling of "wholeness" which unifies a scene, and who may even "improve" the landscape by drawing it in altered form. The picturesque seems an important context for these poems in two other ways as well. First, the picturesque observer’s status as "active composer" underlies Coleridge’s propensity for inscribing viewers into the conversation poems; their presence foregrounds the subject’s contribution to the landscape. Second, the impulse to turn landscapes into framed, composed pictures provides a structural model for Coleridge, for the conversation poems tend to frame one element within another, creating a poetic space that can be diagrammed like the planes of a picture. When Carl Woodring asserts that
Coleridge's "late appraisals of the picturesque are best understood from reiterated insistence that his own poetry is not pictorial but musical" (Nature 52), he fails to notice (as perhaps did Coleridge himself) that the conversation poems have picturesque qualities which go beyond the documentation of pictorial detail.

The conversation poems, however, must be understood as the high point in a stylistic evolution of Coleridge's poetic encounters with the landscape. His poetry seems, in fact, to mirror the gradual movement of the picturesque itself from a "picturesque-classical" style (in which ruined Greek temples and mythological figures would appear in the landscape) to a "picturesque-genre" or "picturesque-romantic" style more focused on the roughness and variety of the landscape itself, populated (if at all) by a rustic peasant rather than a Greek goddess. In the same way that picturesque gardens, as Hunt says, experienced "a switch in emphasis from what [was] there to be read to the reader's act of reading" (134), so do Coleridge's poems move away from the emblematic presentations of scenes toward a fascination with a viewer's reading of those scenes. To illustrate the early stage of this development, I will look briefly at two poems

2Malcolm Andrews points out how the gradual loss of the "classical" element of the picturesque can be seen even in Gilpin's travel books. He notes how the 1789 edition of the 1782 Wye tour volume included loose translations of the Latin quotations in the original. Presumably the emerging audience for the picturesque did not necessarily read Latin or understand the allusions (11).
from Coleridge's 1796 *Poems on Various Subjects*--"Lines: On an Autumnal Evening" and "To the Author of Poems." They show, in embryonic form, an interest in picturesque "scene-painting"; his rhetorical and visual models, however, are eighteenth-century classical ones: not only Pope's couplets but his Twickenham garden as well.

Coleridge felt compelled to apologize for the overblown rhetoric and the derivative nature of some of his early poems when he wrote the preface to the second edition of his *Poems* in 1797 (Magnuson 137), and he no doubt had in mind poems like "Autumnal Evening." Still, despite its faults, the poem illustrates Coleridge's early "classical picturesqueness" and introduces certain principles of scene-making that recur even as his style matures. The poem begins and ends with an autumnal evening scene, but the body of the poem consists of an imagined, mythologized encounter between the young poet and a goddess-like Maid. He invokes a "Sorceress" to help him conjure up this ideal Maid whom he first pursues and then encounters in a highly classicized landscape (reminiscent of paintings by Claude) which he eventually conflates with the "native brook" of his own childhood. As he "trace[s] her footsteps on the accustom'd lawn" he enacts a drama fit for an emblematic garden, finally wishing that (Proteus-like) he could change himself into a protective "flower-entangled Arbour."

The mythological drama of "Autumnal Evening" is set on
a stage continually "colored" by the "gleams" of twilight, sunrise, and moonlight, conditions which—according to both Gilpin and Coleridge—produce a certain picturesque "coloring."3 This atmospheric "coloring," as I have suggested above, may also be associated with Coleridge's "coloring of the imagination." As if to illustrate this point, Coleridge joins one of his descriptions of the "gleam" to a statement about the imaginative act. His invocation to the Sorceress to "aid the Poet's dream" completes the rhymed couplet that began by noting the sunset's "deeper gleam" (13-14), which explicitly connects twilight coloring with the poetic imagination. This metaphorical use of "imaginative" twilight coloring recurs in other landscape poems from the years that follow, even though these poems have significant stylistic differences.

As "Autumnal Evening" concludes, Coleridge acknowledges that he has no more direct visual contact with this remembered scene from childhood, but that it remains as an imaginatively composed scene:

No more shall deck your pensive Pleasures sweet
With wreaths of sober hue my evening seat.
Yet dear to Fancy's eye your varied scene
Of wood, hill, dale, and sparkling brook between!
(95-98)

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3Not unique to Gilpin or Coleridge, this interest in the unifying "gleam" of twilight, as Mary Robbins Duncan points out, has a long tradition in eighteenth-century landscape poetry; William Bowles, for instance, describes the "transient gleam" of sunset in his sonnet "At Tynemouth Priory" (Duncan 94-95)
He remembers this brief, "varied" picturesque landscape as if seen from his "evening seat," like one placed in a landscape garden to capitalize on the sunset prospect. The poem's coda reinforces the scene-making role of the poet:

    Scenes of my Hope! the aching eye ye leave
    Like yon bright hues that paint the clouds of eve!
    Tearful and saddening with the sadden'd blaze
    Mine eye the gleam pursues with wistful gaze:
    Sees shades on shades with deeper tint impend
    Till chill and damp the moonless night descend.
(101-106)

Here the poet acknowledges that he has been painting "scenes" via memory and imagination, a point reinforced by the "paint" metaphor which describes the setting sun's effect on the cloud. These scenes abandon an "aching eye" which feels the pain of pleasures lost, but which also "aches" from the mental exertion of imaginative composition. We have a hint in the final three lines that Coleridge intends to produce more poetic "scenes," for as the shades of the setting sun bring on a "deeper tint," the poet reports that his "eye the gleam pursues with wistful gaze." Not simply a love for the effects of sunlight on clouds, this wistful pursuit of the recurrent "gleam" connotes a dedication to the "coloring of the imagination" Coleridge will pursue as a poet.4

4Peter Louis Valenti, in an unpublished dissertation (1974) on the picturesque aspects of the early poetry of Wordsworth and Coleridge, discusses the imaginative quality of the "gleams" in "Autumnal Evening" and several other early poems, including "Song of the Pixies." Valenti's overall purpose is to relate the picturesque elements of this poetry to the philosophy of associationism.
Stylistically, "Autumnal Evening" is far removed from the conversation poems. Begun in 1792 and revised a year later, the poem reveals the 20-year-old Coleridge struggling to develop a poetic voice, appropriating conventional poetic ideas about the landscape, and ultimately writing lines which he admits are derivative. Nevertheless, he does acknowledge the landscape as an appropriate subject for poetic exploration. He shows similar inclinations in another poem from the 1796 volume, a poem which in some ways is not about the landscape at all, yet which uses landscape metaphorically to contrast sublime poetry with more "modest" verse--verse that I would call picturesque. In this work, "To the Author of Poems," he again uses "picturesque-classical" images of landscape but adds to it the important Pricean idea that this modest, picturesque verse is an intermediate, middle-ground aesthetic creation.

"To the Author of Poems," a tribute to Coleridge's friend and publisher Joseph Cottle, asserts that Cottle progressed from first writing modest verse to later producing occasional flashes of poetic sublimity. Coleridge maps Cottle's career as a climb up the mythological "Poetic mount," the pinnacle of which represents the sublime. Halfway up the mount, he finds the "modest" verse in a metaphorical place which he describes in remarkably picturesque terms. Although Coleridge locates this picturesque topos beneath the sublime summit, thereby indicating its inferior-
ity, he simultaneously valorizes the picturesque in ways which subvert its subordination to the sublime. In this way, the poem expresses an appreciation for the picturesque even stronger than what Coleridge might be willing to acknowledge.

Although Coleridge writes this poem eight years before making his notebook assertion that art allows us to "subjugate" the forms of nature "to our Intellect & voluntary memory" (CN 1:1489), he makes a similar assertion about the effect of Cottle's verse in the poem's opening lines, claiming that Cottle's verse "Tunes to smooth melody unconquer'd sense." Raw sensation, he asserts, must be mentally conquered and transformed imaginatively into a poetic melody, a skill for which Cottle is admired. Metaphorically, Coleridge describes Cottle's poetic imagination in terms of a picturesque scene:

For, like that nameless Rivulet stealing by,
Your modest verse to musing Quiet dear
Is rich with tints heaven-borrow'd: the charm'd eye
Shall gaze undazzled there, and love the soften'd sky.
(6-9)

Cottle's modest verse, like a quiet rivulet, only "charms" the eye with rich tints of reflected light--an effect of picturesque curiosity--rather than dazzling the eye with flashes of midday sun (the kind of bright light always associated, for instance, with the Ancient Mariner's suffering). The imaginative poet in his modest verse not only mirrors the world but also softens its appearance, in the same way
that an artist would "borrow" tints from the Claude glass to idealize and improve the landscape.

Despite Coleridge's praise for this imaginative verse, his purpose is to endorse a "higher" kind of poetry, a sublime verse that resides higher up the "poetic Mount."

Still, as he maps the ascent up the mount, he pauses to relish an intermediate location between "Oblivion's fount" at the base and the "Mountain's lofty-frowning brow" (16). This place he calls a meadow of "mildest charm" (18), again using the word he had applied to Cottle's verse--"charm"--to describe the effect created by the picturesque. The viewer's mind, rather than being overwhelmed by sublimity, actively engages the scene and becomes "charmed" by its formal properties and intricacy. Coleridge also describes this meadow as containing "bowers" of jasmin and an "unceasing rill," two components commonly found in picturesque scenes. Cottle is depicted "collecting flowers / Of sober tint" (the imaginative coloring) from the meadow. These flowers, metaphors for individual images and ideas, are collected by Cottle (as an artist might collect visual fragments in brief sketches) to be transformed into a poetic whole. Coleridge's description--itself a collection of visual fragments--paints a surprisingly positive picture of an ostensibly inferior "stopping-place" en route to the pinnacle of poetic achievement.

When Coleridge reaches the sublime peak, he duly
praises Cottle's sublime poetic achievements, but his tone also suggests an ambivalence toward sublime poetry. He encourages Cottle to "Still soar... those richer views among" (37)--as Cottle had done in his "Monody on John Henderson"--saying that even though "Virtue and Truth shall love your gentler song... Poesy demands th' impassion'd theme" (39-40). But even as Coleridge is equating sublimity with the pinnacle of poetic achievement, he draws attention to the sublime Mount's "alienating" qualities. The top of the peak is described as the "Mountain's lofty-frowning brow" (16) and "the cloud-climb'd rock, sublime and vast, / That like some giant king o'er-glooms the hill" (19-20). The "frown" and "gloom"--while certainly characteristic of the sublime--make the mountain's peak seem like an inhospitable place on which to focus one's poetic aspirations. At the same time, his positive description of the picturesque mead problematizes his overt subordination of it to the sublime. In both ways, he makes the picturesque more appealing than he overtly acknowledges.

These ambivalent feelings about the sublime and picturesque surface once again in the poem's final image, an extended mythological allusion which shows the poem's indebtedness to a rather classical, emblematic picturesque:

Waked by Heaven's silent dews at Eve's mild gleam
What balmy sweets Pomona breathes around!
But if the vexed air rush a stormy stream
Or Autumn's shrill gust moan in plaintive sound,
With fruits and flowers she loads the tempest-honor'd ground. (37-45)
In a metaphorical shift from the poetic mount to the orchard of Pomona (Roman goddess of fruits and orchard-tending), Coleridge likens the sublime to a violent storm and the picturesque to a fragrant, breath-like breeze. The sublime "shrill gust" may litter the ground with fruit from the trees of Pomona, but the fruit seems to have ripened in the "mild gleam" of a picturesque evening, where "silent dews" unleash the fruit's sweet fragrance. Overtly, Coleridge again endorses sublimity, depicting its violent gusts as the consummiate aesthetic power. Once again, however, sublimity seems inhospitable, this time in its destructive severing of the fruits from the trees, whereas the picturesque depiction of a perfumed, twilight garden seems gently appealing. His attempts to celebrate the sublime are compromised by the alluring nature of his picturesque descriptions. The poem plays out a tension which I believe Coleridge felt concerning the picturesque: though he aspired to the heights of poetic greatness, he found himself attracted to an aesthetic realm which lay somewhere beneath that summit--at least in terms of its aesthetic reputation.

In his critique of Cottle, Coleridge seems to be commenting not only on his publisher's poetic output and aspirations, but also on his own, indicating that he has the same ambivalent feelings about the relative merits of his own sublime and picturesque verse. When Coleridge sent a copy of the 1796 Poems to John Thelwell, he said in an ac-
companying letter, "I build all my poetic pretensions upon the Religious Musings" (CL 1:205), a grand, apocalyptic work of Miltonic cadence and scope which concluded the volume, as if to illustrate the sublime heights to which he was capable of soaring. He seemed convinced that the truly great poem must reach for the sublime, but a different impulse pulled him simultaneously in another direction--toward a quieter, more carefully composed scene in which the roving eye was free to explore. These conflicting impulses prompted the production of two different kinds of verse. Ironically, however, as the "modest" verse matured it began to take on a poetic power equal to that of his sublime poetry. Its power, though, lay in its ability to present the "impassion'd theme" not by making rhetorical flourishes but by building a curious, pictorial form and enticing the reader to explore it.

We see hints of this more mature picturesque style in a poem that Coleridge wrote about the same time as his tribute to Cottle--"Reflections on Having Left a Place of Retirement." Coleridge first published "Reflections" in the Monthly Magazine of October 1796 and then included it in the
second edition of *Poems* in 1797. This overtly political poem lacks the "picturesque-classical" images of the other two poems, but it reveals a certain classicism in its argument and oratorical stance. To the reprinted 1797 version Coleridge added the Horatian epigraph, *sermoni propriora,* a designation which, as Paul Magnuson observes, was "often used to identify semi-prosaic poems about public issues" (21). The poem's theme—"the debate between activity and retirement," as John Gutteridge calls it—was also as old as Horace (158). Yet despite the political nature of the poem, Coleridge focuses equal attention on the making of landscape pictures (particularly in the central stanza) and on the value of such composition. His emphasis on the relation of parts to whole in the landscape—and on the act of viewing it—epitomize his compositional understanding of the picturesque as it is revealed throughout the conversation poems.

The poem, as the title suggests, recalls the decision Coleridge made to leave the "retirement" of secluded Clevedon and re-enter the "active life" of politics and journalism, which required a move to Bristol. There he could in-

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5 Most critics seem to agree with E. H. Coleridge (editor of the definitive edition of Coleridge's poetry) that "Reflections" was written in 1795 (shortly after leaving Clevedon), which would align it chronologically with the poem to Cottle. Gutteridge, however, believes the poem dates from 1796 and reflects back on an event from a year before (158). Stylistically, it seems more like the other poems of 1796 and 1797.

6 This Horatian epigraph was a change from the original, "A poem which affects not to be poetry."
volve himself in public debate and also be near Cottle, who would print his newly-conceived periodical The Watchman. He expresses guilt about having hidden himself away in retirement and indulged in pleasing landscapes while others fought political battles. As he reflects later upon the decision he made, he imaginatively conjures up vivid pictures of the landscape he had to leave, and his obvious fondness for these scenes only heightens the sense of sacrifice which the decision required. We hear the call of duty but simultaneously see the allure of a pleasant scene; the poem "combine[s]," as Michael G. Cooke states, "the lover of pastoral retirement and the champion of high, urgent causes, what is 'quiet' and what is 'sublime'" (181).

The heart of Coleridge's remembered image or "reflection" is a description of his first climb from the "low Dell up the stony Mount" (27), at the top of which he sees a rough, mixed, and varied scene, and declares:

Oh! what a goodly scene! Here the bleak mount,  
The bare bleak mountain speckled thin with sheep;  
Grey clouds, that shadowing spot the sunny fields;  
And river, now with bushy rocks o'er-brow'd,  
Now winding bright and full, with naked banks;  
And seats, and lawns, the Abbey and the wood,  
And cots, and hamlets, and faint city-spire;  
The Channel there, the Islands and white sails,  
Dim coasts, and cloud-like hills, and shoreless Ocean--  
It seem'd like Omnipresence! God, methought,  
Had built him there a Temple: the whole World

7In a sense, Coleridge's guilt is a recognition of the accusation leveled against the picturesque by many new historicists—that concentration on the purely visual elements of the landscape ignores its political dimension and tries to dwell in an untenable realm of pure aesthetics.
Seem'd imag'd in its vast circumference:
No wish profan'd my overwhelmed heart.
Blest hour! It was a luxury,—to be! (29-42)

This lengthy description, perhaps moreso than in any other Coleridge poem, demonstrates the picturesque viewer engaged in the act of composing the landscape. He verbally "points" to one location and then another by italicizing the words "here" and "there." Using phrases strung together with repeated "ands," he records the observer's process of itemizing various parts of the composition. The most telling marker of his emphasis on the act of viewing is his shift from "here" and "there" in describing the scene to the use of "now"—a shift from spatial to temporal designation. In claiming that the winding river ("winding" in the way so admired by Gilpin) is "now with bushy rocks o'erbrow'd, /
"Now winding bright and full," he distinguishes between different "moments" in his temporal viewing sequence. Even though the eye "feels" a wholeness in a complex, picturesque scene, the viewing of it requires a temporal movement of the eye as it focuses consecutively on different component parts, while still "seeing" all of it simultaneously. Because the landscape presents data which must be negotiated sequentially but felt as a "whole," it operates somewhat like the language of a good poet, who Coleridge said "gives us the liveliest images of succession with the feeling of simultaneousness" (BL 2:25).

The memory-image of this scene nearly overwhelms Cole-
ridge, leading him to an exclamation which sounds more like a sublime than a picturesque reaction, for it called to his mind the grandeur of God's "Omnipresence." He sees the landscape, in a theological sense, as God's "Temple," yet he follows that observation by saying, "the whole World / Seem'd imag'd in its vast circumference" (39-40), which sounds more like an aesthetic explanation (with a suggestion of an image mirrored in a circular Claude glass). While the landscape causes him to think of God's presence, its intricate form also compels him to act in a "God-like" manner, assembling the scene from its component parts and repeating thereby in his "finite mind" the "eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM" (BL 1:304). Thus Coleridge responds to the scene with religious thoughts—as landscape poets frequently did—but he conceives of the scene simultaneously in aesthetic terms, conscious of the value of his own "picture-making" act. Since Coleridge has abandoned the actual landscape to fight for "Science, Freedom, and the Truth in Christ" (62), his "picture" is now only a "reflection" in the glass of his memory, but it is an image that will allow him to revisit the "dear Cot" in spirit.

To this image of the "dear Cot" Coleridge returns in the closing lines, bringing the poem back to the spot at which it had begun. He notes the cot's "Jasmin and thy window-peeping Rose" (66), mirroring the picture he had drawn in the first two lines: "Low was out pretty Cot: our tallest
Rose / Peep'd at the chamber window." This Coleridgean technique of returning to where he had begun is usually identified as one of the key characteristics of the conversation poem. G. M. Harper, who in the 1920's first applied Coleridge's term "conversation poem" to a whole group of his poems, notes that "Reflections" employs "a pleasing device which we may call the 'return'" (192). This notion of beginning at some fixed point, venturing imaginatively outward from it, and then returning to the point of origin has been repeatedly identified--in one form or another--as common to the conversation poems. The central excursion of each poem is thus "framed" by identical beginning and ending situations. But this employment of a framing device is reinforced in "Reflections" in a particularly interesting way--by the literal window "frame" (present at both beginning and end) at which the rose "peeps." Both descriptions of the scene specifically mention the cottage window; although the scene viewed through this "frame" is not recorded, we can picture the rose, at least, "peep[ing]" in the immediate foreground of the scene--and know that Coleridge would have often looked through the window. In this act of double-framing (the use of a window frame in the poem's narrative frame) we see a hint of the picture-making impulse that

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8This pattern has been described in various ways: as a "systolic--diastolic" rhythm by Albert Gerard or a "centrifugal--centripetal" action by Max Schulz (see Schulz 84), or as a type of "circuitous form" by M. H. Abrams in Natural Supernaturalism (275).
figures prominently in the rest of the conversation poems.

The "framed picture" metaphor actually provides a more historically appropriate model for explaining the "return" or the "systolic and diastolic rhythm" often noted in the conversation poems. Coleridge was quite familiar—as I demonstrated in the first chapter—with the process of framing scenes, the levels of which a viewer would travel visually through. The speakers in the conversation poems, by "going out" and "coming back," replicate the motion of a viewer's eye in the process of composing a landscape scene, all of which occurs within the felt boundaries of some kind of frame. At times the frame is singular, but often the landscape features create a feeling of multiple frames or planes through which the viewer moves. These frames are seldom rigid, confining, or even complete, but are rather suggested, roughly sketched, or not immediately visible. Martin Price makes this point about picturesque aesthetics when he says: "Its favorite scenes are those in which form emerges only with study or is at the point of dissolution" (277).9 Order remains elusive, Price maintains, and picturesque artists may "imitate its very elusiveness in [their] own designs" (279-80). This is true of the framing devices Coleridge uses in the conversation poems; they are more like

9Martin Price's comment that picturesque scenes reveal an "internal conflict between the centrifugal forces of dissolution and the centripetal pull of form" (277) interestingly parallel the use of the same "centrifugal/centripetal" metaphor to describe the conversation poems.
"phantom[s] of complete visual wholeness" (Coleridge's description of the picturesque effect of the ship) which the reader completes from the hints the text provides. Like the picturesque, the poems enact enclosure, putting one scene within another to create for the reader a textual foreground, middle-ground, and horizon, levels which are engaged separately while simultaneously providing the felt sense of wholeness or order.

Perhaps none of the conversation poems models both "enclosure" and "scene-painting" as well as "This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison," which (written in June, 1797) ushers in Coleridge's poetic annus mirabilis. The poetic narrator-Coleridge, literally enclosed in the lime-tree bower, uses an "enclosure" model to construct a three-level text which begins with an explanatory preface, then proceeds to two additional levels of text, one enclosed within the other.

The preface constitutes an important textual foreground for the poem because it emphasizes the poem's own artifice, even as the picturesque scene calls attention to the fact that the viewer has "constructed" it. Both are highly self-conscious artistic acts.\(^{10}\) Like the tourist holding the Claude glass, Coleridge begins by showing how the artist goes about composing such a scene. Having ex-

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\(^{10}\)Kathleen M. Wheeler stresses the importance of this Coleridgean "self-conscious reflection" which she says was "often the organizing principle of his compositions" in *The Creative Mind in Coleridge's Poetry* (1981).
plained the circumstances that made the composition possible—the accident which confined Coleridge to the bower while Charles Lamb and William and Dorothy Wordsworth took their landscape-viewing excursion—Coleridge moves us into that bower where he sits composing.

As Coleridge "goes out" from the bower he imagines two main scenes—the roaring dell and the hilltop prospect of the Bristol Channel—the first of which is particularly picturesque in its imagery:

The roaring dell, o'erwooded, narrow, deep,
And only speckled by the midday sun;
Where its slim trunk the ash from rock to rock
Flings arching like a bridge;—that branchless ash,
Unsunn'd and damp, whose few poor yellow leaves
Ne'er tremble in the gale, yet tremble still,
Fann'd by the water-fall! and there my friends
Behold the dark green file of long lank weeds,
That all at once (a most fantastic sight!)
Still nod and drip beneath the dripping edge
Of the blue clay-stone. (10-19)
The arching trunk of an ash serves as a unifying curve in this composition, bringing together rough, disparate elements dappled picturesquely with patches of light and shade. The suddenness with which they notice the dripping weeds and the exclamation "a most fantastic sight!" also epitomize the picturesque's tendency to create an effect of "surprise."\textsuperscript{11}

Coleridge imagines his friends then emerging from the dell to gain a wider prospect of the hills, the sky, and the Bristol Channel, over which the sun gradually sets. Anne Mellor has argued that the daylight prospect reveals the "beautiful" while the sunset scene is "sublime" (thereby giving the poem examples of all three parts of the aesthetic trinity) but the landscapes are better described as picturesque scenes which contain elements of the other aesthetic categories. As the sun sets over the scene, each element is colored by the unifying tinge which brings the composition together; the heath-flowers "shine" and the groves "Live in the yellow light" (35-36). He imagines that his friend is:

\begin{verbatim}
  . . . gazing round
  On the wide landscape, gaze till all doth seem
  Less gross than bodily; and of such hues
  As veil the Almighty Spirit, when yet he makes
\end{verbatim}

\footnote{In "Scenery and Ecstasy: Three of Coleridge's Blank Verse Poems" John Gutteridge notes that in the process of revising this poem, Coleridge seems to have modified the description of this dell to include details from Dorothy Wordsworth's description of the Alfoxden dell (167-68). In this way Coleridge "improves" the landscape scene on which his first version was based, much like Gilpin's students who improved scenes which nature had inadequately composed.}
Spirits perceive his presence. (39-43)
The scene certainly evokes a spiritual (and somewhat sublime) response—as in "Reflections"—but the feeling which transports the viewer is simultaneously an aesthetic one: a realization that a felt "wholeness" has been created visually by the sunset's harmonizing power. As God composes the scene via twilight—and thereby shows Himself—so does the bower-imprisoned poet compose the invisible scene by the twilight coloring of his imagination, thereby calling attention to his creative, unifying power.¹²

When the "return" occurs—Coleridge's withdrawal from the imagined scenes back to his own bower—he sees the lime-tree bower differently. He has, as Paul Magnuson observes, "verified his imagination" (28) and now sees the bower through the lenses of his own imaginative pictures, so that a detail like the dappled sunshine in the dell he now sees on the leaves of the lime-trees. His imaginative picture-making has brought him back to nature "with new eyes," much like Coleridge said the visual arts did. The imaginative coloring of twilight emblematically permeates his bower, in which Coleridge now composes the scene before him, helped by the rich, unifying "tinge" of sunset color—and the imagina-

¹²Leonard Orr also refers to the poet's composition of the scene as a "Godlike ordering and commanding of the natural elements" (84). Valenti connects the scene to the power of the imagination and asserts that the "swimming sense" felt by the observers constitutes "the apex of [a] process originally isolated by Gilpin and his followers" (76).
tion's power to unify. In "Lime-Tree," says Mary Robbins Duncan, "we see the evening's power to transform, a power which mirrors the ability of Coleridge's imagination to change his bower from prison to evening prospect" (165).

Coleridge's "return" ultimately brings him to the realization that "Nature ne'er deserts the wise and pure" (60). As he sees the last rook flying overhead he blesses it, forming a union with his friend Charles, whom he imagines also saw it, and for whom "No sound is dissonant which tells of Life" (76). Charles's function here is to underscore the unity of all life by his friendship with Coleridge and, of course, to serve as the "addressee" of Coleridge's monologue. He serves an equally important function, however, as an "inscribed" observer of the landscape--something which recurs in almost every conversation poem. Coleridge could have simply described the landscapes he imagined while confined in his "prison," but instead he imagines Charles composing the scenes, so that the scene-making takes place through Charles's eyes. The distinction may seem minor, but it emphasizes that "composed" scenes exist because observers construct them--a point which is crucial to picturesque aesthetics. The literal act of Charles's viewing is as important as Coleridge's imaginative act of writing--and both activities are inscribed in the poem to foreground the
The term "conversation poems" seems to refer partly to the informal or "conversational" tone of the speaker and partly to the presence of a particular individual in each poem with whom Coleridge "converses." This explanation is problematic, of course, in that "conversation" implies a two-way dialogue, not a soliloquy. Coleridge can hardly have a conversation with the absent Charles in "Lime-Tree Bower," anymore than he can "talk" with the infant Hartley in "Frost at Midnight." In these cases the conversational partner is not even a listener; the conversation Coleridge has is with himself.

One role the listener or addressee does usually play, however, is that of observer; Charles observes the landscape, for instance, that the absent Coleridge cannot see. Although Charles is passive in his role as conversationalist, he is certainly active in his role as observer, uniting the parts of the landscape by the imaginative power of active perception. While Coleridge has one conversation with the absent Charles, Charles has his own active interchange with nature--a different kind of conversation. A similar

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13 Ronald A. Sharp similarly observes that the conversation poems emphasize the point that "meaning inheres in the very act of perception." He points out that Coleridge's early poems were structured on a two-part description/meaning model, but the later poems recognize that the two acts are one. He says that "the speaker in the conversation poems moves into the foreground because the scene he describes always includes himself in the act of describing it" (41).
picture of an imagined subject interacting with nature can be seen in "Frost at Midnight," where Coleridge imagines his infant son's childhood as a process of wandering through nature, moving from scene to scene. Although "Frost at Midnight" does not particularly emphasize the landscape, Coleridge uses Hartley as a vehicle to transcend his narrow cottage room imaginatively. As Heffernan says, he "prospectively travels into open space, where Hartley . . . will see and hear the shapes and sounds of God's eternal language" (112). In both poems Coleridge looks at the landscape through the eyes of a "surrogate viewer"; by showing us both viewer and landscape, he emphasizes that the viewer participates in--or, we could say, converses with--the forms he sees. Because the picturesque (moreso than the beautiful or the sublime) requires an active participation of the viewer, the viewing of a picturesque scene is like a conversation. Consequently, the conversation poems reflect picturesque aesthetics not only in the Gilpinesque framing devices or the making of landscape pictures, but also in their employment of a perceiving subject--whether it be Coleridge himself or an "inscribed viewer"--who stresses that scenes are always constructions of an active consciousness made from a particular vantage point.

The viewer, by the act of choosing a vantage point, limits the scene to the material framed by his vision. Often elements of the landscape itself provide additional
"boundary" elements to give the composed scene a sense of enclosure. The conversations poems, as I have been arguing, often enclose one piece of text within a broader "frame."

G. M. Harper, in his discussion of the conversation poems, makes explicit use of the "frame" metaphor only once, and that occurs in his analysis of "Fears in Solitude," which Coleridge wrote ten months after "Lime-Tree Bower" and published along with "Frost at Midnight" and "France: An Ode" in 1798. Of "Fears in Solitude," Harper says:

Were it not for the exquisite frame in which the fears and questionings are set . . . the pain excited by this poem would outweigh our pleasure in the aptness of its figures and the melody of its verse. But the frame saves the picture, as the profound psychological truth of the picture justifies the beauty of the frame. (196)

Harper makes an important point here about the structure of the poem, even if he exaggerates the role played by the frame in "saving" an otherwise "painful" poem. Harper's "frame" metaphor explains how Coleridge brings together contrasting materials (the landscape and politics) to make a unified composition. In combining landscape and politics, the poem recalls "Reflections on Having Left a Place of Retirement," but in "Fears" the political discourse dominates, taking up the lengthy, central section of the poem. Although small in terms of number of lines, the opening and closing landscape sections make a crucial statement about the role of landscape, in addition to employing picturesque images like those seen in the other conversation poems. The poem could be diagrammed in this way:
The poet himself (as the speaker) is the lone "observer" in this text, picturing himself in a "quiet spirit-healing nook" as he observes the landscape and ponders his predicament: he would gladly remain in the soul-calming landscape, but he cannot help but "feel / For all his human brethren," whose suffering in such volatile political times "weighs upon the heart" (31-33). The central section of the poem is, as Harper notes, filled with pain; in this woeful jeremiad Coleridge attributes England's problems at home and abroad to a lack of political and spiritual leadership. He condemns the nation for having "gone forth"--in an almost grotesque parody of the visual "going forth" across the landscape--and "borne to distant tribes slavery and pangs / And, deadlier far, our vices" (49-51). He ends this section with a plea for God's mercy and a call for repentance, recognizing that his prophetic message may only cause others to see him as an enemy of the state.
This intense political rhetoric contrasts sharply with the landscape scenes Coleridge constructs at the beginning and end of the poem. He places himself in a quiet dell as the poem opens, a dell which he compares to a field of corn or flax glimmering with evening light. He returns to it at the end of his political discourse, first thanking his "Mother Isle" for the upbringing he received at the hand of nature, claiming that "There lives nor form nor feeling in my soul / Unborrowed from my country!" (182-93). The descending dew yields a "fruit-like perfume" (reminiscent of Pomona's poetic fruit in "To the Author of Poems") and the fading twilight leaves "a sunny gleam . . . Aslant the ivied beacon" (206-7) as the poet bids farewell to the dell. He heads for home, walking up along the sheep-track until he reaches a higher vantage point, from which he sees a multi-form landscape that includes Stowey in the distance (and even the elms surrounding his friend's home):

I find myself upon the brow, and pause
Startled! And after lonely sojourning
In such a quiet and surrounded nook,
This burst of prospect, here the shadowy main,
Dim-tinted, there the mighty majesty
Of that huge amphitheatre of rich
And elmy fields, seems like society--
Conversing with the mind, and giving it
A livelier impulse and a dance of thought! (213-20)

His "broad-strokes" description focuses on the spatial rela-

14 Although one might describe these words as "patriotic," Kelvin Everest seems correct when he notes that his love is "rooted in a domesticated nature, a known and familiar landscape expressive of ideals that are not national" (39). His praise is more for the land than for a political entity.
tionship of parts to whole (including the "here" and "there" seen also in "Reflections"), but avoids overly-specific, "dutchified" detail. Even more importantly, the "burst of prospect"--an experience of picturesque surprise--is said to be "like society--Conversing with the mind." In this conversation poem, where no specific listener is named or implied, Coleridge explicitly states that he is "conversing" with nature. His parenthetical description of the prospect constitutes his "lines" in the dialogue, for in it he composes the scene, creating unity out of otherwise "fixed and dead" objects. Like a picturesque viewer, he responds actively, yet at the direction of the varied scene, which gives the mind "A livelier impulse and a dance of thought." This "livelier" impulse of the mind is precisely the response evoked by the picturesque (moreso than the beautiful or the sublime), for the picturesque scene invites the audience to "converse" with it.

In the closing lines Coleridge justifies placing an anguished political discourse in a picturesque frame, achieving a reconciliation of sorts that transcends the "either/or" thinking of "Reflections." Even as he heads home, Coleridge re-creates the picture of the dell via memory and expresses gratefulness that:

... by nature's quietness
And solitary musings, all my heart
Is softened, and made worthy to indulge
Love, and the thoughts that yearn for human kind.
(229-32)
Coleridge presents the viewing of picturesque landscape not as a self-indulgent act of political avoidance but as the spiritually rejuvenating force that enables politically responsible action. The truly efficacious legislator, as both Coleridge and Shelley point out, is the person of imagination; the quiet dell allows not only for solitary musings but also for exercise in imaginative acts. Retreat into nature need not be escape from the world, and unifying acts of landscape composition need not preclude interest in unifying the body politic. The individual's political action can be enclosed in an aesthetic structure, the imaginative power providing a framework for action.

What seem like conflicting impulses, then, move toward reconciliation in "Fears in Solitude." In an autograph manuscript of the poem, Coleridge added the note: "N. B. The above is perhaps not Poetry,--but rather a sort of middle thing between Poetry and Oratory--sermoni proprio.---Some parts are, I am conscious, too tame even for animated prose" (PW 257n). The poem's reconciliation of the aesthetic/political polarity is echoed by the "middle thing" designation he gives it; he sees his poem as lying between two existing modes of discourse. This declaration, however, only reinforces the "middle-ground" status the poem already has by virtue of its "picturesqueness"--its location in an aesthetic-

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15His use of the term sermoni proprio also connects this poem with "Reflections," for which he had used the term as an epigraph.
ic realm between the sublime and the beautiful. The *sermoni propriora* designation and the focus on picturesque landscape both exemplify his philosophical interest in polarity.

Within weeks of the writing of "Fears in Solitude," Coleridge's poetical exploration of picturesque landscape culminated in the one poem he actually called a conversation--"The Nightingale." Its subtitle, "A Conversation Poem," acts as an *ex post facto* title to the group of poems which this work concludes.\(^{16}\) W. J. Bate has suggested that the term "conversation" as an epigraph for "The Nightingale" may constitute "a half-humorous apology as if to say it was a 'middle-thing' between poetry and conversation" (47). Although Coleridge's reason for calling it a conversation is not entirely clear, I believe the poem is a "middle-thing," not just rhetorically but also aesthetically, for it epitomizes the "middle-ground" position of the picturesque.

Written during a period when Coleridge walked tirelessly through the Quantocks with William and Dorothy Wordsworth, the poem reflects--both in form and content--a preoccupation with touring and viewing landscape. In the poem, which is based upon a day spent walking through the hills, Coleridge "converses" not only with the landscape but also with Doro-

\(^{16}\)G. M. Harper includes both "Dejection: An Ode" (1802) and "To William Wordsworth" (1806) in his listing of conversation poems, but both of these seem to be of a different character. Since both were written more than four years after the others, they are the products of a different phase of Coleridge's career.
thy and William, who are clearly inscribed in the poem as fellow viewers.

Coleridge invites the reader/viewer to take incremental steps into this composition, even as the viewer does in a landscape scene. One way to "see" this is to conceive of the poem as a spatial form. In reading the poem I have transformed it into what W. J. T. Mitchell might call a "literary space." Mitchell feels that this spatializing activity is "a crucial aspect of the reading process" ("Spatial" 553n). Rudolph Arnheim goes even further in his claims about the spatialization of poetry, arguing that "any organized entity, in order to be grasped as a whole by the mind, must be translated into the synoptic condition of space" (1-2). Although this "translation" may not always be essential, I believe the mind often does transform a poem's "temporality" into a spatial, visual form. In the case of "The Nightingale," the audience encounters a series of scenes or objects, each of which is subordinate to or dependent on the preceding one. The reader feels increasingly drawn into deeper levels of the poem, pulled toward a sort of textual horizon, while also feeling enclosed by it. The best visual representation of a series of items, each being subordinate to and contained by the previous one, is a diagram like this--a spatial form like the ones Gilpin saw in landscape scenes.
What cannot be satisfactorily determined is the extent to which my "picture" is the product of my reading and to what extent Coleridge encoded a spatial form in his text. I am inclined to agree with Mitchell that it is a "fundamental impulse" for artists to try to "breach the supposed boundaries between temporal and spatial arts" (Iconology 98), and Coleridge's desire to achieve "unities" which overcome apparent opposites would especially predispose him to superimpose a spatial form upon the temporality of poetry. The poem reflects, at the very least, a deep-seated impulse to compose pictures and an appreciation for structures that simultaneously enclose and draw the reader/viewer deeper inside. I would not call the poem "picturesque" solely on the basis of this criterion, however; its structure constitutes only one of its picturesque traits.
The poem is clearly also about the landscape; it begins, actually, with a darkened landscape, a picture taken just after the moment of "twilight gleam" so characteristic of the picturesque. Although few (if any) landscape features are visible, Coleridge calls to his companions, "Come, we will rest on this old mossy bridge" (4), as if selecting a vantage point from which paradoxically to view the invisible scene. The "mossy bridge" location again recalls the seats of landscape gardens where visitors could stop to view "constructed" prospects. Despite the darkness, however, a "glimmer of the stream beneath" is visible from the bridge, and this imaginative gleam seems to signal an incursion into an imagined landscape.

Inside the largest frame of the dark, open landscape, then, lies a realm of companionship and conversation where Dorothy and William join the poet as figures in a poetic middle-ground. Coleridge, hearing the sound of a nightingale, suggests to his companions that the traditional interpretation of the nightingale’s cry as "melancholy" is inaccurate, a mere projection of some despondent "night-wandering man" which has been echoed by generations of poets, Milton included. For a moment we focus on the bond these friends share as "true" observers of nature (not merely mimics of poetic landscape traditions) before being led into another landscape--a remembered scene imagined by Coleridge.

The setting of this remembered scene is a "castle
huge, / Which the great lord inhabits not" (50-51). The scene abounds in the roughness and decay characteristic of the later picturesque-romantic style:

This grove is wild with tangling underwood,  
And the trim walks are broken up, and grass,  
Thin grass and king-cups grow within the paths.  
But never elsewhere in one place I knew  
So many nightingales . . . (49-56)

The broken walks and "tangling underwood" recall Gilpin's love for fragmented ruins (his desire, for instance, to hammer away at the gable ends of Tintern to break up their regularity). Unlike the more formal garden of "Autumnal Evening," this garden-like grove exhibits a romantic wildness (and perhaps—as the castle suggests—a certain medievalism). Within this scene, Coleridge turns his attention to the nightingales which "You may perchance behold," their "bright eyes . . . glistening" in the moonlight (66-68). Rather than simply describing the scene, he focuses on the composing act of perception—not on what is there but on what his companions could see there. He further emphasizes the composing process, then, by inscribing a viewer—by moving into a smaller frame of reference enclosed within the grove itself.

This inscribed perceiving consciousness, a "gentle Maid" in the grove who lives near the castle, "Glides through the pathways" (74) in the evening, listening to the nightingales. She performs no particular actions other than those of observer; "heard" and "watched" are the two primary
verbs used to denote her behavior. No plot develops around her, and we learn only that she seems "vowed and dedicate / To something more than Nature in the grove" (72-73). She hears the "pause of silence" caused when the moon goes behind the cloud and the nightingales cease their crying. She "hears" this absence of sound as she stands in the grove deep inside the poem, even as Coleridge "sees" the invisible landscape shrouded in darkness while standing on the mossy bridge in the poem's foreground. Both assemble fragmented, perceptual data into compositions, one on the perimeter of the composition, the other at its center.

This truncated, pseudo-gothic fiction of an isolated Lady wandering the grounds of an uninhabited castle may be, as some observers have noted, a romanticized portrayal of Coleridge's own evening walks with Dorothy Wordsworth. Harper feels that the castle is "a romantic exaggeration for Alfoxden house" (196); Richard Holmes calls the Maid "partly a Romantic portrait of Dorothy herself" (192). Dorothy's Alfoxden journal (which is dominated by landscape description) does, in fact, record numerous nighttime walks with Coleridge between January and April, 1798 (just prior to the poem's composition), and several entries mention the effects of moonlight. But these facts only reinforce our understanding of the Maid as "picturesque observer," for the perceiving consciousness inscribed within the scene then becomes Dorothy, a literal picturesque observer and the most
perceptive landscape composer of Coleridge's acquaintance. Dorothy's interest in picturesque landscape (a subject which she discussed with Coleridge, as his journals indicate) provides a strong biographical reason to read the poem as a manifestation of picturesque aesthetics.

The maid in the grove constitutes the deepest, most distant point in the poem, from which Coleridge draws the reader quickly back to the mossy bridge, where he bids farewell both to the nightingale which inspired the poem and to his companions. "We have been loitering long and pleasantly" (89), he says. But as the poem seems about to end, Coleridge starts out in another direction, not into a deeper level but perhaps to an adjacent plane. Hearing the nightingale, he says "That strain again! / Full fain it would delay me!" (90-91), as if caught by the song while turning to depart and pausing to listen again. Having changed his vantage point, however, he "looks" in a different direction, constructing from memory a corresponding scene.

At the sound of the nightingale, Coleridge imagines that his "dear babe" Hartley, if present, would "place his hand beside his ear . . . and bid us listen" (94-96). This causes Coleridge to remember an incident concerning Hartley which parallels the scene of the maid and nightingales in the grove. He explains how his child "awoke / In a distressful mood" (98-99) one night, at which time Coleridge took him outside into the orchard plot. Here Hartley saw
the moon, which has the immediate effect of stopping his crying, his "undropped tears" still in his eyes, "glittering in the yellow moon-beam" (105). Hartley's glistening eyes parallel those of the nightingales in the grove, which also shone in the moonlight. Like the icicles of "Frost at Midnight," the eyes embody a reflective, imaginative "gleam." Coleridge abruptly ends his anecdote, calling it a "father's tale" (106), but expresses his hope that Hartley will grow up to appreciate the night as well as the day, for the night moon spreads its own gleam. Hartley will, like the maid in the grove, be an observer--a role Coleridge also assigned to him in "Frost at Midnight." In entering a garden at night to experience the natural world, the child repeats the actions both of his father in the outermost frame of the poem and of the maid in the innermost. He represents the potential picturesque observer.

Jean-Pierre Mileur notes how this scene of the infant Hartley and the scene of the Maid both question whether "unmediated" apprehension of the landscape is possible. Having resisted the temptation to see the nightingale's song as melancholy (for then poetic convention would be mediating the experience of nature), Coleridge tries, according to Mileur, to "dispense with mediation." His attempt, however, "brings us face to face . . . with the indispensability of projection or displacement if meaning is to be achieved" (50). Attempts to "fictionalize" the observation of nature
(the "Maid" scene) or to use an innocent, "prelinguistic" observer (the "babe" scene) still lead to the conclusion that "the mature consciousness inevitably distorts nature and mediates all experience in the image of its own desire" (51).

No conclusion could flow more naturally out of a picturesque text. This point—that our experience of nature is never unmediated—is precisely the lesson of picturesque aesthetics. Coleridge and Dorothy cannot escape the conventions of landscape viewing any more than they can escape the mediating effects of language. Art will always alter the way they see the landscape, and although that may appear tyrannical or confining, it also produces benefits. As Coleridge has shown, art also "sends us back to nature with new eyes," helping people see what they have not seen before. Just as importantly, art helps turn observers into creators, who transform fragmented, natural objects into unified landscape compositions.

Acknowledging this myth of unmediated perception and recognizing the power of cultural models of "seeing," we can begin to see parallels between picturesque aesthetics and the fascination in our own time with the role of the perceiving subject in making meaning. For literary critics interested in the reader's role in "constructing" a text, the picturesque offers a way to historicize the dilemma. The cult of picturesque viewing was a kind of "interpretive
community" that predetermined (at least to some degree) how people read the landscape, even as internalized codes or reading strategies (according to Stanley Fish, among others) affect how a reader constructs a text. In addition, picturesque aesthetics required a particularly "active" viewer whose observation "composed" the scene; very similar claims are made by literary critics today about the reader's composition of a "readerly" text. And Coleridge's conversation poems, in their picturesqueness, not only exemplify the readerly text but also inscribe a viewer/reader who models the active participation of the composing subject.

By focusing on the act of observing--either his own or that of an inscribed companion--Coleridge reminds the reader that the text (like the scene) only comes into existence when composed by a reader. Kathleen Wheeler argues eloquently that the reader of "Lime-Tree Bower" must model himself on the imprisoned narrator, who suddenly "becomes aware of his 'bower situation'" and focuses on his own act of locating nature there. The reader, says Wheeler, must realize that "it is his reading, perception, and interpretation which he must contemplate, not the poem as some external nature" (144). Coleridge similarly models self-con-

17In a similar vein, Wheeler also argues that the speaker of "Frost at Midnight" models the act of reading; Coleridge "makes imaginative use of his surroundings" in the first stanza, showing that the mind should not simply reproduce pictures but transform them imaginatively--also the act required of the reader (Creative Mind 103-4).
scious composition for the reader when he imagines Hartley wandering the landscape to encounter God's "shapes" in "Frost at Midnight," or when he puts the Maid in "The Nightingale" to read the scenes in the grove. Even where no special viewer is created for the poem (as in "Reflections" or "Fears in Solitude") Coleridge makes a narrative of his own viewing process, depicting himself organizing spatial compositions.

These viewers, then, as they engage in acts of picture-making, signal the reader to "look" at the text and see it spatialized as a landscape—as an enclosed or framed space inspired by a fascination with picturicity. The "planes" or "screens" of text are no less real in the poem than they are in the landscape, for both are constructions done by the perceiving subject from hints provided by the scene/text. When a scene provides only a "phantom of complete visual wholeness" (CN 2:2012) and requires the viewer to supply the missing visual data, says Coleridge, the picturesque results. These scenes, according to Coleridge, contain visual "gaps" which the viewer must fill to complete the picture. To this kind of scene, then, the viewer makes a contribution which is not unlike the contribution made by readers in constructing certain texts—at least as the process is defined by some reader-response critics. Texts have "gaps" as well, according to Wolfgang Iser, and the reader must fill them in to complete the text. Works which leave
sufficient gaps stimulate interest in the reader--the verbal equivalent of picturesque "curiosity"--whereas other texts (though they might be beautiful or sublime) do not extend the same kind of invitation to the reader.

The "gap-filling" in the conversation poems is not limited, however, to the reader's production of the spatial "frames" I have described. In his landscape scenes, especially in "Reflections" and in "Fears in Solitude," Coleridge resists overly-detailed description (which he found poetically ineffective) and instead moves the viewer rapidly from place to place in the composition, pointing to one object "here" and another "there." The absence of detail causes readers to supply information from their own imagination, and in "jumping" from point to point the reader ties all the parts of the composition together, filling in the unspecified parts of the scene imaginatively.

The reader of the conversation poems (like the viewer of a picturesque landscape) must also negotiate scenes of great textual variety and roughness, sometimes making abrupt leaps of tone or content. All poems obviously exhibit some degree of variety, but many texts--those associated with formal "beauty"--stress unity of tone or place or subject. Although the conversation poem, like the picturesque scene, exhibits a certain degree of formal control, the elements within its boundaries are often widely disparate. This can be seen in the shifts from landscape to politics in "Reflec-
tions" and "Fears," in the contrasts between imprisoning bower and imagined prospect in "Lime-Tree," and in the rather unusual juxtaposition of Hartley's story with the "Maid scene" and the "mossy bridge" in "The Nightingale." Iser explains that in acts of reading, the reader constantly makes predictions about the direction a text is taking and then revises them in light of new data. The tension which results causes the reader to perform a balancing act which makes reading interesting. Many of the abrupt shifts in the conversation poems cause this kind of temporary disorientation, forcing readers to incorporate the new materials into their evolving picture of the poem, forcing them to find the vantage point from which all the elements can be seen to form a unified whole.

In *The Act of Reading*, Iser cites Benbow Ritchie's claim that the reader of a text must be "surprised" without becoming "frustrated." Textual frustration "blocks or checks activity" while surprise "merely causes a temporary cessation of the exploratory phase of the experience, and a recourse to intense contemplation and scrutiny" (qtd. in Iser 128). This describes the experience of reading the conversation poems, for the surprise only compels the reader to look more deeply into the scene. Ritchie's analysis also has striking parallels with the picturesque, for the landscape viewer is often said to be "surprised" by a prospect, yet the variety and intricacy of the scene causes "intense
contemplation and scrutiny"--or, as Uvedale Price would say--curiosity. The reader or viewer must become more actively involved in the text/scene.

We should also remember the premise with which Iser begins *The Act of Reading*: that a literary work has two poles, the artistic and the aesthetic, the first of which is the product of the author and the second "the realization accomplished by the reader" (21). Rejecting a simple "transmitter/receiver" model of communication, he insists that "in literary works ... the message is transmitted in two ways, in that the reader 'receives' it by composing it" (21). This is similar to what happens in the viewing of picturesque landscape, where observers do not simply "receive" the visible data before them but rather compose it by selecting a vantage point, employing culturally encoded principles of composition, and even altering the scene to "improve" its arrangement.

As we have seen, a "two-way transmission" model of aesthetic apprehension is also characteristic of the conversation poems. These poems can legitimately be called conversations, for they not only reveal observers conversing with the landscape, but they also model the active "conversing" required by the reader. Years after writing the conversation poems, Coleridge would define the beautiful and the sublime by saying, "I meet, I find the Beautiful--but I give, contribute, or rather attribute the Sublime" (Raysor
If the beautiful is to be met or found, Coleridge must see beauty as residing primarily in the object; if the sublime is given or attributed, it must reside primarily in the subject. Between these two extremes lies an aesthetic experience most like a "conversation," where subject and object contribute equally to realize the aesthetic experience. This was at the heart of picturesque experience as understood by Coleridge and as seen in "The Nightingale" and the other conversation poems.

To return to the point on which the chapter began, we must also remember that audience response to a scene enables its designation as picturesque or sublime--and this is but another way in which current critical interest in the reader parallels tenets of picturesque aesthetics. Reader-response critics, despite their disagreements in defining the place of the reader, seem to agree that what a poem does is more significant than what it means. They believe, as Jane Tompkins says, that "a poem cannot be understood apart from its results," for its "'effects,' psychological and otherwise, are essential to any accurate description of its meaning" (ix). The "meaning" in picturesque aesthetics is similarly tied up in a scene's "effect"--a point clearly made by Coleridge and his fellow aestheticians. What a picturesque scene is cannot be separated from what it does to the viewer.

Seeing the picturesque as a historical example of the
current subject/object debate--as played out in reader response criticism--helps us understand the conversation poems as texts structured to produce a certain effect, an effect much like that of a picturesque scene. We are then also able to see Coleridge's fascination with inscribed, active viewers (itself a product of picturesque aesthetics) as a model not just of viewing but of reading. Coleridge wants to give the reader as active a role in composing the poem as he had in viewing the scene. The conclusion to which we are ultimately led is that the person with whom Coleridge is truly "conversing" in these poems is the reader. He invites the reader into an enclosed, picturesque space that will produce a pleasing effect of safety, intellectual curiosity, and unity, knowing, however, that the "wholeness" is ultimately a "felt wholeness" partly contributed by the reader's act of composition.

Shortly after completing the last of the poems discussed in this chapter, Coleridge brought to an end his most productive years as a poet and also left England for the first time, traveling to Germany for his first sustained experience as a tourist. For the next several years, Coleridge's experience as both traveler and careful observer of landscape increased. His method for documenting scenes shifted from conversation poem to prose description (in both notebook and letter), but his interest in picturesque aesthetics continued--and perhaps intensified, to the extent
that he became a landscape tourist. In his notebooks he began to engage in extended "conversations" with himself, writing entries for a private audience of one. In these notebooks Coleridge typically describes scenes in great detail, using the pictorial techniques which he so criticized in others' poetry. Yet in his personal prose--where he was not so concerned with leaving room for the exercise of the reader's imagination--the technique was appropriate. Here he hoped to capture a scene in its entirety, both by crafting a prose document to serve as a record of the scene and by submitting to the internalizing process of describing it.
CHAPTER 3
INTERNALIZING THE LANDSCAPE:
PROSE DESCRIPTION AS PERSONALIZED PICTURESQUE

During the first years of the decade in which Coleridge was most influenced by the picturesque, his interest in composing pictures appeared primarily in his poetry. Between 1798 and 1803, however, picturesque poetry decreased as Coleridge's interest in capturing landscape scenes was diverted to the prose description of his notebooks. In the autumn of 1803, as this five-year period was about to conclude with Coleridge's departure for Malta, he wrote a description which epitomizes his "landscape prose" and also provides an appropriate introduction to my discussion of its significance. Having recently returned from a walking tour of Scotland with the Wordsworths, Coleridge walked with Southey and Hazlitt on October 24 "thro' Borrodale into Watendlath," serving as a kind of tour guide for his friends. Coming upon the Lake of Watendlath, he writes that "the mountains at its head would be better in a picture than they look in Nature." He claims that even though "the Forms & Combinations are fine," they "want something or other in colour, & distance to make them Satisfiers" (CN 1:1610).

This failure to "satisfy"--the pronouncement of a
landscape connoisseur accustomed to evaluating landscape compositions—compels Coleridge to seek a better vantage point. Soon he finds a better spot from which to compose, and his lengthy description of the scene (insofar as it demonstrates several key principles) is worth quoting in its entirety:

... but from the Bridge, & all the rest of the way down to Baragh House—0 what is there on Earth that can better deserve the name of Divine?—There should be some mark, some Cross or Heap of Stones to direct the Travel­ler to turn off on his Left, 15 or 20 yards thro' the Coppice, about a 100 yards or so before he comes to the road-view of the Lake of Keswick/20 yards thro' this open Coppice brings him suddenly to the Edge of a finely wooded Precipice, with Lodore beneath him at a small Distance on his Left, & on his Right the Promontory of Birches on the Lake/the House at the Foot of Lodore, the Bridge, the Road seen in 3 different distances, so very beautiful—-the Lake of Keswick—& Bassenthwaite/—the Height from the extreme steepness & direct plumb-down Look in the Lake seems vast—the breezes rush in pencil brushes over it—/ you look down on every thing, & every thing spreads in consequence, broad & long & vast! This is/I have no hesitation in saying it—/the best, every way the best & most impressive view in all the Lake Country—-why not in all the Island? (CN 1:1610)

Coleridge locates the perfect vantage point from which to compose the scene, then acts like a true landscape traveler in pronouncing the scene the "best" and in expressing his wish that he might help other tourists find it. What the description itself reveals is his desire to analyze the composition, which he does by relating each element of the scene spatially to the others. He uses Gilpin’s language of "distances" and even notes how the road winds through the middle-distances to culminate in the distant lakes, first Keswick and then Bassenthwaite. He chooses a significant
foreground object for his composition: the waterfall of Lodore, which he had called "the first & best Thing of the whole Lake Country" in a letter to Sara Hutchinson the previous summer (CL 2:854). In addition to acting like a landscape tourist applying compositional rules, he makes an overt connection between his "verbal picture" and the art of sketching by describing the lake’s movement as "pencil brushes" of the breeze—as if to suggest that both nature and his description were essentially pictures.¹ Finally, the tone of his description (with its many exclamations) is passionate, an indication that a landscape of this kind engages the viewer emotionally even as it appeals to the intellect’s apprehension of formal qualities.

The description of this picturesque scene concludes by modulating into one final dimension, however, in which Coleridge combines the scene with the reading and writing of poetry:

. . . measure the Strides from the Bridge . . . to the Place, build the Stone heap, & write a Poem, thus beginning--From the Bridge &c repeat such a Song, of Milton, or Homer--so many Lines I will must find out, may be distinctly recited during a moderate healthy man’s walk from the Bridge thither . . . so to this Heap of Stones--there turn in--& then describe the Scene.--0 surely I might make a noble Poem of all my Youth nay of all my Life . . . (CN 1:1610)

¹Gilpin was also pleased by the valley of Watendlath. It is difficult to locate in Gilpin the precise scene which Coleridge is describing, but one part of Coleridge’s rhetoric closely echoes Gilpin: "Not only the design and composition," says Gilpin, "but the very strokes of nature’s pencil might be traced through the whole scene" (Cumberland 1:210).
In order to complete this perfect scene, he feels he should compose a poem, the recitation of which would precisely fill the time it takes to walk from the bridge to the prospect, at which time the poem would end with a description of the scene. Poetic feet would be made to correspond to human strides, and verse would somehow interpenetrate the landscape.

What begins as a description of the "best view" in the Lakes ends with a plan for a poem that is not only descriptive but autobiographical. No such poem, however, was ever written, a fact which is not especially surprising, given the decline of poetic output which characterized this phase of prose description. Although we cannot be sure why the poetry decreases and the prose increases during this time, Coburn seems right in observing that the notebook descriptions "were to some extent a substitute for more sustained works" (CN 1 Notes xlii). We might expect a poet's career to move from the collection of source material in notebooks to the eventual use of that material in poetic form, but for Coleridge the opposite was true. After writing his greatest poetry, and perhaps because he felt that he had lost his poetic genius, he documented his encounters with the land-

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2The remark may indicate Coleridge's attempt to write his own Prelude, which Wordsworth was working on and discussing with Coleridge at the time. His mention of the "pile of stones" also recalls Wordsworth's "Michael," which had been included in the later edition of Lyrical Ballads.
scape in descriptive prose. To understand these descriptions on their own terms—as independent texts, not step-children of his poetry—we must explore what motivated Coleridge to write them and determine what purpose they served.

Journals typically provide a professional writer with a place for gathering data and exploring ideas. Since Coleridge relied on writing to produce most of his income, he undoubtedly saw his notebooks, at least in part, as an exercise in his professional craft. Some of the descriptive material in his notebooks can be explained, then, as notes for proposed (or potential) writing projects. Before his exploration of the Lakes in 1800, for instance, Coleridge apparently contracted with the publisher Longman, who agreed to pay him 100 pounds for a "Tour in the North of England" (CL 1:580). Coleridge also wrote to Southey in November: "I have visited the Lakes / & in a pecuniary way have made the Trip answer to me" (CL 1:545), apparently referring to this contracted tour volume. No published tour of the Lakes ever materialized, but the plan itself reveals that Coleridge felt he could supplement his income by applying his skills to the popular genre of travel literature.

This is the point which Patricia Ball seems to ignore in her otherwise interesting study The Science of Aspects, when she discusses Coleridge's descriptive prose as "transcend[ing] itself . . . to yield the fruits of poetry" (33), or when she calls the notebook entries "the first steps toward poetry, the preliminary studies from which the fully creative union can be developed" (46). It is anachronistic to see the notebooks as studies for the major poetry.
In a similar way, Coleridge took copious notes and wrote highly descriptive letters on his German tour of 1798-99 with the intent of publishing some kind of travel book based on his experience. In July of 1800 he asked Thomas Poole for a copy of a letter he had written him describing the Hartz Mountains (CL 1:608), and a few months later he wrote James Webbe Tobin, expressing his intention to "occupy myself with a volume of Letters from Germany" (CL 1:623). He begins one of these descriptive letters, written to Sara in May of 1799, by saying:

These Letters, & the Descriptions in them, may possibly recall to me real forms, if I should ever take it into my head to read them again; but I fear that to you they must be [insupportably] unmeaning--accumulated repetitions of the same words in almost the same Combinations--but how can it be otherwise? In Nature all things are individual; but a Word is but an arbitrary Character for a whole Class of Things. (CL 1:503)

Not only does Coleridge indicate here that his descriptions were partly intended for his own later use, but he also raises an issue that troubled him throughout his years of landscape writing: the inability of descriptive prose to truly call up the image in the mind of an audience. Coleridge failed to produce the proposed volume of German letters in 1800, but he took (or had sent) some of the German notebooks to Malta in 1804, undoubtedly intending to produce something from these notes. Some of this material finally did see publication as "Satyrane's Letters" in The Friend and later in the Biographia Literaria.

Coleridge also filled his journals with notes which
were not designed for any specific literary purpose. He would periodically reread his notebooks, however, undoubtedly looking for source material for other writing. Sometimes he recopied notes from one book into another, often expanding upon or paraphrasing the ideas. In 1802-03, for instance, Coleridge reworked material from a small pocketbook (N5) used in 1799, copying or expanding entries into a sturdier notebook (N21) which he took to Malta. It is not clear, however, whether he saw these entries as source material for later projects or simply as ideas he wanted to preserve or rethink. Coburn hypothesizes that "some of the notes salvaged were for personal consolation in absence" (CN:1 Notes xxx.). This "reworking" of notebook material can be illustrated by a significant 1803 entry which expands upon a note from 1799; this example is of particular interest because Coleridge revises fragmentary data into an explicitly pictorial composition.

On his way north in October of 1799, perhaps writing while riding in a carriage, Coleridge records:

Governments gouge Highlanders towards Scotland--Towton. Tadcaster--Flock of Sheep sick Sheep head on ground Boy--Dog

4Most of Coleridge's surviving notebooks have a label with a number on the cover; Coburn believes the notebooks were numbered by Mrs. Gillman (in whose house Coleridge lived for the last years of his life) when she went through Coleridge's papers after his death. Coburn numbers each entry chronologically (regardless of the notebook in which it appears) but she also includes the number of the notebook for each entry; N5 and N21, therefore, indicate the notebook number as given by Gillman.
Four years later (perhaps, as Coburn notes, even on the anniversary of the writing of the original entry) Coleridge writes in a different notebook:

... at Tadcaster saw a most interesting Picture on the road -- a flock of sheep, and perhaps 200 yards behind a sick Sheep with its head on the ground, a dog looking up at the little Boy's face--and the poor little sheep boy standing close by the sick Sheep, anxiously looking forward to the Flock--not knowing what to do! I never saw distressful Doubt so strongly painted. (CN 1:1583)

Coleridge appears to take the sketchy notebook entry of 1799 and embellish the scene via memory, perhaps hoping that an expanded, more pictorial version will preserve the scene from further erosion over time. By calling the expanded entry "a most interesting Picture," he makes painting not only an analogue of memory but also an aid to memory. Conceived in terms of painting (his scene resembles, in fact, the paintings of the picturesque-genre school), the scene becomes more concretely "fixed" or composed in his mind than words alone could make it.

A drawing, Coleridge recognized, would be even more effective in representing a landscape composition. Unfortunately, Coleridge could not draw, and this inability helps explain the nature of his verbal descriptions. One of Coleridge's statements about this inability to draw was written at almost the same time that he described the picture of the dog and his sheep at Tadcaster (in the autumn of 1803). This discussion also appears to be based upon the reading of
his 1799 notebook. In a brief 1799 entry he had stated:
"Man but an half animal without drawing . . ." (CN 1:524).

Re-reading this four years later, he writes:

Without Drawing I feel myself but half invested with
Language--Music too is wanting in me.--But yet tho’ one
should unite Poetry, Draftsman’s-ship & Music--the
greater & perhaps nobler certainly all the subtler parts
of one’s nature, must be solitary . . . (CN 1:1554)

Possessing only the verbal "half" of the language of repre-
sentation, Coleridge had to rely on words to make pictures,
but he was aware of their limitations.

After describing Glen Nevish in 1803, for instance, he
declared that the scene would be "simple for a Painter" but
felt that he had depicted it "laboriously" and with "dim
similitudes & slow & dragging Circumlocutions," so that
"they who knew the place best would least recognize it in my
description . . . " (CN 1:1489). At various points in this
lengthy description of Glen Nevish, he attempts rough sket-
ches, including this rather unsuccessful attempt to capture
the scene:

This drawing is followed by the statement: "Silly words I am

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5 During the same week Coleridge wrote in his notebook, "O
Christ, it maddens me that I am not a painter or that Painters
are not I!" (CN 1:1495). Here he seems disappointed not only
because he lacks skill with a brush, but also because such
technical skills have been wasted on painters who lack his
power of mind.
vexed with you." What Coleridge recognizes here is that verbal description is often no more effective than his primitive sketches in communicating the intended picture to the reader—a realization which calls into question the value of such description.

This problem returns us, then, to the question of Coleridge's purpose for writing notebook descriptions. Although some of the material was intended for publication, most of it was not. And as Coleridge pointed out, the descriptions were largely unintelligible to a reader. We can only conclude that the notebooks were a private exercise; the audience for which Coleridge wrote was himself alone. The value of such an exercise, I believe, is twofold: it produces a permanent record of the scene or object viewed and it also enhances the viewing experience, allowing the describer to more thoroughly internalize the scene. In other words, the act of description results in a product which is personally valuable to its creator, but the process of describing the scene also benefits the observer—in a way that is less tangible but (at least for Coleridge) may be even more valuable.

Before exploring this internalizing process, I would like to examine some of the "products" which resulted from his description. Many of these descriptions are best understood, I believe, in the context of tourism and the descriptive writing which tourism engendered. One basic reason for
this belief is that his first period of significant description occurred when he left his homeland for the first time and became a tourist, traveling to Germany in September of 1798. He was equally a tourist when Wordsworth took him to the Lake District for the first time in 1799, shortly after Coleridge returned from Germany. In a pre-photographic culture, the tourist who wanted to document a visual experience (in the hopes of somehow "preserving" it) had to use either description or drawing. Coleridge, of course, had to rely on his verbal skills, although he initiated a technique in Germany which continued during the coming years: the use of small diagrams which accompany his descriptions whenever the spatial relationship of objects cannot be explained verbally.

The notebook entry of 14 May 1798 typifies the descriptions Coleridge wrote during his ten-month stay in Germany. He writes:

Left Elbinrode, May the 14th,--& travelled on for half a mile thro' a wild Country of bleak stony Hills with two or three Caverns visible in their breasts-- & came to Rubelland/charming scene--a few sweet Cottages in a vale that formed a very small amphitheatre, a stream flowing thro' it c. the stream; B.b.b. an half moon Hill with first one over the other like Spectators in Theater with masses of rock-like Obelisks & Walls--c. the stream--a. a low green Hill with Cottages at its foot/D. Bare high Crags with some twenty scattered Firs, & companies of Goats on them . . . (CN 1:415)
Coleridge tries to compose this "scene" verbally, but resorts to the diagram to clearly establish spatial relationships. The amphitheatre-like nature of the scene creates a picturesque sense of enclosure and "boundedness." The description itself recalls many of the characteristics Gilpin often noted in the English landscape--the mixture of rough objects (crags, green hill, cottages, scattered firs) and the winding of the stream through the vale.

Coleridge seems most likely to use the word "picturesque" when describing German scenes that have a particularly "English" flavor. While en route from Osterode to Catlenburg, he remarks how the country abounds in "many a little dell & hollow, & the pine trees picturesquely scattered." Shortly after, he notes: "... the view of the Amtshaus [Amthaus] on the Hill forming a fine English Prospect" (CN 1:418). He not only proudly affirms "English" scenes, but points out one particular defect in many German landscapes: the absence of water. The scenes which Gilpin taught the English to love favored the winding stream; Coleridge expresses disappointment when the German vistas fail to provide it. One detects a particular note of national pride when he writes about this fact to Thomas Poole on 19 May 1799 and then adds: "Our fields & meadows too are so green, that it is common here for novellists & describers to say when they praise a prospect 'It had a British Greenness'--all this & more is wanting in Germany" (CL 1:515).
At times it appears that the "poetic picturesque" of the preceding years has simply been transferred from one place and genre to another. Coleridge's letter to Poole of May 19 (and the May 16 notebook entry on which it is based) sounds remarkably like a prose version of "This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison," with its trip through the dell and emergence out into an open prospect. He tells Poole: "We entered the wood, and walked for two miles under a complete Bower, & as we emerged from it--O I shall never forget that glorious Prospect." As he tries to describe the "dance of Hills" before him, he exclaims:

And all these Hills in all their forms & bearings, which it were such a chaos to describe, were yet in all so pure a Harmony!--before us green corn-field[s] that fill'd the Plain & crept up the opposite Hills in the far-off distance, and closing our view in the angle at the left that high woody Hill on which stands the Mon-arch Ruin of the Plesse--& close by me in a deep dell was a sweet neighbourhood of houses with their Orchards in blossom.--O wherefore was there no water! (CL 1:516)

His enthusiasm over the view (except for its lack of water) and his attempt to locate the landscape elements in spatial relationship to each other recalls his "prospect" descriptions in the conversation poems. As a tourist, Coleridge wants to document these scenes accurately, yet he also finds himself comparing them (sometimes directly, at other times unconsciously) to English prospects. He is also beginning to recognize (as we see in this passage) that his prose description often results in a kind of "chaos" for the reader, who cannot produce from verbal details the "Harmony" appre-
Coleridge had gone to Germany to learn the German language, read German philosophy, and do research for his proposed biography of Gotthold Lessing. It would be misleading, then, to conceive of his visit simply as a picturesque tour. As his notebooks reveal, the landscape is only one of many subjects which receive his attention. Ironically, he seems even more like a tourist when he returns to his homeland and travels the Lake District for the first time with Wordsworth. Coleridge would take up residence in the Lake District in 1800, at which time his descriptions take on the character of a resident-describer. On his initial visit, however, Coleridge traveled as a novice through the heart of England's most popular "tourist" region. His initial visit brought out the tension which the picturesque tended to produce in Coleridge: the need to outwardly condemn the excesses of picturesque "practice" while simultaneously using its rhetoric and taking delight in the composing of landscape scenes.

Over the next two years Coleridge observed and experienced the practice of picturesque touring firsthand. He became acquainted with guidebooks, as evidenced by his proclamation that a certain Lake District scene had been "exaggerated" in the guidebooks of West and Gilpin (CN 1:1207). After settling at Greta Hall in 1800, he commented humorously on the women "reading Gilpin . . . instead of looking at
the places" (CN 1:760) and also complained of Keswick's inundation with "Tourists of all shapes & sizes, & characters" during one-third of the year (CL 1:610). As these remarks indicate, Coleridge could be both annoyed and amused by picturesque travel as a popular phenomenon; he seems interested in distancing himself from its excesses and placing himself "above" its more unsophisticated adherents.

Yet this very act of "self-elevation" may indicate just how much of a tourist Coleridge really was. As Jonathan Culler points out in his discussion of the semiotics of tourism, "wanting to be less touristy than other tourists is part of being a tourist" (158). As Culler explains it, every tourist's goal is the "authentic" experience or scene, not the inauthentic one encountered by the common tourist. Coleridge shows--by trying to rise above tourism--that he is a practicing tourist. One cryptic fragment penned on his first Lakes tour seems to support this view; the isolated sentence reads: "Gold-headed Cane on a pikteresk Toor--Describe the ornaments" (CN 1:508). Coburn speculates in her note that Coleridge is trying to mimic someone's manner of speaking, but Lefebure suggests that Coleridge was "taking a mild dig" at the "fashionable people" for whom picturesque tours "were at that time all the rage" (131). Perhaps Coleridge saw a well-to-do tourist whose affected manner of speaking and valuable traveling accessories made him see how ludicrous the picturesque tour was. Yet the comment appears
in his notebook surrounded by his own landscape descriptions: verbal pictures drawn while on his own "pikteresk Toor."

One other incident from his first Lakes tour of 1799 shows him transcending the institution of picturesque travel while also remaining a part of it. On November 5 Coleridge records in his notebook:

While at Sir Fleming's a servant, red-eyed &c, came to us, to the Road before the Waterfall to reprove us for having passed before the front of the House--/= by our Trespass of Feet with the Trespass on the Eye by his damned White washing! (CN 1:514)

Sir Michael Le Fleming, as Alan Liu discusses at length in *Wordsworth: The Sense of History*, regulated tourists' viewing of Rydal Lower Falls by requiring them to enter a small summer house on his property and see the falls properly "composed" through a window. His mandate epitomizes, as Liu argues, the "social control" typical of the picturesque (88-90). Coleridge and Wordsworth apparently trespassed by passing in front of the house and neglecting its framing device. In one sense, then, Coleridge resists the prescriptive control of the framing device, but in seeking his own vantage point he also "out-picturesques" the picturesque compulsion to find the best view. And while he iconoclastically rejects the rules of Sir Fleming's aesthetic game, he simultaneously condemns his whitewashed buildings for violating the rules of that game. Coleridge thus upholds standards of picturesque taste even as he dismisses them.
To truly see the impact of the picturesque, of course, we must look at the scenic descriptions themselves. Many critics, in their examination of the notebooks, minimize the impact of picturesque aesthetics, arguing that Coleridge created a new kind of tourism and an original style of description. Although these critics correctly note some of Coleridge's original contributions to landscape viewing, they tend to ignore his tendency to compose scenes by carefully describing the relationship of landscape parts to each other. In the initial Lakes tour, he often tries to explain how the various "screens" or "planes" arrange themselves before his view. Travelling between Bampton and Hawkshead on November 1, for instance, Coleridge describes and numbers the "views" that can be seen from a given vantage point.

About the "fifth" such view he says:

... the Walla divides itself now into three compartments... the third running slant down into a Lake in a soft tongue--a most woody promontory/then comes a chasm, then a Hill steep as a nose running behind the embracing Giant's arms/with a chasm interposed--then the high black rampart, Mist-covered terminating all-- (CN 1:510)

Coleridge documents the order in which he sees the elements as he looks at the scene, a process which Harold D. Baker calls "the micro-narrative of perception itself in its continual constitution of the world" (657). By using repeated "thens" as temporal indicators of the viewing sequence, he also echoes a technique seen earlier in his poetry: his use of "nows" to document the order of viewing the prospect in
"Reflections: On Having Left a Place of Retirement." 6

William Ruddick argues that in these descriptions from the first Lakes tour, Coleridge "breaks free from the conventions of picturesque-tourist descriptive writing" by "offering a moving panorama in which the spectator's head is free to move this way and that" (91). The choice of views available in all directions from the top of the mount clearly overwhelms him, and the effect of his description does sound "panoramic," but in one sense a panorama is nothing more than a sequence of static pictures. Coleridge would like to compose a picture of each view, but since he cannot resist the temptation to move his head from one pleasurable scene to another he offers a "shorthand" description of each--usually a comment on the spatial relationship of parts to each other.

The descriptions often appear as frantic attempts to compose a scene quickly and accurately while burdened with the anxious anticipation of the next scene. His insatiable visual appetite made it difficult for him to rest. The attempt to note everything (characteristic of a tourist's first visit to an area) necessarily causes Coleridge to abbreviate his descriptions, but he never abandons the pic-

6A few days later, Coleridge uses this technique again when he ascends Helvellyn for the first time. He writes: "First the lake of Grasmere like a sullen Tarn/then the black ridge of mountain--then as upborne among the other mountains the luminous Cunneston Lake--& far away in the Distance & far to the Lake the glooming Shadow, Wyndermere with its Island . . .(CN 1:515).
ture-making impulse. Near Lowes Water he writes:

We have . . . curved around the Hill--the Bridge, the Plain, & Lowes Water are at my back--& before me--O God, what a scene.--the foreground a sloping wood, sloping down to the River & meadows, the serpent River beyond the River & the wood meadows terminated by Melbreak walled by the Melbreak . . . (CN 1:537)

His syntax becomes garbled by his enthusiasm for the scene, yet he struggles to explain the scene in terms of spatial relationships. As Mediano notes, his descriptions are "dominated by nouns, adjectives or prepositions to define the spatial location of various objects" (17). Yet almost palpable is the tension between his enjoyment of the scene and his impulse to analyze it spatially and thereby preserve it in a verbal document. 7

His interest in spatial composition also is evidenced by the diagrams he draws on this first Lakes tour, using the technique he had begun in Germany. This can best be seen in a numbered diagram of an Ullswater scene. The diagram shows that the scene can be divided into a number of planes, but

7The foregrounds, distances, and "serpent river" of this 1799 description sound particularly Gilpinesque, which raises the question of when Coleridge actually read Gilpin for the first time. He mentions Gilpin in the summer of 1800 and had undoubtedly read the Cumberland guidebook by 1802. One particular echo of Gilpin suggests he may have read it by 1799. Gilpin discusses a plan to introduce goats into the area around Keswick, saying that "in a picturesque light, no ornament is more adapted to a mountainous, and rocky country, than these animals" (214-15). Coleridge, describing the lower end of Ennerdale in 1799, writes of a "rubbishy Crag with sheep picturesque as Goats & as perilous feeding on the very summit" (CN 1:541). Gilpin had also noted how the tendency of goats to wander along precipices added a pleasing element of terror to scenes.
the numbering of the elements in the diagram indicates that landscape viewing does not simply involve moving from foreground to background.

![Diagram of landscape elements]

Coleridge identifies #1 as a cliff, #2 as a slightly curving hill, #3 as a green hill that runs along the lake, #4 as a rustic house with three trees behind it, and #5 as a stone fence. The haphazard numbering presumably documents the order in which his eye "found" the elements--not in a simple front-to-back motion, but by visually "jumping" from point to point in an attempt to integrate all the elements into one scene. To apply the conventional aesthetic terminology: the scene has a "first distance" (#1), a "second distance" (#2), and a stone fence which (by "run[ning] in a trembling circle round a green Lawn") provides a kind of "front screen" to give the scene enclosure (CN 1:549).

This lengthy entry of November 16, which describes a number of other scenes as well, pays particular attention to changing lighting effects, a point noted by Malcolm Andrews in *The Search for the Picturesque*. Andrews rightly observes that Coleridge's informal syntax and "volley of similes" are attempts to describe how the landscape quickly alters in changing light conditions. Andrews also argues, however, that in these passages "we have lost any sense of the larger
composition. He is not interested in side-screens or the relation between foreground and background" (157). This assertion (like Ruddick's attempt to completely divorce Coleridge from picturesque aesthetics) exaggerates Coleridge's uniqueness and ignores what the diagrams show—that he felt compelled to explain the parts-to-whole relationship of a composition. Although Coleridge certainly modifies, and at times even struggles to transcend, the paradigms of picturesque viewing and description, he demonstrates in his descriptions the tension between two central characteristics of the picturesque: the impulse to conceive of a scene in broad, compositional terms, and the recognition of varied, intricate details which divert attention away from the "whole" in favor of the "parts."

At times—especially when a scene is relatively simple—the compositional drive dominates. In what Coburn believes is the first entry Coleridge wrote after settling in the Lakes as a resident, Coleridge describes Dungeon Gill Force in Langdale, writing in his pocket-book (N5 1/2):

Stand to the right hand close, by the bellying rock, so as to see the top of the waterfall only by the Daylight on the wet rock—the arch right above the little imitation of the great waterfall (connections in nature) between the arch & the great Waterfall an arch of Trees—hollies, ash, & 1 birch . . . (CN 1:753)

He particularly notes how nature creates its own formal unity by a repetition of shapes; the arches of the rock and the trees seem to imitate the waterfall's form, resulting in "connections" between the elements of the composition. The
arching form also recalls the dell scene from "Lime-Tree Bower," in which the arching tree brings together the parts of the composition.

On the other hand, another description from about the same time (the summer of 1800) shows how the "multiplicity" of the landscape tended to frustrate the attempt to compose. Even his prose style rambles as he tries to identify each part of this scene, recorded on a tour of Saddleback:

. . . the Derwent water, & the Greta meandering, its right bank (down the stream) being Latterig, hollow & woody--two Vales on my left--mount & mount & mount, the vale now fronting me as I stand--lay down, beautiful effect of the vale of St. John's with Withburne Water on the right in the distance / endless squares of Land, whose multiplicity by multitude acquires unity . . . (CN 1:784)

Because of this scene's complexity, Coleridge has more difficulty making a spatial arrangement of parts. Yet he still acknowledges, as he had done in the simpler description of Dungeon Gill Force, that nature produces an "effect" of visual unity by the repetition of similar yet unique forms--in this case, the endless patchwork of squares spreading out before him.

Coleridge wrote these last two descriptions when he was no longer a tourist of the Lakes, but a resident. His first tour of 1799 had made him seriously consider moving his family to the Lake District, in order to be near both Wordsworth and the influence of such inspiring landscape. In the spring of 1800, having spent most of the winter in London, Coleridge was looking for a house to let, either in
the West country or the Lakes. Although Sara would have preferred the West, Coleridge eventually made arrangements to let Greta Hall in Keswick, a house perfectly situated for viewing the landscape. The Greta Hall property smacked of the picturesque in a number of ways: the house was surrounded by a garden which provided them "delightful walks without passing our garden gate" (CL 1:644), and behind the house was "a declivity planted with flourishing trees . . . at the bottom of which is a most delightful shaded walk by the River Greta" (CL 1:610). The river, in fact, wound around the house serpent-like, so that the house was almost completely surrounded by water.

Even more importantly, the house—which had once been an astronomical observatory—was positioned on a hill and offered different views in all directions. In one sense, moving to the house made an aesthetic statement about the importance of point of view. The windows of his study became "frames" through which he composed different landscape scenes.\(^8\) He wrote to Josiah Wedgwood:

> The room in which I write commands six distinct Landscapes—the two Lakes, the Vale, River, & mountains, & mists, & Clouds, & Sunshine make endless combinations, as if heaven & Earth were forever talking to each other. (CL 1:644)

Coleridge also recorded that the mirror which he used for

\(^8\)Coleridge seems to have even "named" the windows of his study according to their views. In an October, 1802 notebook entry he comments that he could see "Sunshine on the Bassenthwaite window, while Rain & Hail was scourging the Newlands window" (CN 1:1252).
shaving each day (in a pseudo-Claude glass manner) always reflected "Some Mountain or Peak . . . or some slanting Column of misty Sunlight" which, distracting him, inevitably caused him to cut himself.

By becoming a Lakes resident, Coleridge made a commitment (far beyond that of a tourist) to the serious study and internalization of landscape scenes. Not long after moving to Greta Hall, he wrote to William Godwin:

... Mountains & mountainous Scenery, taken collectively & cursorily, must depend for their charms on their novelty-- / they put on their immortal interest then first, when we have resided among them, & learnt to understand their language, their written characters, & intelligible sounds, and all their eloquence so various, so unwearied.--Then you will hear no 'twice-told tale.' (CL 1:620)

Fluency in the language of nature, he asserts, comes only from total immersion in it, which allows a person to understand the subtleties of a language "so various." Although Coleridge still sought out new scenes, his residence at a fixed "vantage point" allowed him to view the same scene repeatedly (especially those seen outside his windows) and note how the composition changed under varying lighting and atmospheric conditions. Such subtle differences could not be ascertained by the tourist (even as the learner of a new language fails to grasp its nuances). In one description from his window he noted how "the Sun setting over Whin-latter sent a river of amber mist athwart the hill GREEN," but also how the colors quickly changed, producing first a "spot of rich yellow" on the top of Walla Crag and finally
one "cheerful gleam over the vale" (CN 1:783). His observations affirmed Gilpin's claim (made in his Cumberland volume) that lighting changes the appearance of landscape "in a mountainous country especially" (1.viii.).

In most of these descriptions, especially after he becomes a Lakes resident, Coleridge is not particularly writing with an eye toward publication. We are struck, then--especially upon reading the notebooks for the first time--by his painstaking efforts to record a scene in all its detail, making sure to accurately "place" each part in relation to the others. For what purpose must the scene be recorded? To a great extent, I believe, his writing is an exercise in observation and scenic internalization. The process of describing the scene forces Coleridge to closely examine its features, and the transformation of those features into a spatial composition "fixes" the landscape for him, turning it into a "picture" more readily stored in the memory. As noted earlier, Coleridge stated that we must "subjugate [the forms of Nature] to our Intellect & voluntary memory" (CN 1:1489)--something which he felt the visual arts helped people to do. His notebooks strongly indicate that the art of descriptive writing performs a similar function. Shortly after making this claim in his notebook (while touring Scotland in 1803), Coleridge observed: "Sadly do I need to have my Imagination enriched with appropriate Images for Shapes--/ Read Architecture, & Ichthyology . . ."
This proposed reading would presumably give Coleridge names (drawn from these specialized fields) that he could apply to shapes for which he had no names. Attaching the shape to a word would "subjugate" it (by his descriptive art) to his intellect, fixing the form in his mind even as landscape art helps fix the scene. Both arts—picturesque landscape and verbal description—help Coleridge bring the scene inside himself and compose it in a mental Claude glass.

This process both heightens the pleasure of the scene he is encountering and also enables him to better remember the scene in the future. He seemed anxious about the transitory nature of memory and would sometimes admonish himself in his notebooks to hold fast to the mental image; he ends one very emotional description, for instance, with the exclamation "O remember it--" (CN 1:1782). Once on the Scotland tour, trying to record a landscape seen in recent days (but not immediately before him), he writes: "Let me not, in the intense vividness of the Remembrance, forget to note down the bridging Rock, cut off alas! from the great fall by the beaked promontory . . ." (CN 1:1495). The pleasure and intensity of the remembrance conflict with the discipline required to record it accurately; tempted to indulge himself with the memory, Coleridge realizes that the recorded memory would survive as a source for future pleasure.

The pleasure produced by a scene and the intellectual
effort required to understand it in formal terms combine to create some of the tension in these descriptions, but that is so because this tension is an inherent part of the picturesque. The picturesque, in other words, is simultaneously an emotional encounter with the landscape and an intellectual analysis of its compositional features. Martin Price notes that the use of the word "interesting" to describe the picturesque reveals its "cool and non-committal" status (260); at other times, however, the picturesque sounds quite passionate, as when Gilpin speaks (in his Essay on Prints) of a scene that "strikes us beyond the power of thought," causing us to "rather feel, than survey it" (qtd. in Greaves 131). As Alan Liu states, it can create in the audience an oxymoronic "enthusiastic calm" (65). The viewer's "contribution" in picturesque aesthetics consists of both intellect and passion. As Coleridge pointed out, the effect of "wholeness" in the picturesque is felt, but this can happen only insofar as the individual parts are seen—something which his detailed description enabled him to do.

Coleridge's understanding of the collaboration of passion and intellect in landscape viewing may be partially indebted to the German philosopher Christian Garve, whose name Coleridge mentioned in a notebook entry which I cited in the first chapter. In this passage, written in 1803, Coleridge claimed that he hoped to fill the remaining pages of a pocket-book with "Notes &c on the Picturesque, & the
Pleasures of natural Scenery--/from Garve, Price, &c" (CN 1:1676). In associating the picturesque with the pleasures of landscape viewing, Coleridge invokes not only Uvedale Price but also Christian Garve. Although Coleridge planned to fill the notebook with comments on the picturesque, the only other entry actually made at this time (in a notebook used primarily in 1799) is a translation and commentary on passages from Garve's "On Some Beauties of Mountainous Regions."

Coburn points out that Garve's ideas may have been very appealing to Coleridge; I would add that they would also have reinforced his developing understanding of the picturesque. Garve argues that some people, though sensible to beauty, require reflection to hold on to their sensuous impressions. For these people, says Coburn (in her summary of Garve):

Their full enjoyment of beauty and harmony follows upon this act of reflection about what they have seen and heard and why it pleased them. In this way they imprint their perception of an object upon the mind and render it possible, by the power of recollection and in-imag-ing, to renew the pleasures even in its absence. (CN 1:1675n)

Coleridge could easily have seen himself as one of these people who uses reflection and analysis to transform a visual image into a more permanent mental image, from which he then can extract even greater aesthetic pleasure. This would further explain his motivation for writing minutely detailed descriptions which are intended only for his own
eyes; writing and re-reading the descriptions are acts of "in-imaging" which enhance the aesthetic pleasure he receives from the landscape. Picturesque landscape aesthetics requires a similar intellectualization or "in-imaging" of the landscape, so Coleridge's plan to use Garve in his discussion of the picturesque seems perfectly natural. The picturesque could be a useful tool—not an oppressive or restrictive aesthetic—for those who seek the full pleasure of the scene through reflection upon it.

In a letter Coleridge wrote to his wife, he described himself in a similar way, characterizing his encounters with external nature as a process of mental and emotional internalization. Attempting to explain how his mental and emotional makeup differ from hers, he writes to her on 13 November 1802:  

I seem to exist, as it were, almost wholly within myself, in thoughts rather than in things, in a particular warmth felt all over me, but chiefly felt about my heart & breast; & am connected with things without me by the pleasurable sense of their immediate Beauty or Loveliness, and not at all by my Knowledge of their average value in the minds of people in general . . . (CL 2:881)

Whereas practical-minded Sara undoubtedly saw external objects primarily for their value, Coleridge transformed the "things without" into "thoughts," moving the experience completely "within [him]self." Not simply a mental process, however, this internalization happens largely because he "connects" with outward forms by the feeling of aesthetic pleasure he gets from them. In his prose descriptions,
Coleridge similarly brings a landscape scene into his "thoughts" while also feeling, "about [his] heart & breast," the "immediate Beauty" of it. This mental/emotional act of landscape documentation not only serves to provide him with a meaningful product, but it also affords him the pleasure of the process.

After settling at Greta Hall, Coleridge went through a "honeymoon phase" as a Lakes resident, according to Ruddick, which culminated in "the great range walk of 31 August 1800," a trip from Keswick to Grasmere which took him over the mount of Helvellyn (96). Although he had been to the top of Helvellyn with Wordsworth in 1799, he had never crossed it coming from the north. The descriptions he writes on this long, one-day journey perfectly illustrate the tension he felt when trying to "fix" or "compose" a scene to which he had a powerful emotional response. This strenuous climb over treacherous terrain, as Ruddick rightly observes, differs markedly from the comfortable carriage or boat rides typically taken by picturesque tourists (89). Coleridge completed this walk to Grasmere at 11:00 p.m., having made parts of the perilous journey--over unfamiliar terrain--in the dark. Lefebure says of this solitary, moon-light journey: "It is doubtful whether anyone had ever done it before" (137).^9

^9Lefebure also adds that upon Coleridge's arrival at Grasmere, Dorothy "broiled Coleridge a chop" and William (who had gone to bed) "emerged in his dressing-gown," after which
Obviously moved by the views he saw that day from Helvellyn, Coleridge wrote one of his longest notebook entries, filling both sides of 16 pages in his pocket-book. The tone of these descriptions reveals Coleridge's love for the high vantage point, which Ruddick says separated him from the Wordsworths and from most picturesque tourists (90, 93). The point, again, is valid (numerous scholars call the low vantage point particularly characteristic of the picturesque) but even Gilpin maintained that picturesque scenes could be constructed from higher vantage points: side-screens were simply replaced by planes receding into the distance. Gilpin himself ascended Helvellyn, where he observed that "these vast regions, whose parts are thus absorbed in the immensity of the whole, have the strongest effect on the imagination. They distend the mind, and fix it in a kind of stupor" (Cumberland 1:170). Coleridge expresses a similar awe-like stupor (and a corresponding activation of the imagination) as he composes scenes atop Helvellyn.

"How populous is the landscape," Coleridge exclaims at one point in this entry, attempting to count and identify various landforms. He strives to arrange and order them spatially, counting "7 great Mountains, one behind another" as he looks in one direction; turning, (and using Gilpin-
esque language) he sees "4 distances/ in one direction I count 9--yea, 10." As he approaches the top of a ridge he primes himself for the aesthetic effect, purposely avoiding looking back at the scene until he reaches the summit. There he turns to look back at familiar territory, but this time from a completely new perspective.

In the passionate tone of his long, run-together sentences we see the tension embodied: a cool, detached response to the scene would be impossible, yet passionate ramblings will not provide an accurate record of the scene. His rambling prose chronicles the act of passionate viewing more accurately than it depicts the appearance of the scenes. Such descriptions, as Harold Baker explains it, constitute an "immersion in a continual present-tense of pure phenomenality" (667). Looking back towards Ullswater from atop Helvellyn, he exclaims:

What a scene! nothing behind me!--as if it would be an affront to that which fronts me!--two complete reaches of Ullswater, then a noble Tongue of a Hill <Glenruddin Screes, where the King of Patterdale keeps his goats> intercepts by me, and then I see it again, about the half of the Patterdale reach, with its two vales, both its own, like a lake by itself, and away up in the mountains on the right two Tarns--and close on my right those precipices stained with green amid their nakedness, & ridges, tents, embracing semicircles--I front to them--there are two, and there is a narrow ridge between them . . .(CN 1:798)

A reader struggles to transform this verbal rendering into a visual scene. If the description were intended for an audience, it might be deemed a failure, but it functions primarily to make the scene real for Coleridge himself, both
now as he internalizes the scene and later in his own subsequent readings, when even a fragmentary description will help recall the image stored in his mind—an image which his act of description helped to solidify.

Landscape descriptions of this kind dominated the notebooks of 1799 and 1800, but a few months after the great range-walk over Helvellyn, the descriptive prose suddenly disappeared. For a period of two years Coleridge recorded very few landscape scenes, probably because he had been overwhelmed by physical and emotional problems which kept him from enjoying the pleasures of nature. The winter of 1801 brought serious illness to Coleridge, accompanied by a frustrating inability to write. His life was further complicated by his growing love for Sara Hutchinson; this impossible, guilt-inducing relationship occupied increasingly greater amounts of his time and energy. This included an extended visit with her in the summer of 1801, which certainly only exacerbated his marital discord. In the fall of 1801 he returned to London to write temporarily for the Morning Post. The notebooks of this year are filled both with notes from his readings in metaphysics and with cryptic references to his love for Sara. His problems receive ultimate expression in the "Verse Letter to Sara"—the original version of "Dejection"—in April, 1802, wherein he lays bare not only the emotional turmoil caused by their relationship but also Coleridge's perceived loss of his creative power.
The nadir of this "dejection crisis" occurs in the early spring, and by the summer the worst seems to be over. A reconciliation of sorts even improves his relationship with his wife, at least temporarily.

Health and greater happiness return, then, in 1802, at which time another two-year phase of touring and writing occurs. The descriptions of 1802-1803 are like those of 1799-1800 in many ways, but I see two notable differences. One new feature of the 1802 journals is the use of the word "picturesque," which appears more during this phase than at any other time. Near the end of the 1800 fell-walks (on September 9) Coleridge had described in his notebook a scene of "houses with the woods at their back, in the best stile of picturesque & a little way down the river a Boat-house of bushes" (CN 1:804). Although he never explained what made this scene archetypally picturesque, it contained one trait common to most of the descriptions labeled "picturesque" in 1802--the mixture of nature and artifice, scenes in which rustic houses or bridges combine with landscape forms.

The word "picturesque" reappears in the account of Coleridge's nine-day walking tour of August, 1802 perhaps because this trip--more than most others--was a carefully planned, deliberate "tour" of landscape scenes, probably designed to celebrate a return of health and spirits.¹⁰

¹⁰As previously noted, this tour certainly differed from the typical picturesque tour in its demanding walks over rugged terrain. This particular tour is the one which compels
Using William Hutchinson's 1794 *History of the Country of Cumberland* as a guide, he starts by drawing a map of the proposed route.\(^{11}\) Since he makes the comment about the cataract "extravagantly exaggerated by West and Gilpin" (*CN* 1:1207) on this particular trip, he may have consulted these guide books before leaving as well. He documents his trip in two ways, both by notebook writing and by a daily, continuing journal-letter to Sara Hutchinson.

The now-familiar picturesque "signals" recur throughout the description of this tour: one scene mixing wild and cultivated elements, all bathed in the "watery gleam" of the setting sun (*CN* 1:1207); criticism of the "tyrannically strait parallelogram enclosures" at Egremont Castle--"neutralized", however, by a certain "variety" (*CN* 1:1211); frustrated attempts to diagram what cannot be described ("impossible to conceive it without a Drawing," he writes in *CN* 1:1213); exasperation over the failure of both words and pictures to truly recreate the landscape (in nature, he says in *CN* 1:1227, "20 fold more than you draw, appears to you, each part modified by all the rest"). To all of this, however, Coleridge adds the word "picturesque" with greater

Richard Holmes to assert that Coleridge was "inventing a new kind of Romantic tourism" (328). Nonetheless, his deliberate planning of the route makes him resemble tourists rather closely.

\(^{11}\)See Ruddick (98) and Lefebure (139) on Coleridge's use of Hutchinson and the notebook itself (*CN* 1:1206) for a picture of the map.
regularity—especially to scenes involving human subjects and human artifacts. Explicit references to painting also heighten the sense of "view-hunting" which emerges from his notes of this tour.\textsuperscript{12}

Often it is difficult to determine exactly what causes Coleridge to apply the word "picturesque" to a particular scene. It serves, for instance, as the "end-punctuation" to this description of a seacoast scene from his 1802 tour:

The Seaward view very nicely wooded/3 Ships in view--4 one horse carts in a file on the top of the Fell to my Left, 3 boys, each one on his Horse, one Girl in her cart--picturesque. (CN 1:1212)

We see here his typical emphasis on spatial arrangement, but the word "picturesque" seems to be prompted by the boys, the horse, and the girl in her cart—archetypal elements of genre paintings, which typically portrayed rustic, peasant characters engaged in everyday activities. Coleridge later referred to a picture of this type—very popular among British collectors in the 18th century—when discussing the impact of visual art: the scene "of the Cottagers bu Du Sart Engraved by Woollett" (CN 2:1907).\textsuperscript{13} When the touring Coleridge sees these characters in the landscape he says they

\textsuperscript{12}In the first entry from this tour, for instance, he describes a hill as "lying flat upon Skiddaw, like a Painting" and later calls the prospect "a scene for Salvator Rosa" (CN 1:1207).

\textsuperscript{13}Coleridge mentioned this Woollett engraving in February, 1804 (shortly before leaving for Malta). As I noted in the first chapter, he uses this engraving as an example of his assertion that "Painting & Engravings sends us back with new Eyes to Nature."
look "like a picture" because he has seen pictures like it; he has found in nature, in other words, a scene codified by art. The taste for such scenes is reflected in Gilpin as well, who calls country peasants "the picturesque inhabitants of the landscape" and rejects "dressed-out figures and gaudy carriages" as unsuitable for a picturesque scene (Cumberland 2:43).

At least two such scenes are also called "picturesque" by Coleridge in his account of the Scotland tour, which he took one year later. In one case he records:

Two Children, in the rain, under one cloak, their arms round each other, their two faces, a pair!--the drapery, &c, very picturesque.--A Fisherman's Hut/the Oar, the one end on the ground, leaning on the Cottage, the broad end rising a few Inches above the little Chimney--an image for a poet. (CN 1:1468)

Since this scene contains no landscape features at all, its status as "picturesque" can only be accounted for by associations with painting. A description of a similarly "painted" scene appears in the notebook a few days later when Coleridge writes: "I found a Distillery <all under and among Foliage,>" and adds "which with its Hogs &c sufficient picturesque" (CN 1:1475). Although it would be dangerous to conclude too much from these two references, I believe they reflect the influence of painter and art collector Sir George Beaumont, with whom Coleridge had become friends not long before taking the Scotland tour. Coleridge's ideas about the picturesque would undoubtedly have been affected by this landscape painter and connoisseur of visual art, whose
influence on Coleridge I will address in the following chapter. It appears that Coleridge’s understanding of the picturesque, which was initially influenced most by the poetic tradition, later became broadened by virtue of his extensive touring and description, only to expand further as a result of learning about the visual arts.

The other feature which sets the 1802-1803 descriptions apart from the ones he wrote in 1799-1800 is the tendency to evaluate scenes—to present himself as an experienced connoisseur who, having internalized the standards of landscape taste, can render sound judgments upon them. After returning from the August, 1802 tour he applied his critical skills in a particularly concrete way by becoming a sort of picturesque real estate agent. His letters to his friend William Sotheby indicate that he was trying to find him a Lake District residence with a suitable view. He writes on 10 September that "Pocklington will not sell his House" (CL 2:867), then suggests on September 19th that "If it were possible to find a truly fine situation . . . it would certainly be better economy to build a House" (CL 2:868). Coleridge has a particular place in mind, but he laments the absence of available land for building a house. As he evaluates possible locations, he echoes descriptors used by tourists, telling Sotheby:

The one at Applethwaite is indeed in point of the exquisitely picturesque confined view on the one side, & the glorious view of the whole vale & lakes on the other / in point of the dryness of the Roads immediately around,
& the number of lovely Walks close by--the place, to which I have long & uniformly given the preference over any other spot in the whole Vale . . . (CL 2:869)

If only land were available, Sotheby could build a house on this most perfect of spots, which would give him a perpetual view of a bounded, enclosed scene described as "exquisitely picturesque."14 The contingency of tourism could thus be fixed and stabilized in a permanent picture, like the ones Coleridge enjoyed from the windows of Greta Hall.

Three years of landscape viewing (dating from the first tour with Wordsworth in 1799) had turned Coleridge into a Lakes expert. Having acquired and assimilated an enormous amount of perceptual data about Lakeland scenes, he was now ready to apply these principles to the evaluation of new scenes. The trip to Scotland with the Wordsworths in August/September, 1803 gave him a perfect opportunity for this. We see the three of them portrayed as landscape connoisseurs in an humorous anecdote based on this trip--a story which Coleridge loved to relate. This story, which he told in lectures in 1808 and also in 1811-12 (and also mentioned in the Genial Criticism essays) also appears in a similar form in the journal of Dorothy Wordsworth, who recorded it with great amusement.

Dorothy records that her brother and Coleridge had

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14On the August tour (one month earlier), Coleridge similarly associated the picturesque with enclosure, labeling as "eminently picturesque" a scene in which ridges were described as "running like Arms & confining the middle view to these level fields on high ground" (CN 1:1225).
been discussing "the precise meaning of the words grand, majestic, sublime, etc." (JDW 1:223) not long before coming upon the falls at Clyde. There Coleridge thought deeply about which term best described the falls, finally settling upon "majestic." At this point, as an attendee at Coleridge's lecture records:

... a lady and gentleman came up neither of whose faces bore much of the stamp of wisdom & the first word the gentleman uttered was "It is very majestic." -- Coleridge was much pleased to find a concurrent opinion & complimented the person on the choice of his term in warm language. "Yes Sir" replies the gentleman, "I say it is very majestic, it is sublime & it is beautiful and it is grand & picturesque" -- "Aye" added the lady, "it is the prettiest thing I ever saw." -- Coleridge was not a little disconcerted. (LOL 1:193)

Dorothy records that Coleridge could "make no answer" to the couple but "came to us and related the story, laughing heartily" (JDW 1:223). The story depicts Coleridge as a tourist who is still trying to distance himself from the unsophisticated tourism of the masses, expressing anxiety over the popular confusion of aesthetic terms. Despite his ability to laugh at the story, we can see that he takes the definition of aesthetic terms seriously. At this particular time (on the Scotland trip and in the months immediately thereafter) Coleridge was drawing conclusions based on his years of landscape viewing; his most philosophical remarks about the picturesque emerge from these months of late 1803 and early 1804. The ignorance of the amateur tourist, then, was all the more frustrating to the sophisticated aesthete-
The Scotland tour, in terms of its scope, was Coleridge's most remarkable effort as a tourist. Wordsworth proposed the trip to Coleridge, thinking it might help alleviate Coleridge's ill health. They planned to ride in an Irish jaunting car (a light carriage pulled by a horse) so Coleridge would not have to endure the rigors of walking. Departing the Lakes on August 15, 1803, Coleridge and the Wordsworths traveled together for two weeks, after which time they separated. The Wordsworths took the carriage and Coleridge set off on foot, walking a remarkable 263 miles in eight days. His letters from this tour are dominated by reports of poor health, exhaustion, pain, nightmares, and lack of funds. His shoes began to fall apart, and Coleridge walked many miles barefoot. Despite the agonies of the trip, Coleridge methodically documented scenes in his notebook. In addition to viewing landscape, Coleridge met Sir Walter Scott in Edinburgh, making the interesting observation that Scott's house is "divinely situated" and (thinking undoubtedly of himself at Greta Hall) declared that "the Monks formerly, but the Poets now, know where to fix their Habitations" (CL 2:989).

Given the formidable obstacles Coleridge endured on this exhausting trip, his tour contrasts sharply with the comfortable excursions of most fashionable tourists. On the other hand, this trip may be the most tourist-like of all in its evaluative pronouncements on scenery. In one entry he
uses the phrases "good effect" or "fine effect" three different times when judging prospects (CN 1:1449). On another occasion he criticizes a scene of mountain ridges for being "odd & void of connection or harmonizing principle" (CN 1:1489); he criticizes another for having "too few Houses, too little motion" (CN 1:1468). When the trip ends, he makes his summative judgment on Scotland in a letter to Southey: "There are about four Things worth going to Scotland for, to one who has been in Cumberland and Westmoreland" (CL 2:989).

Dorothy's journal corroborates this attitude of "landscape connoisseurship" shared by the three travelers. The incident cited at the beginning of chapter one (references to "side-screens" and exclamations of "That's what we wanted!") creates a vivid picture of these traveling companions as scene-seekers. Still, their tastes differed. The Wordsworths took a ferry across Loch Katrine on August 27 while Coleridge chose to walk around the lake, always in search of better views, continually making notations ("I saw such a visionary Scene!" he writes, or "as I went on, the view varied and improved in distinctness") (CN 1:1471). A few days later Coleridge left the Wordsworths and continued on alone, beginning his eight-day, 263-mile walk.

15Dorothy records that the ferry man who took them across the lake would say, "'This is a bonny part,' and he always chose the bonniest, with greater skill than our prospect-hunters and 'picturesque travelers'. . ." She seems intent on rising above the mere "prospect-hunters" while sounding remarkably like one.
Coleridge made most of his direct remarks about the picturesque (all of which were cited in chapter 1) during this final segment of the "prose-description" phase, either on the Scotland trip or in the months just after. While in Scotland in September, he asserted (probably as a result of a debate with the Wordsworths) that "illustrat[ing] Nature by Art"--far from being undignified--actually helps "bring the forms of Nature within our voluntary memory" (CN 1: 1489). In November he resolved to fill the remainder of N 3 1/2 (the notebook he had taken to Germany in 1799) with notes on the picturesque, based on Price and Garve. In December he debated with Dorothy Wordsworth whether the smooth horse is picturesque or beautiful (a discussion undoubtedly based on their reading of Gilpin). More importantly, we see him struggling in this entry with theoretical questions to which he has no clear answers--questions about what "causes" the picturesque experience, whether the picturesque is a type of beauty or a distinct aesthetic category, and whether the picturesque depends upon knowledge of art.

Two months later, while readying himself for his passage to Malta, Coleridge made the crucial picturesque observation that "Art sends us back to nature with new Eyes" (CN 2:1907). In April he left for Malta, and the period of landscape viewing and picturesque theorizing culminated in the lengthy discussion of the "picturesque effects of a
ship." In this analysis we see that the viewer's apprehension of a composition lies at the heart of the Coleridgean picturesque; the abstract qualities he associates with the picturesque constitute a distillation of ideas learned over four years of landscape viewing. As he notes the "harmony of the Lines," the "strongly felt variety," the sense of "proportion," the connections produced by repeated forms, the "Lights & Shades," and the "Passion" which "unifies," we feel that he could be describing not a ship but a favorite Lakes scene (CN 2:2012). His definition of the picturesque, as Modiano observes, emphasizes "the manner in which a perceiver apprehends the relationship of parts to the whole" (23)--and an abstract definition of this kind confers "picturesque" status on composed scenes of varying subject matter.

Not long after arriving in Malta, Coleridge made a remark which aptly characterizes his own purpose and method in his notebook description. In what Coburn calls "one of the early forms of his distinction between Imagination and Fancy," Coleridge contrasts men of "discontinuous minds" (who utilize Wit) with men of "continuous minds," whose "property and prerogative," he says, is "the disjunction conjunctive of the sudden Images seized on from external Contingents by Passion & Imagination (which is Passion eagle-eyed) . . ." (CN 2:2112). "Eagle-eyed passion," his characterization of the imagination, perfectly depicts the
combined cognitive/emotional dimensions of his landscape descriptions written during this five-year phase. Looking carefully--and with great feeling--he used his powers of description to bring the landscape imaginatively inside himself.

With precisely this same "eagle-eyed passion," Coleridge approached the world of visual art, which began to come to life for him when he came under the influence of Sir George Beaumont. Having learned some important lessons from Beaumont, Coleridge left for the Mediterranean, where he not only encountered the art treasures of Italy but also made the acquaintance of another artist/teacher, the painter Washington Allston. As Coleridge studied paintings and learned from visual artists, he expanded in yet another direction his understanding of how scenes are composed. And even as his picturesque scenes had begun to "mix" artificial with natural elements, so did Coleridge add the visual arts to the mixture of other elements (natural landscape, poetry, prose description) which comprised his evolving understanding of the picturesque. In the next chapter I explore the process by which painting became an important part of this rich interpenetration of art and nature.
CHAPTER 4
LIVING WITH(IN) THE PICTURE: BEAUMONT, ALLSTON, AND THE IMPACT OF PAINTING ON THE COLERIDGEAN PICTURESQUE

When Coleridge sailed from Portsmouth for Malta in April of 1804, his mind was filled not only with landscape images from the recent years of travel but also with scenes composed by the artist’s pencil or brush. His friend Sir George Beaumont had opened a window--by his collection of masterworks and his own paintings and drawings--onto a world of visual art which Coleridge gladly entered. On the Mediterranean journey he was about to take, he greatly expanded this nascent awareness of "painted" scenes by confronting many of the masterpieces of Italian art. In Rome, Coleridge found another aesthetic tutor in the person of Washington Allston, a painter who (even as Beaumont had done in the previous year) helped Coleridge understand scenic composition not just from a tourist’s point of view but from a painter’s. In addition to helping Coleridge understand painting, Allston also accompanied him in viewing the very landscapes which had originally inspired the picturesque canvases of Claude and Poussin in the seventeenth century. In this way Coleridge studied the "originals" that lay behind the paintings which had become normative in terms of
picturesque composition. In the five-year period, then, between his introduction to Beaumont's art in 1803 and his return from Italy in 1807, Coleridge received an education in the visual arts and grafted them onto his evolving understanding of the picturesque.

Had Coleridge been a common tourist, we might have been able to find in his travel descriptions the sum total of his picturesque expression. But because he was sophisticated enough to explore the ways in which the artist's principles lay behind picturesque aesthetics, we must also look, I believe, at his encounters with visual art to fully understand how he struggled to define the picturesque. Others have focused almost exclusively on the poetry or on the prose descriptions to locate Coleridge's debt to the picturesque. While these are obviously important—as I have tried to point out in the first three chapters—they omit one key element of the picture: in the years immediately following the writing of his landscape poetry and prose descriptions, Coleridge began to learn a great deal about visual art, causing him to see "pictures" not just as landscape prospects but as artists' constructs. I believe that Coleridge, given his intellectual propensity for building all-inclusive explanatory systems, tried to graft these principles of painting onto his current understanding of the picturesque, producing thereby a "picture-making" rubric which explained not only the scenes composed by the tourist but also those
made by the artist.

To construct a complete picture of how Coleridge came to think about the picturesque, we must examine the events of 1803 to 1807, when art, landscape viewing, poetry, gardening—all the picturesque's components—clustered together in Coleridge's experiences. Although the poetic passages and prose descriptions might provide precise images of picturesque scenes, the events of this time best illustrate how Coleridge saw nature mediated by art and one artform mediated by another. At the center of this period is the Italian journey, in which the study of art and the viewing of landscape scenes were closely juxtaposed, causing him to think of one in terms of the other. Bracketing this period are two key events involving Beaumont which show Coleridge involved in "making" the picturesque. The first was a plan by Coleridge to write a series of poems based on Beaumont's sketches and paintings, in which he hoped to "translate" the essence of visual artworks into verbal form. This Coleridge was planning just before leaving for Malta. When Coleridge returned from Malta in 1807, he directly experienced another kind of picturesque creation, this time on Beaumont's Coleorton estate. Arriving at Coleorton, Coleridge found Wordsworth designing a picturesque winter garden for the Coleorton grounds, the construction of which he observed during his three-month stay. In all of these experiences, Coleridge broadened his understanding of the picturesque by
interacting with artists who had composed—or were in the process of composing—visual scenes.

Carl Woodring, in his essay "What Coleridge Thought of Pictures," correctly asserts that "the graphic arts came into full existence for Coleridge" (91) as a result of meeting Sir George Beaumont in 1803, after which time Coleridge "looked at pictures and landscapes with eyes enriched by the words of books and friends concerning the picturesque and the sublime" (105). Coleridge could hardly have found a more qualified teacher, for Beaumont (as both painter and collector) was an "acknowledged authority" on the subject; in the first decade of the nineteenth century he was "one of the half dozen whose names recur whenever there is any public matter relating to art," says Margaret Greaves (142).

Because of his expertise, he was a member of the "Select Committee" which planned the British Institution and was involved in the earliest discussions of the creation of the National Gallery. Beaumont's offer of his own paintings to the nation in 1823 helped convince the British government to purchase the collection of the late John Angerstein and use these two collections as the core of the National Gallery.

Long before the National Gallery existed, however, Coleridge had become familiar with those paintings in Beaumont's collection and had also seen (through Beaumont's letter of introduction) Angerstein's collection. Just before leaving for Malta in 1804, Coleridge wrote to Southey
about the "Picture Room" at Beaumont's house in Grosvenor Square in London, where he had been staying while awaiting his passage to the Mediterranean. About the "exquisite" pictures he says:

The famous Rubens, two Claudes, a Gaspar Poussin!! & yet Sir George's own Landscapes hang by them undishonored / while the Niobe of Wilson, which in poetic Conception & form is a first-rate & sublime Landscape, with the ex­ception of the Sharp-shooters in the Clouds--yet in colouring looks quite mealy and pastey by comparison. (CL 2:1110)

From this remark we learn a number of things about Cole­ridge's education in painting. First, since landscapes figured prominently in Beaumont's collection, Coleridge learned to discuss compositional principles using landscape examples. Wilson's Niobe, he concluded, displayed a formal excellence despite its poor coloring. Beaumont displayed a talent for composition equal to that of the masters who served as his models. We also learn that Coleridge was familiar with (and perhaps impressed by, if the two exclama­tion marks are to be taken seriously) the work of Claude and of Gaspar Poussin, probably the two greatest contributors to the British sense of picturesque composition.¹

Of the three Claudes which Beaumont eventually gave to the National Gallery, the best-known (and also Beaumont's favorite) was Landscape With Hagar and the Angel. Beaumont

¹Manwaring notes how travel writer Mariana Starke, in her Letters from Italy, described paintings by putting multiple exclamation points ("like stars in Baedeker") behind the names of artists like Claude and Poussin (Manwaring 60). Coleridge's exclamation points seem to work in a similar way.
cared so much for this small canvas (52x43 cm) that, after donating his collection to the National Gallery, he asked that this work be returned to him during the remainder of his lifetime.


He supposedly "carried it with him whenever changing
residence between Coleorton Hall and Grosvenor Square" so that he would have it with him all the time (DNB 2:56-57). Alan Liu asserts that Wordsworth first learned about the "Claudian vision" from this painting (67), and the same is undoubtedly true for Coleridge. The painting leads the viewer from the foreground figures of Hagar and the angel through a series of receding planes--first the trees behind the figures, then the water in the middle-ground, then the arched bridge so often found in picturesque scenes, finally culminating in a series of distances--a city on a rocky hill and two ranges of indistinct, distant mountains shrouded in haze. Claudian landscapes of this kind had played a prominent role in teaching the English how to compose landscapes; the guidebook illustrators, by using similar principles, taught a mediated Claudian vision to tourists who had never even seen a Claude. Coleridge's notebooks and letters provide no specific comments on Claude's Hagar, so we can only speculate about his reaction to it. What does seem certain is that the painting--as Beaumont's prized possession (a kind of consoling companion)--must have been the source of some conversation between them, as Beaumont tutored Coleridge in painting. Beaumont would certainly have tried to convince Coleridge of its merits. Given Coleridge's interest in composed landscapes (as seen in the poems and prose descriptions), it seems likely he would have admired his friend's beloved canvas.
Coleridge learned not only from Beaumont's collection, however, but also from Beaumont's own paintings and drawings, which (as he told Southey) could be honorably hung alongside the masterpieces he collected. Beaumont had been a student of Richard Wilson, whose "Italianate landscapes"—inspired by his visits to Rome—"dominated British oil painting" in the mid-eighteenth century (Wordsworth, Jaye, and Woof 90). Hunt observes that Wilson's style consisted of a "Claudian mode" modified by Dutch influences (133). Even as Wilson had "applied the arcadian vision of Claude to British subject matter" (Wordsworth, Jaye, and Woof 221), Beaumont applied many of the principles of Wilson, his teacher, to Lake District scenes. Manwaring notes that Beaumont also looked to the picturesque masters for inspiration; he was known to paint "with a picture of Gaspar Poussin's beside his easel" (70).

Picturesque scenes of the Lakes were in fact Beaumont's favorite subject; over two hundred of his drawings and paintings of the Lakes survive (Wordsworth, Jaye, and Woof 221). Christopher Hussey's assertion that Beaumont had "the picturesque mind" (263) seems an accurate one, based on this abundance of picturesque scene-making. The painter Sir David Wilkie (a Beaumont protege) said that Beaumont's paintings constituted "a poetical recollection rather than a minute detail of nature; full of sentiment and feeling, and eminently successful in what was his chief
delight--a rich and deep tone of colouring" (qtd. in Greaves 99). In Wilkie's evaluation of Beaumont we hear interesting echoes of Coleridge's distrust for minute detail and his assertion that "feeling" and the "colouring of the imagination" unify the picturesque composition. Wilkie here expresses what Coleridge had found in Beaumont: a fellow poet who--although working in a different medium--also composed scenes and imbued them with feeling.

One of the best testimonies to Beaumont's status as a picturesque artist can be seen in Thomas Hearne's sketch *Sir George Beaumont and Joseph Farington Sketching a Waterfall*, a work which portrays Beaumont in the act of documenting an archetypally picturesque scene. Based on a landscape tour to the Lakes taken by Beaumont, Farington, and Hearne in 1777 (where they had been lured, probably, by reading Gray's *Journal*), the sketch perfectly captures the picturesque artist at work. In the sketch we see Beaumont, having set up his easel at the perfect vantage point, converting the landscape into a composed scene. What ties this scene to Coleridge, however, is the fact that Beaumont and Farington are shown painting Ladore Falls, a place of special meaning to Coleridge. Only a few months after meeting Beaumont, Coleridge declared that "the best and most impressive view in all the Lake Country" was a scene containing Ladore Falls--his description of which I quoted at length in the beginning of chapter 3. Beaumont, then, long before having
met Coleridge, demonstrated his love for the same scene—and his aesthetic kinship with the poet—by composing it in his own medium.  


Hearne's sketch also contains an allusion to Claude (as is pointed out in *William Wordsworth and the Age of English Romanticism*), for in his painting *Morning*, Claude had produced a self-conscious portrait of himself under an umbrella (like the umbrellas sheltering Beaumont and Farington) painting a landscape outside Rome (90-92).
Coleridge became acquainted with Beaumont in the summer of 1803 when—quite by accident—Beaumont leased half of Greta Hall from William Jackson in order to spend time in the Lakes painting, "only to discover that the other part of the same house was leased by Coleridge" (Greaves 107). A close friendship quickly developed, as their letters from the next year reveal. Within a few months of meeting Beaumont, Coleridge wrote (in a February, 1804 letter to John Rickman) that he had "learned as much from Sir George respecting Pictures & Painting and Painters as I ever learnt on any subject from any man in the same Space of Time." He added, with a note reflecting his growing connoisseurship: "A man may employ time far worse than in learning how to look at a picture judiciously" (CL 2:1063).

Shortly after meeting Beaumont in the summer of 1803 (and immediately after returning from the Scotland trip with the Wordsworths) Coleridge planned a project that shows the extent to which he had been affected by his friend's paintings and drawings. On 22 September 1803 he wrote to Beaumont: "In a few weeks I shall, If I live & am tolerably well, send you three Specimens of my Translations from your Drawings. If you should really like them, I will go on & make a Volume" (CL 2:995). By calling these proposed poems

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3 As Greaves points out, Coleridge and Beaumont had actually met for the first time earlier that spring, at a London dinner at Sotheby's. Beaumont's initial reaction to Coleridge was negative.
"translations" of Beaumont's artworks, he underscores their kinship as artists and suggests that the "poesy of the eye" (as he would call painting in the Genial Criticism essays) might be "translated" into a sister language--his own "poesy of the ear." Coleridge wrote again to Beaumont concerning this project on 1 October 1803:

... Of the poems on your Sketches, dear Sir George! I hope thus much / that they will give evidence that the Drawings acted upon my mind as Nature does, in it's after workings--they have mingled with my Thoughts, & furnished Forms to my Feelings.-- (CL 2:1004)

Here we glimpse the extent to which art has joined with nature in filling Coleridge's mind with pictures. Beaumont's drawings are producing an effect similar to that which landscape scenes had on Coleridge in the previous two years. Even as Coleridge had responded to nature's landscapes both intellectually and emotionally, he similarly admits that Beaumont's pictures not only "mingled with [his] Thoughts" but also "furnished Forms to [his] Feelings."4 He has certainly not abandoned scenes from nature, but he recognizes how the artist's pictures can create similar effects.

Coleridge's notebook descriptions of Beaumont's artworks are--not surprisingy--very similar to his descrip-

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4By explicitly connecting his "feelings" with the "forms" of the artworks, Coleridge may also be anticipating the conclusion he would draw years later about the picturesque: the parts of the picturesque are seen, but the whole is felt. Individual parts of the picture's content may mingle with his thoughts, but his passion is activated by the work's formal qualities.
tions of actual scenes, an indication that artworks could evoke a verbal response not unlike his responses to nature. Coleridge probably started taking notes on these artworks when he first planned the series of poems in the summer of 1803; he apparently lost most of these notes, however, and so wrote to Beaumont in February of 1804, in hopes of resurrecting the project:

The more I have thought of the Translations from the Drawings, the more & more deeply am I persuaded of the excellence of the Idea / and no sooner am I any where settled, than I shall dedicate a certain portion of my Time to the realizing about 20--which I calculate, will be a small Volume, of 13 of which I have already the leading Idea--that is to say--whether I mean it as a moral Descriptive-poem, whether an Inscription, whether a Tale. (CL 2:1055)

Coleridge wrote the letter from London, where he was arranging passage to Malta; he proposed, however, to visit the Beaumonts at their house in Dunmow, Essex for two or three days in order to look at the drawings again and take notes, since he had "an accurate & detailed Imagery of only three" of the 21 drawings he had studied. The volume Coleridge was envisioning would have been a strikingly picturesque interfusion of artforms: verbal art not based on nature but on nature mediated by painting, which would allow the reader to construct a scene twice removed from the original. Far from seeing this artistic layering as contrived or artificial, Coleridge congratulated himself for the "excellence" of this idea, fascinated by the potential richness of blending art with poetry, perhaps also cognizant of the potential market
for an artform that would so exploit picturesque taste. Despite its artistic and commercial potential, the volume (like so many of Coleridge’s writing projects) never materialized. But in the surviving notes on Beaumont’s drawings we get a clear picture of how actively Coleridge engaged artworks, never content to passively observe but always pushing the barrier between subject and object, hoping that he might actually participate in the scene, even as he had done while traveling through landscape scenes that he could literally enter.

Using notebook N21 (a "desk-book" devoted to notes on writing projects), Coleridge carefully described 31 artworks, 27 of them drawings from Beaumont’s "Blue Book," the rest oil sketches or paintings (CN 2:1899n). Stylistically, these notebook entries read like the ones based on actual scenes: descriptions emphasizing spatial relationships are accompanied by rough diagrams that help Coleridge conceptualize the composition. After describing the first two drawings, he created a set of shorthand symbols to stand for the top and bottom and the right and left side of the picture plane, in order to more easily explain the placement of elements within the composition. By describing the artworks in great technical detail, he not only "internalized" them as he had done with the landscapes on his walking tours, but he produced a prose document from which he could reconstruct the scene poetically at a later date.
These descriptions, although sometimes exhibiting a tedious, technical quality, become for Coleridge (in the act of describing them) scenes that he imagines entering. In her note to the descriptions Coburn calls them his "kinetic responses"; Woodring says that he "conflated his sense of Beaumont's compositions with his own kinesthetic and emotional responses to the scenes" ("Pictures" 98). In short, he describes them as if they were real, finding in the picturesque scene an invitation to enter its world and bring it to life. One drawing (#11) shows a series of small, segmented waterfalls; Coleridge asserts that "After Rain it would be all one Niagra," as if a storm could invade the page and convert the modest falls into a torrent. Describing the steps in the ruins of a castle in one of the oil sketches (#28), he says that "from the fourth you might perhaps climb into that window on the right hand but a little above it." In the next description (#29) he pushes this boundary even further, saying: "I will get over on the other side of the Bridge, if only to pass under that curious arch, a perfect Triangle, formed by two Trees." (CN 2:1899)

This 29th description is the only one to use the word

Woodring's comment underscores the fact that the drawings produced both cognitive and emotional responses from Coleridge; they were compositions capable of careful analysis, but they were simultaneously "forms for his feelings."

By adding to this description that "it is 4 or 5 o'clock in an autumnal afternoon," he makes the painted scene sound like an actual landscape encountered at a particular time of day.
"picturesque"--which he applies to a wooden bridge--but the spirit of the picturesque permeates these landscapes. A significant number of them contain some form of water, a bridge, a series of receding planes, and human figures. They look, in other words, like the scenes Coleridge began to call "picturesque" on the Scotland tour--which he took only months after meeting Beaumont and seeing his work. One sketch (#23) shows an "old Hag with a collection of sticks" and a boy by a "Mad Yew-tree"; another sketch depicts a man watering his horse at a "natural Trough-Pool" alongside a road "winding between mountain Banks, like a River" (#14). In the center of a painting of Conway castle (#31) he describes a "one arched Bridge" (reminiscent of the bridge in Claude's Hagar and the Angel) across a stream, on the bank of which are a group of people--mother, two children, a man, an older man. When we recall how the scenes Coleridge called "picturesque" in both the Lakes and Scotland in 1803 tended to incorporate human figures, it seems likely that Coleridge was recalling in these cases the picturesque compositions of Beaumont. The peasant figures which populated so many of Beaumont's sketches would have given Coleridge justification for labeling as "picturesque" the Scotland scene of children huddled under a cloak (a scene with no explicit landscape features at all). Perhaps even Coleridge's tendency to look at the Scotland scenes evaluatively should be attributed to the tutelage of Beaumont, who taught
him to look "judiciously" (as Coleridge put it) at scenes.

Within days of describing Beaumont’s artworks he summarized in another notebook entry the effect of his immersion in visual art: "Painting & Engravings sends us back with New Eyes to Nature" (CN 2:1907). This declaration, as I emphasized in my first chapter, clearly states his belief that art can enhance our viewing of nature’s compositions, and need not impede it, as opponents of the picturesque declared. So affected was he by the viewings of Beaumont’s artworks that he wrote to Southey immediately upon returning from Dunmow that he had been in the midst of "such divine Pictures, & Engravings as have made me almost an apostate to Music" (CL 2:1066)—a bold claim for someone who usually elevated music above the other arts. Beaumont made possible Coleridge’s immersion in the visual arts in February and March of 1804 not only by showing him his own artworks but also by procuring him access to others. On 8 March 1804 Coleridge used Beaumont’s letter of introduction to gain permission to see Richard Payne Knight’s collection, where he was struck by a bronze sculpture of a "Venus-like figure, as from the bath, on one leg, putting her sandal on the upraised leg." About this bronze he said to Beaumont: "I have seldom in my Life experienced such a Burst of pleasurable sense of Beauty." Knight also showed Coleridge his "views of Sicily chiefly by Hackart," of obvious interest to the Mediterranean-bound traveller. The pictures confirmed
Coleridge’s suspicion that he would "see nothing in Sicily of half the beauty of Cumberland" (CL 2:1079). 7

During this time Beaumont must have also enabled Coleridge to see John Angerstein’s and Lord Ashburnham’s collections, for he wrote to Southey encouraging him to use Beaumont’s influence to gain access to the collections. The letter goes on to encourage Southey:

> But however this may be, do not forget to call on Northcote & beg to see the portrait of Lorenzo de Medici’s, imagined to be by Bronzino / & on Comyns, the Picture Cleaner in Pall Mall (Sir G. would give you a note to him) to see the Landscape by Salvator Rosa, if he still have it in his keeping, and above all the picture of St Helena dreaming the vision of the Cross, designed by Raphael & painted by Paul Veronese. That is a POEM indeed! (CL 2:1110)

In the artists Coleridge cites we see the eclectic nature of his exposure to painting. Salvator Rosa, for instance, figured prominently in popular discussions about the picturesque and the sublime; his "wild" or "romantic" canvases—sometimes called picturesque—were more often characterized as sublime. If Coleridge’s interest in Rosa’s canvas ties him to this "popular" aesthetic dialogue, then his taste for more "classically" defined beauty is confirmed by his praise for the Raphael/Veronese canvas. His admiration of Raphael’s "design" anticipates the overwhelming response he would have to Raphael’s "Bible Gallery" at the Vatican two

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7Coleridge was not nearly so impressed by Knight as a person, whom he felt received him civilly but coldly. He referred to Knight’s face as "the hardest countenance, I ever beheld, in a man of rank and letters" (CL 2:1078).
years later. By exclaiming (almost rhapsodically) that this painting is a "poem," he pays it a profound compliment, elevating it to a level normally reserved only for musical or verbal art. He does not explicitly state what makes a painting poetic, but the passionate tone of his exclamation suggests that a painting becomes a poem when it produces the passionate effect of a poem. In these rare cases the painting transcends the particularity of its concrete details, affording the viewer a glimpse of something beyond, something constructed by the viewer--something more like the picture made by the reader of a poem. This point is more clearly made, however, in another notebook entry from this time, in which Coleridge tries to differentiate between various artforms.

This note--probably written the day he saw Knight's bronzes--shows how Coleridge's increasing exposure to artworks caused him to think carefully about the relationship between "sister arts." In an attempt to establish a hierarchy for the arts, he writes:

The generic how superior to the particular illustrated in Music, how infinitely more perfect in passion & its transitions than even Poetry--Poetry than Painting-- & yet Genius how marvellous in all implements!!-- March 10th / Lamb & John Lamb. Saturday Night--Knight's Bronzes with eyes--Statues-- (CN 2:1963)

Here Coleridge praises the "generic" and sets up a scale of abstractness for the arts, placing poetry between the most abstract (music) and the most concrete (painting), yet recognizing that genius--as recent exposure to painters had
shown him--could manifest itself in all artforms. Painting appears to be the "inferior" sister because she is most "particular." If we were to apply Coleridge's "continuum of abstractness" to the micro-level of painting itself, however, we could rank paintings according to their "poetic" merit. The excessively "particular" picture discourages participation by overwhelming the viewer with every detail, but the more "poetic" picture compels the subject to add something to complete the composition or to realize its "wholeness." In no genre of painting could Coleridge find better examples of this poetic picture-making than in the picturesque. Although filled with great variety, the picturesque painting was executed in a rough, indistinct, "sketchy" style that required the viewer to fill in details imaginatively and work to see the "partially concealed" formal structure. Like the reader of a poem, the viewer of a picturesque painting made from the fragmentary details of the canvas a totality which transcended the details.

Coleridge's love for the "incompletely realized" nature of the picturesque scene helps us understand a comment he made a few days later, undoubtedly in response to a work seen at the Beaumonts. Initially the two sentences which make up this notebook entry seem illogically connected, but they actually reveal what kind of painting Coleridge admired:

A complex Ship to Vandervelt as completely one Thing, one abstract, as an Egg or one of its ropes to an ordi-
nary Artist. Sir G. Beaumont found great advantage in learning to draw from Nature thro' Gause Spectacles. (CN 2:1973)

What Willem van de Velde (a seventeenth century marine painter) could do--according to Coleridge--was turn a scene of complex variety into a unified whole. A few weeks later, when Coleridge described the "picturesque effects of a ship" (which I discussed at length in the first chapter) in his journal while en route to Malta, he undoubtedly had in mind van der Welde's ability to achieve what Coleridge called "multeity in unity"--a whole composition out of complex parts. To do this, one must not pay too much attention to minute detail (an over-emphasis on the parts), but allow the audience to "feel" the whole while seeing the parts. One method for helping an artist achieve this "vision," apparently, was the use of "gause spectacles." The name implies that this optical device "softened" the artist's view of the landscape by means of a gauze-like filter that obscured small details and spread an artificial "haze" over the scene, augmenting the sense of harmony, emphasizing how shapes relate compositionally to each other, while making detail indistinct. Using such a device, the painter could approximate the appearance of the landscape under its most picturesque conditions--the gleams of twilight or the unifying shrouds of mist, fog, or haze. In his poetry and his notebooks, Coleridge had already demonstrated the picturesque quality of these atmospheric conditions; Beaumont's dis-
cussion of the spectacles would have only underscored the value of the "indistinct" or the abstract--and showed him how the artist strives to replicate it.

It should not surprise us, then, to hear echoes of Beaumont's voice in Coleridge's account of the Malta voyage: the description, for instance, of a fishing boat's "ocher brown" sails and the "olive less brown" caps of the boys on board. Calling the colors "remarkably soft & yet lively," he adds that he "thought of Sir G. Beaumont" (CN 2:2015). Beaumont was not the only "scenic composer," however, to play a role in Coleridge's voyage to Malta. Interestingly, the two men most responsible for Coleridge's going to Malta were avid landscape travelers and tour writers. Thomas Stoddart had originally invited Coleridge to come with him to Malta in August, 1803 after Stoddart accepted a government position there. Coleridge chose instead to travel to Scotland with the Wordsworths, taking with him a copy of Stoddart's tour of Scotland. A year later, when Coleridge decided that the Mediterranean climate might improve his health, he considered going to either Malta or Madeira. He was strongly influenced to choose Malta when his friend and former traveling companion George Greenough read him the journal of his travels in Sicily (Sultana 71). Coleridge was particularly impressed by his description of the climb up Mt. Etna (CL 2:1050), an excursion which Coleridge replicated and described (see CN 2:2170-2179). Coleridge had
traveled with Greenough years before in Germany, and their mutual love for landscape viewing is attested to by Coleridge's note to send Greenough a Claude glass upon returning to England (CN 1:452).

When the Speedwell dropped anchor in the Malta harbor on 18 May 1804, Coleridge began a Mediterranean adventure that lasted just over two years and carried him beyond Malta itself--first on two trips to Sicily and later to Rome, Florence, and Pisa. Although he went to Malta without any guarantee of employment, he worked for Alexander Ball (the island's governor) first as a private secretary and eventually as acting public secretary, serving in a government office during a particularly volatile time, as Malta weathered the threats of the advancing French army. By no means could his sojourn there be characterized as a relaxing tour of landscape scenes and art museums. The notebooks provide ample evidence, however, that aesthetic questions demanded a significant part of his attention, alongside subjects political and theological. By traveling in Malta, Sicily, and Italy, he looked back and forth between landscape scenes and visual art, examining principles which applied to each, seeing one in light of the other. The novelty of fresh scenes and new art encouraged him to pursue and refine the aesthetic judgments he had only recently begun making in earnest.

Choosing lodging in Malta, Coleridge showed once again
his fascination for "rooms with a view"—and his uncanny knack for procuring them. Like the Clevedon cottage by the sea or the perfectly situated Greta Hall with all its windows, his Malta lodgings allowed him to compose his surroundings within a well-placed frame. After staying briefly with Stoddart upon arrival, Coleridge was able (with Ball's help) to move into rooms just under the observatory at the palace, rooms "commanding from one or other of the windows the main Sea and the Harbour with all it's Thumb and Finger Coves" (CL 2:1145). Even more emblematic of his aesthetic experience in the Mediterranean was the apartment he took after returning to Malta in November, 1804 from his first trip to Sicily. Forced to vacate his earlier rooms, he moved across the street to the treasury, where he took a small room at the top of a staircase—he called it "a sort of Garrets"—from which he looked out at "a most magnificent view of open Sea, & lake-like Harbours" (CL 2:1158). Yet Coleridge's "viewing" was enriched (or complicated) by the fact that the ceiling of this room was covered by a mural of the four winds, a canopy of visual art to rival the claims of nature's compositions seen through the window. At a time when art and landscape viewing combined like never before

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8About this view, Coleridge commented in a different letter that "you would wonder" how the view "could be so impressive having neither River, Trees, nor grassy Field in Sight" (CL 2:1143), a comment which recalls his complaints about the lack of water in German landscapes and demonstrates the power of the internalized English "standard" for picturesque scenes.
for Coleridge, even his lodging seemed to symbolize the intertwining of the painted scene and the actual.

Twice Coleridge described in his notebook the painting on the ceiling—four disembodied heads (he calls them "curly-wigged Nobodies") representing the four blowing winds. Each head was "blowing white smoke in a brush or wedge" (CN 2:2268). The longer of these descriptions of the room (which he called his "sky-chamber") follows immediately upon a critique of Hume's aesthetics, as if the two subjects were somehow related in Coleridge's mind. Coleridge objected to Hume's belief that the "whole" could be explained as "an aggregate of single successive sensations."

Hume's "one moment" is "opposite to nature," Coleridge asserted, for "Who ever felt a single sensation?" Perhaps looking up at the painting at the ceiling and out at the seascape before him, Coleridge thought once again about the way a composition's various elements achieve wholeness. He continues:

... the pretended single sensation is it any thing more than the Light-point in every picture either of nature or of a good painter; & again subordinately in every component part of the picture? And what is a moment? Succession with interspace? Absurdity! It is evidently only the Licht-punct [punkt], the Sparkle of in the indivisible undivided Duration. (CN 2:2370)

Coleridge is again struggling to explain how the perceiving

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9 In his other description of the painted ceiling he calls the breath from the mouths "the pencil of Blast" (CN 2:2370), which recalls his earlier use of the term "pencil brushes" to describe how the wind creates motion in an actual landscape.
subject makes one whole picture out of a scene’s component parts. This occurs, he says, through a simultaneous apprehension of parts rather than a perceived sequence of unconnected moments. Even though the "light-point" of a natural or painted scene may "sparkle" and thereby attract our attention, we nevertheless have the subordinate compositional elements simultaneously in view—in an "undivided Duration."
This observation, certainly indebted to viewing paintings and reading aesthetics, also affirmed his conclusions about viewing landscape: the perceiving mind can focus on one or another element in a scene of great visual variety, but it "sees" them all at once and brings them into unity. Perhaps the four winds in the "sky-chamber"—presumably in the four corners of the ceiling—came together in such a unity for Coleridge, for he goes directly from this aesthetic refutation of Hume into his description of the painted ceiling.
In any event, he emphasizes that the natural scene and the painted one both demonstrate the same aesthetic principles; the "sky-chamber" reinforces the point by providing a place where both kinds of aesthetic apprehension occur.

During Coleridge’s first days in Malta, his dose of visual experiences included both painted scenes and actual ones. The day after landing Coleridge saw paintings by Spagnoletto and Caravaggio in the state room of the palace, "his first view of Malta’s seicento art," says Donald Sultanana (142). Three days later Stoddart took Coleridge to Gen-
eral Villette's country house known as "Sa Maison," which Sultana describes as "a kind of 'pleasuance' of the grand masters in picturesque surroundings" (142). Coleridge describes this house, which was "near the end of the Botanic Garden" as "the pleasantest place I have seen here" (CN 2:2102). In the next few weeks he took delight in describing the flora of the island, although his overall impression of the island was negative--"a mere rock of free stone" (CL 2:1138).

Six months later Coleridge finally found a Malta scene which really pleased him, at which time he rendered a description which recalls the Lakes notebook entries. This scene, encountered on a "solitary walk to Gravitelli," he calls "amongst the very loveliest Prospects, I have seen." In his description, he mentions being "enamoured of the marvellous playfulness of the Surface of the Hills," which were "all so combined as to make it impossible to look at as many / no! it was a manifold One" (CN 2:2705). Noting the intricacy of the scene--what he here calls "playfulness"--Coleridge again lays emphasis upon the inherent unity of the composition, even as he had done in the notebook entry refuting Hume--and throughout his English landscape touring. Coburn notes that Coleridge is here describing "one of the fiumare or defilas on which at picturesque points villas were built" (CN 2:2705n)--a point which helps explain Coleridge's interest. Places like this had inspired Claude and
Poussin to paint scenes that later taught the English how to appreciate their own native landscapes. Perhaps we should not be surprised when these descriptions sound like those Coleridge wrote of the Lakes. Having pulled away layers of scenic mediation, Coleridge was looking--almost--at an "original."  

Coleridge's real immersion in Italian art did not occur in Malta, however, but during his time in Italy at the end of his Mediterranean pilgrimage. Although Coleridge initially intended to stay only a few days in Rome on his way back to England, he remained in Rome for five months, living in the company of foreign artists headquartered in the Piazza di Spagna--in the neighborhood where Claude himself had stayed in the mid-seventeenth century. Here Coleridge made the acquaintance of artists and art students, including English painter George Augustus Wallis and art student Thomas Russell (who eventually accompanied Coleridge when he left Rome in May, 1806). The most significant of

10 The best example of Coleridge describing a truly picturesque Italian scene occurs when he documents the view at Olevano Romano, a rural retreat near Rome that Coleridge visited with Allston. This site had been popular with the picturesque painters; his descriptions of it bear striking resemblances to his descriptions of the Lakes. See CN 2:2796 and 2818.

11 According to Donald Sultana, Coleridge moved in a circle of foreign artists under the patronage of the Prussian minister to the court of Pius VII, Wilhelm von Humboldt, who "dispensed liberal hospitality in a stately house on Trinita de Monti above Piazza di Spagna near Coleridge's lodging" (386).
his new acquaintances was the American painter Washington Allston.

Soon after meeting Allston, Coleridge became an "almost daily" visitor of Allston's studio. S.F.B. Morse, a student of Allston's at the time, reported that they entertained themselves while painting by posing a question to Coleridge upon his arrival at the studio, a trick which "never failed to set him off on a monologue to which we could listen with pleasure and profit throughout the entire sitting" (qtd. in Flagg 63). These visits to the studio fostered a mutually beneficial interchange of artistic ideas, with Coleridge learning about the art of painting while Allston reaped the benefits of Coleridge's extensive reading and thinking about aesthetics, gleaning ideas he would later use in his own aesthetic lectures. We can see Coleridge's admiration for Allston in his efforts to promote Allston's 1814 Bristol exhibit by publishing his "On the Principles of Genial Criticism" in Felix Farley's Bristol Journal.

In his "Genial Criticism" essays, Coleridge refers to an Allston landscape done "in the spirit of Swiss scenery" (237)--a landscape which Coleridge says he associates pleasurably with his experience of first meeting Allston. One of the reasons, I believe, why Coleridge admired this painting (which Allston was working on at the time of Coleridge's visits to his Rome studio) was because it produced a highly
picturesque effect, compelling the viewer to enter the scene and compose it. Coleridge described the painting at length in his notebook, at one point calling a particular effect in it "picturesque." But before examining the description, we should note an earlier reference to the painting: he had called its effect "picturesque" a month before writing his detailed description. This occurred when he tried to describe an actual landscape at Olevano Romano, a rural retreat about 30 miles from Rome. Coleridge had gone to Olevano with Allston, who had invited him to visit this town which Coburn says had "always attracted painters" (CN 2: 2794n). Describing the mountains which rise in the background of the scene, Coleridge comments that the patches of snow on the mountains look much like the sun's reflection off portions of wet rock--and yet at the same time different. He continues:

... they formed one of the gentlest diversities possible, and yet the distinction evident and almost obvious--How exquisitely picturesque this effect is (in the strictest sense of the word) Mr. Alston has proved in his Swiss Landskip . . . (CN 2:2796)

The picturesque effect in its "strictest sense" appears to result from a "gentle diversity" of forms which compel the eye to penetrate the scene more deeply in order to discern differences between similar forms. In a larger sense, the very act of describing the scene by resorting to the mediating device of painting epitomizes picturesque aesthetics. Coleridge can call the effect made by the scene before him
"picturesque" because he has first seen the effect in a painting: nature now seemed to be imitating it--presenting itself like a picture.

When we look at Allston's painting (now usually referred to as *Diana and the Chase*) and Coleridge's description of it, we see even more clearly how the picturesque can draw the viewer into the kind of "entanglement" that intrigued Coleridge. Compositionally, Allston's landscape recalls the scenes of Claude (and also the rhetoric of Gilpin) in its creation of a series of distinct planes through which the viewer is drawn. At least five distinct levels appear in the scene, the eye passing from the foreground figures and the tree-trunk bridge through at least two different middle-ground levels (where the solitary figure runs near the water's edge and, behind that, the lake and its island), finally to the "distant" central mountain and the hazy mountain of the "second-distance" far in the background. The trees on both sides of the painting (what Gilpin might call "side-screens") frame the scene, creating an impression of embedded "Chinese boxes" which funnel the viewer's eye towards the distance. Allston's placement of relatively small figures in the foreground also seems inspired by Claude's tendency to stage miniature classical or Biblical dramas against immense landscape backgrounds--as, for instance, in Beaumont's beloved *Hagar and the Angel*. Even Allston's fragile, wisp-like trees resemble Claude's.
Diana and the Chase
by Washington Allston

Gift of Mrs. Edward W. Moore
Courtesy of the Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University

10.
Coleridge's detailed description of the painting—which E. S. Shaffer says "must rank as one of the first extensive pieces of bravura word-painting of the kind Ruskin was to produce much later" (15)—sounds much like the descriptions he made of Beaumont's drawings in February, 1804. His concern for documenting how the parts are spatially related to each other and to the edges of the picture plane indicates a desire to be able to accurately recreate the picture at a later time. As in his descriptions of Beaumont's works, Coleridge psychically "enters" the scene in order to participate in its re-creation. In describing the lower left-hand corner, for instance, he writes "three spans from thence commences the great chasm, & dark, bridged over by the weedy tree"; he then stops suddenly to exclaim, "take care, for heaven's sake," warning himself (so it appears) not to fall from this "perilous bridge." By calling the tree-trunk near this "bridge" a "sweet Stool," he makes it a kind of garden seat which allows him to pause inside the picture and admire the prospect.

Never content to rest long in admiring one view, however, Coleridge then imagines plunging headlong into the

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12As Coburn points out, Coleridge may have been planning a poem about this painting, even as he did with the artworks of Beaumont. Another journal entry from about this same time discusses a poem about "W. Alston's large Landscape sent by sea to England/threnic on the perishability by accident as well as time" (CN 2:2813). The subject of this poem seems not so much to be the painting itself as it does the "perishability" of paint and canvas.
scene. Noting the stone in the lower left, he states that he must "climb over it to get the prospect of the far valley." At this point he has not only inscribed himself into the scene but adopted the familiar role of prospect-hunter. He imagines getting beyond the barrier of rock and trees in the middle-ground, hoping, like Gilpin's travelers, that the next scene might surpass the present one in the perfection of its composition and the power of its effect. His forward action seems inspired by--or perhaps it parodies--the solitary hunter-figure in the center of Allston's canvas, who appears to be leading Diana's chase. Like the painted figure, Coleridge participates in a "chase," pursuing not a beast of prey but a well-composed scene, confident that his aesthetic quarry lies just around the next bend--even though the paintedness of the scene makes the next bend forever unreachable.\footnote{13}

Coleridge's description further hints that Allston had been expanding his understanding of composition--especially of the extent to which the painter uses color to create harmony. He notes some "faintly purplish Stones that connect the right extremity with the purple rock on the left extremity," and then adds:

\footnote{13}The small figures in a picturesque landscape, as John Dixon Hunt points out, do function as models for the act of viewing. Hunt claims that the small figures in Richard Wilson's paintings function, at least on one level, as "our surrogates within the landscape, experiencing it and reading it" (130).
... & how by small stones, scattered at irregular distances along the foreground even to one in the very centre or bisection of the foreground, which seems to balance & hold even all the tints of the whole picture, the keystone of its colors ... & o how delicate grey-white Greyhound, whose two colors amalgamated make exactly the grey-blue of the larger & the 12 small stones behind & around them & even the halo <still with a purplish gray> of the crescent carries on the harmony, & with its bright white crescent forms a transition to the bright left-hand thick body-branch & trunk of the largest tree. (CN 2:2831)

"Harmony" is the key word of this part of the description, for Coleridge concerns himself with how Allston has used the repetition of color to bring disparate parts of the composition together. The eye moves from one part of the composition to another, finding in the repeated colors a centripetal pull that brings the fragments together.

Coleridge's concern for the motion of the eye around the parts of a composition underscores his interest in the viewer's "composing" role, a subject Allston must have discussed with him. Allston treats the subject beautifully in a sonnet about a Raphael fresco in the Loggia (or "Bible Gallery") of the Vatican, a place which he had visited with Coleridge. In this poem, based on a scene of the three angels and Abraham before the tent at Mamre, Allston discusses how he "views" the picture into wholeness, saying:

Mine eyes, impelled as by enchantment sweet,
From part of part with circling motion rove,
Yet seem unconscious of the power to move;
From line to line through endless changes run,
O'er countless shapes, yet seem to gaze on One.
(qtd. in Hollander 133-34)

Even as Coleridge had refuted Hume's notion of individual
"moments" of perception in his "sky-chamber" entry, Allston asserts here that any perception of individual "moments" on his eye's circular journey is nullified by an overpowering feeling of static "oneness." "Succession," as Coleridge might put it, has been reduced "to an instant" (BL 2:23).

The viewer's eye does a similar kind of circling and unifying, of course, in Allston's Diana and the Chase, a point which Coleridge is making in his discussion of the repetition of color in various parts of the composition.14 Interestingly enough, Coleridge wrote his description probably within days of going with Allston to see the Sistine Chapel and the Raphael frescoes in the Loggia, at which time Coleridge also purchased a set of prints of Raphael's frescoes to use in a proposed lecture series. Only one entry in his notebook (N15) comes between his comments on the Sistine Chapel (which he saw on Good Friday, 1806) and his description of Allston's landscape. Did Raphael help Coleridge come to a deeper appreciation of Allston? At the very least, Coleridge's record of viewing Allston parallels Allston's account of viewing Raphael. John Hollander notes how the rhetoric of Allston's sonnet resonates in Coleridge's Genial Criticism essays, where Coleridge "discusses Allston and Raphael together under the rubric of beauty defined as

14The poet R. H. Dana, Allston's brother-in-law, noted that the point Allston makes in this sonnet about the work of the viewer is also "perfectly true . . . when applied to his own works in the art" (qtd. in Flagg 406).
'Multeity in Unity'" (134)--which is the very thrust of Allston's sonnet. The similarities of these statements suggest how much the two men enriched each other's aesthetic understanding during these months in Rome. As their friendship developed (in the shadow of fine paintings and picturesque views) Allston tapped Coleridge's intellect, but Coleridge borrowed Allston's way of seeing, learning not only how an artist composes his own works and also how he reads the work of others.

Less than a week before describing Allston's Diana in great detail, Coleridge visited the Sistine Chapel (April 3-4, 1806), a visit which prompted no descriptions of paintings at all--at least none which survive. He responded to the experience not by describing any of Michelangelo's scenes but rather by renewing speculation about aesthetic theory. The art of the Sistine Chapel had obviously affected him, for he responded in his notebook by attempting to define the "ideal" as it applied to art. In terms of subject matter, Michelangelo's dramatic Biblical scenes diverged sharply from picturesque landscapes; what both had in common, however, was their ability to evoke feeling in the viewer--an essential part of aesthetic experience for Coleridge. In a particularly complex prose passage, Coleridge writes (coining new words when needed):

Ideal = the subtle hieroglyphical felt-by-all though not without abstruse and difficult analysis detected & understood, consonance of the physiognomic total & substance (Stoff) with the obvious Pathognomic / herein
equi-distant from Opie-ism, i.e. passions planted in a common face <or portrait> that might equally well have been the accidental Substrate of any other Passion, and the insipid personified passions of Lebrun, or the un-meaning abstractions of, mere Form of the Pseudo-Greeks. Take as an instance of the true Ideal Michel Angelo's despairing woman at the bottom of the Last Judgment. (CN 2:2828)

Ideal art, by this definition, depicts and evokes a kind of universal passion ('felt-by-all') that--because of its subtlety--can only be explained by careful analysis, despite the unmistakable immediacy of the feeling which it produces. The audience's response can thus be both emotional and intellectual, at least for one who (looking "judiciously") can analyze compositionally how the passionate response was produced. What Coleridge calls for here is a fusion (or "consonance") of spirit and matter, a "middle-ground" point between pure passion (the attempt at which, because it cannot be achieved in material form, results in sentimental or insipid art) and pure material substance (an equally impossible goal, the attempt at which results in generalized, non-specific passion). Although the experience of The Last Judgment helped Coleridge refine his evolving definition of ideal visual art, it also perpetuated a central tenet of the picturesque: in both cases, the aesthetic experience conjoins a picture's formal qualities with a viewer's passionate response to them.

Coleridge made two additional visits to great centers of Italian art after leaving Rome on 18 May 1806, one of which added crucial support to these beliefs about passion
in art. The first of these two stops on the artistic pil­
grimage was the Uffizi gallery in Florence, about which few
comments survive. Coleridge’s visit to the Campo Santo in
Pisa, however, made an impression that stayed with him
throughout his life. Discussing the experience years later,
in one of his philosophical lectures of 1819, he said: "The
impression was greater, I may say, than that which any poem
has ever made upon me" (PL 167). This claim is a remarkably
bold one, given Coleridge’s traditional elevation of poetry
over painting (as discussed earlier in this chapter); yet it
makes clear—as did his 1803 remark that Beaumont’s paint-
ings had almost made him an "apostate to music"—that a
barrage of evocative pictures could produce an extraordinary
activation of his imagination. The images which moved him
so profoundly in Pisa were 14th and 15th century frescoes on
gallery walls in the cemetery, the Campo Santo. E. S. Shaf-
fer observes that Coleridge was particularly struck by the
fresco The Triumph of Death, which included a scene of the
Last Judgment—a subject similarly explored by Michelangelo,
in whose Last Judgment Coleridge had found (in the despair-
ing woman) an "ideal" aesthetic form. With the damned fig-
ures in the paintings, says Shaffer, Coleridge was able to
identify, seeing in them the anguish he endured in the hell
of opium addiction and its accompanying nightmares (14). In
the work of these Italian "primitive" painters, Coleridge
found compositions unified by passion, scenes which con-
tained "a presence we cannot explain," despite the "stiff lines and the awkward form" of pre-Renaissance style (PL 167). The medieval frescoes--partly because they were not fettered by allegiance to naturalistic detail--communicated an abstract or ideal truth "felt-by-all" (and felt particularly by the suffering Coleridge). As Shaffer observes, Coleridge also connected this Italian primitivism with the Romanticism of Allston (15), whose paintings similarly relied on passion to forge aesthetic unity. As the concluding lesson in his aesthetic education in Italy, then, the Campo Santo visit recalled the genius of Allston and also confirmed his earlier suspicions that a great scene's "poetry" does not necessarily arise from a realistic presentation of minute visual detail.

When he finally sailed from Leghorn on 23 June 1806, Coleridge headed homeward as an aesthetically "wiser man" than he had been when he set sail for Italy two years earlier. The plans he made immediately following his landing in Kent on August 17 indicate that he did not simply put Italian pictures and aesthetic principles behind him when his journey was over. He continued to contemplate the images and ideas acquired in Italy, proposing a lecture series on the fine arts. As he moved restlessly about England after arriving in Kent--almost as if postponing a meeting with his estranged wife--he wrote to her of his plans to lecture "on the Principles common to all the Fine Arts" at the Royal
Institution (CL 2:1181, 1191). He admitted that "Something . . . I must do, & that immediately, to get money" (CL 2:1188), a fact which Sara would have readily acknowledged. He also told her of his difficulties in re-assembling all the books and manuscripts he brought with him on the return voyage, making special note of "a collection of Prints from the Fresco Works of Raphael," which he says "I shall want instantly" (CL 2:1190)---undoubtedly for use in the lecture series. Notwithstanding his obvious financial motivation for giving these lectures, Coleridge seemed genuinely interested in the topic; the proposed lectures were a logical extension of his most recent immersion in aesthetic speculation and pictorial analysis.

Coleridge planned this lecture series for the winter of 1806-7, but his closest friends advised him against it, probably because they could see the tenuous state of his physical and emotional health. Coleridge finally reached his family at Keswick on 30 October; shortly thereafter he received a letter from Wordsworth asking him to reconsider giving the lectures in London and inviting him to come instead to Beaumont's home at Coleorton--in order to "sit down at leisure and look about you before you decide" (qtd. in CL 2:1188n). When Coleridge accepted Wordsworth's invitation, he encountered at Coleorton yet another picture-making experience, this time in the medium of picturesque gardening (for which the invitation to "sit down and . . . look about
you" seems especially suited). Wordsworth, his wife, his sister Dorothy, and Sara Hutchinson were staying at the farm house on the Coleorton property while workers rebuilt the nearby Hall. The Beaumonts, who were staying at their London home, offered the farm house to the Wordsworths, who had been looking for larger accommodations and would also (by their residence at the farm house) be able to monitor the progress of the builders at the Hall. When Coleridge accepted the invitation and arrived at Coleorton on 21 December, he unwittingly encountered the one manifestation of picturesque creation with which he had little previous experience, for he found Wordsworth engaged in a plan to create a picturesque winter garden on the grounds of Coleorton Hall.

Sir George Beaumont had commissioned Wordsworth to design a "winter garden" in which Lady Beaumont could "take the air" year-round. In a series of letters to Beaumont from November, 1806 to February, 1807, Wordsworth and his sister Dorothy presented William's ideas to his patron, outlining how a portion of the grounds could be transformed into a picturesque garden. As Wordsworth told Beaumont, he used as a model a description of a winter garden from Joseph Addison's *Spectator* (#477), a garden "exclud[ing] all deciduous trees" but filled, rather, with evergreen and cypress—to allow for a green garden throughout the year (Knight, MOC
According to Margaret Greaves, the garden was to contain "as much of the picturesque as the small space could contain" (136), an assertion borne out by a look at Wordsworth's plans. He told Beaumont he would fence in the garden with cypress, leaving "one opening . . . which should present the best view of the most interesting distant object" (MOC 193). The garden would be divided into a series of compartments, each a kind of self-contained composition. One compartment was to have an "ivied cottage" as its "master object," along with "the most delightful assemblage of English winter shrubs and flowers" (MOC 226). The property apparently contained two old cottages, and although both were not needed, Wordsworth said that the second cottage's "irregular and picturesque form . . . plead strongly with me for its being retained" (MOC 194-95). A path would "wind around the garden," but in some places "it would be kept out of sight, so that the imagination would have room to play" (MOC 198). Wordsworth planned a pool with two "gold or silver fish" and also hoped he would be able to divert some running water into the garden--"at least a dripping of water" at the base of a wych elm (MOC 196), and--at another spot--a "stone fountain of simple structure to throw out its stream or even thread of water" (MOC 1:199). In addition to

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15 The earliest reference to Wordsworth's work on the garden seems to be a letter to Beaumont on 10 November 1806, in which he mentions Addison's garden in the Spectator and offers some preliminary ideas. (MOC 168-70)
reflecting picturesque taste, these plans also show how susceptible Wordsworth was to the "gentlemanly" fashion for gardening as a liberal art.

Amidst Wordsworth’s planning for the Coleorton winter garden, Coleridge arrived with his son Hartley on 21 December. When he wrote to his wife a few days later on Christmas day, he spoke of their arrival and of Hartley’s behavior, but he also said—concerning the London lectures—that "we are to discuss it, William & I, this evening" (CL 2: 638). In addition to dissuading Coleridge from lecturing, Wordsworth must have also engaged Coleridge almost immediately in conversation about the garden. Dorothy Wordsworth’s Christmas Day letter to Lady Beaumont records Coleridge’s reactions to the plan:

I long to know your opinion and Sir George’s of my brother’s plan of the winter garden. (Coleridge (as we females are also) is much delighted with it, only he doubts about the fountain, and he thinks it is possible that an intermingling of birch-trees somewhere, on account of the richness of the colour of the naked twigs in winter, might be an advantage; I may also add from myself, that we have often stood for half an hour together at Grasmere on a still morning to look at the rain-drops or hoar frost glittering in sun-shine upon the birch twigs; the purple colour and the sparkling drops produce a most enchanting effect . . . (MOC 210)

Like a true picturesque composer, Coleridge listened attentively to Wordsworth’s plan but proposed an "improvement"—a suggestion which would provide greater variety in color by adding the whites and purples of bare birch twigs to the
dominating greens of the winter garden. His "doubts about the fountain" may simply indicate a suspicion that sufficient water could not be pumped into the garden; it is equally possible, however, that Coleridge questions the fountain on aesthetic grounds, fearing that such a "formal" art object would be stylistically inconsistent with the rougher, "untamed" quality of popular picturesque gardens. Since Coleridge—as I have noted—frequently criticized scenes for their absence of water, he could hardly be objecting to the mere presence of water in the garden. The proposed "dripping of water" at the base of the tree—to which he does not object—represents a more natural, more appropriate use of water in a picturesque garden.

In the art of gardening, we find the most literal manifestation of the picturesque tendency to mix art and nature. In the garden, nature is literally manipulated, not just re-arranged in "improved" form on the artist's sketchpad. Using rules strongly influenced by painting, the gardener composes scenes which the viewer observes—but also steps into. When we consider Coleridge's experiences in the two years prior to arriving at Coleorton (his attempts to "climb inside" Beaumont’s or Allston’s canvases, his study of Italian landscapes and Italian painting) we can see Beau-

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16Coleridge had earlier expressed a particular fondness for the birch tree, writing in his notebook in September, 1803: "S. Rosa had the conifers & chesnut / I would study the Birch / it should be my only Tree" (CN 1:1495).
mont's garden as a natural opportunity for Coleridge to apply his strong "composing" impulse. Therefore, it is hardly surprising to see him express interest in the garden and offer compositional suggestions. Although the extent of his involvement cannot be clearly determined, we know that Coleridge stayed at Coleorton until 4 April 1807, during which time the work on the garden was underway, closely monitored by the Wordsworths. A letter from Dorothy to Lady Beaumont on 27 January 1807 reports that William "visits the workmen generally twice a day, and one of us accompanies him"—meaning that Coleridge might have gone along on these supervisory tours (MOC 219-20). In any case, we have every indication that Coleridge took his friend’s project seriously. Given Coleridge’s recent immersion in landscapes, paintings, and aesthetic theory, the garden would have been an irresistible opportunity to apply his knowledge, bringing together various components of his picturesque experience.

When Coleridge biographers discuss those January days at the Coleorton farm house, the picturesque garden understandably receives scant attention. It is usually seen only as a footnote to the major poetic event which occurred at this time: Wordsworth’s recitation of The Prelude, to which Coleridge’s responded by writing his meditative "To William Wordsworth," a tribute to his friend’s genius. Although this event is largely unconnected to the planning of
the garden, the two events are at least chronologically "entangled," anticipating, perhaps, the kind of place that the winter garden would be—a place of poetic and artistic connections. Wordsworth had placed a seat in the garden beside a cluster of holly bushes, saying that "since Burns's time the holly has been a poetical tree" (MOC 206). Greaves calls the garden's mood "literary"—a place to "promote poetic thought" (137). Wordsworth penned a number of inscriptions at Coleorton which were eventually carved in stone and set up as monuments on the Coleorton grounds. Others wrote and painted in the garden as well; Sir Walter Scott, on a visit to Coleorton later that year, supposedly planned the tournament scenes of Ivanhoe in the winter garden, and Beaumont's protege Sir David Wilkie painted in the garden (Greaves 119). Perhaps the most complex intermingling of the arts at Coleorton occurred when John Constable painted The Cenotaph, a picturesque scene of the Coleorton garden, in which tall lime trees surround and embower the monument dedicated to Sir Joshua Reynolds—a monument inscribed with a verse by Wordsworth, commissioned by Beaumont.

Although Wordsworth did convince Coleridge (during the January, 1807 visit to Coleorton) to cancel the proposed lecture series in London, Coleridge was re-issued the invitation to lecture at the Royal Institution, and finally did so one year later. By this time, however, he had changed
his topic to the "Principles of Poetry," noting in a letter to Sir Humphry Davy (who had helped him procure the lectureship) that lectures on the Arts "would require references and illustrations not suitable to a public Lecture Room." Seeking out "books of Italian Prints" would be difficult, he continued, and, "after all, the general & most philosophical Principles I might naturally introduce into Lectures on a more confined Plan" (CL 3:29). For largely pragmatic reasons (though it is possible that these serve only as an excuse), Coleridge eliminated his discussions of the visual arts, "retreating," perhaps, into the subject on which he could most easily discourse, arguing that since the same principles applied to all the arts, poetry could provide the necessary examples.

While his lectures of 1808 did focus on poetry, he occasionally made application of these aesthetic principles to all the fine arts. Many of these statements drew upon ideas explored in the Italian notebook entries cited above. His emphasis upon compositional arrangement and the passionate response of the audience also shows that an intellectual link to the picturesque persists, even as he develops definitions of beauty and of the fine arts which begin to subsume the picturesque. In his first lecture he defines taste as "a distinct Perception of any arrangement conceived as external to us co-existent with some degree of Dislike or Complacency conceived as resulting from that arrangement"
(LOL 1:30). In this definition, taste is seen (at least to a great extent) as the ability to see compositionally. The Fine Arts he then defines as those arts "whose especial purpose is to gratify to the Taste--that is, not merely to adjoin but to combine and unite a sense of immediate pleasure in ourselves with the perception of external arrangement" (LOL 1:30). Here Coleridge not only defines aesthetic apprehension as a perfect union of subject and object, but he acknowledges that the subject's contribution is itself a kind of union--the blending of feeling (a "sense of pleasure") and intellect ("the perception of external arrangement"). This belief in the fusion of passion and intellect in aesthetic apprehension had been evolving especially during the previous three years, as the passages I have cited in this chapter indicate.

Coleridge promised to follow this definition of taste with definitions of other key terms, "the greater part of which will be suitably given in after Lectures--as the Words, Wit, Fancy, Imagination, Sublimity, the grand, the picturesque, the majestic--Each will receive the fullest development" (LOL 1:30). We have no evidence that Coleridge ever took up these definitions in subsequent lectures, but his declaration does indicate how he envisioned his role: as aesthetic arbiter he would purify the waters muddied by the casual mishandling of popularized terms. In this light, it is not surprising that he told once again--in this first
lecture—one of his favorite stories: the tale of the picturesque traveler he met who called the waterfall "sublimely beautiful, & indeed absolutely pretty" (LOL 1:34). It must have been easier to laugh at her confusion, however, than to provide a definition of the picturesque that demarcated its aesthetic domain once and for all. Acknowledging its existence—at least as a term—he turned his attention away from it in order to define beauty, using a formula which recurs throughout his aesthetic writing: "a pleasurable sense of the many . . . reduced to unity by the correspondence of all the component parts to each other" (LOL 1:35). When he states this in a similar way in his fourth lecture, he adds that the definition "applies equally to Painting & to Music, as to Poetry," citing as evidence the point that "a Painter of great Genius" had heard these words and was immediately "struck with their Truth" (LOL 1:76). The painter is undoubtedly Allston, with whom—as we have seen—Coleridge talked about just such issues.

We should look at these lectures, then, at least in part, as an attempt to synthesize the aesthetic speculations prompted by his encounters with art, as seen especially in

__17__Here Coleridge states that the incident occurred "in a Boat on the Lake of Keswick" while observing Lodore Falls. The story which Dorothy Wordsworth corroborates occurred at the falls of Clyde in Scotland. Coleridge may not be remembering the location accurately, or he may be conflating two different incidents. The story seems to have taken on, by this time, a mythological life of its own; perhaps he is simply "improving" it.
the notebooks from 1803-1806. Since these lectures avoid direct discussion of the visual arts, however, they fall short of a total synthesis of his experiences. Not until he wrote his essays *On the Principles of Genial Criticism* in 1814 did he offer a more complete discussion of the fine arts. Although these essays lie outside the decade on which I am focusing in this study, I believe that a few relevant observations about the essays are particularly suitable for concluding this chapter. The *Genial Criticism* essays are relevant to this discussion in two important ways. First, they are strongly rooted in the months Coleridge spent with Allston in Italy and bring to completion many of the fragmentary ideas discussed at that time. Second, Allston is the impetus for these essays insofar as Coleridge wrote them to help publicize Allston's exhibition in Bristol in 1814. Although Allston's paintings almost disappear from the essays as Coleridge pursues the philosophical issues on more abstract levels, the influence of Allston (as painter and fellow-observer of art and landscape) remains.

In *Genial Criticism* Coleridge emphasizes—as he had done in the first lecture of the 1808 series—the importance of clearly defining easily-confused aesthetic terms. To illustrate the dangers of failing to do so, he recounts yet again the story of the confused traveler at the waterfall. Although the story may have been a laughing matter, the definition of terms was not:
There are few mental exertions more instructive, or which are capable of being rendered more entertaining, than the attempt to establish and exemplify the distinct meaning of terms, often confounded in common use, and considered as mere synonyms. Such are the words, Agreeable, Beautiful, Picturesque, Grand, Sublime: and to attach a distinct and separate sense to each of these, is a previous step of indispensable necessity to a writer, who would reason intelligibly, either to himself or to his readers, concerning the works of poetic genius, and the sources and the nature of the pleasure derived from them. ("Genial" 226)

Finally, it appeared, Coleridge would clear up all misconceptions about those troubling aesthetic terms. But the essays produced—as in the past—no clear definition of the picturesque. Although he called the proper definition of each term an "indispensable necessity" for the aesthetician, his particular concern in these essays was the definition of the Beautiful, especially as it was to be distinguished from the Agreeable. He still grants the picturesque (in his list of terms) the status of a distinct, definable aesthetic category, but I believe that its virtual "disappearance" probably results from its absorption into his definition of the beautiful. Certain elemental principles of picturesque aesthetics, confirmed by his encounters with art, live on in—and make at least a small contribution to—his definition of the beautiful.

Coleridge's definition of beauty in Genial Criticism clearly owes its greatest debt to Kant. It is not my purpose to trace these strands of Kantian influence or to show how Coleridge modifies them (that is the topic of another study), but rather to note two basic parts of Coleridge's
definition that seem to perpetuate ideas seen earlier in the picturesque. First, by defining the apprehension of beauty as a disinterested "complacency" (239) not dependent upon agreeable associations, he grounds beauty in an intuitive apprehension of part/whole relationships. In the third essay he calls the beautiful "that in which the many, still seen as many, becomes one"--or, simplified even further--"Multeity in Unity" ("Genial" 232). Regardless of its intellectual source in Kant or elsewhere, this belief had been registered experientially long before this moment. Coleridge had witnessed the "many" becoming "One"--and had used language to that effect to describe the process--in the countless landscape scenes he documented (where the diverse elements formed a unified composition) and in the Allston and Raphael canvases he so admired. 18

A second crucial point--this one taken from the preliminary essay of Genial Criticism--seems equally rooted in the experiences of Coleridge which I have documented in this study. In declaring that the common principle of the arts is "the excitement of emotion for the immediate purpose of pleasure through the medium of beauty" (221), he reiterates his long-held belief in the importance of the audience's emotional response to a "scene" (in nature or on canvas). Coleridge certainly is struggling with a Kantian question

18As Modiano observes, Coleridge's "attraction to unity and oneness" had always been the "deepest springs of [his] interest in the picturesque" (20).
when he claims, first, that the emotions are excited by art, but then also calls the apprehension of the beautiful a disinterested "complacency" (239). Yet this conflict was hardly a new one for Coleridge, either. In the picturesque he had seen how intellectual curiosity about a scene's details becomes interfused with a feeling that the scene is a unified whole. The journal entries cited in this chapter reveal his interest in the emotional/intellectual nature of aesthetic response.

In *Genial Criticism* Coleridge tried to explain this "doubleness" of aesthetic apprehension by using an Allston painting as an example. He claims that while the conscious, perceiving mind is busy engaging the "life and spontaneous action" of the object perceived, the viewer simultaneously "feels" a compositional dimension not readily apparent to the mind. Describing Allston's *Dead Man Reviving From the Touch of the Bones of the Prophet Elisha*, he explains how the arrangement of figures creates, compositionally, a kind of circle, but one which is "concealed by the action and passion" of the figures, even as human flesh conceals the underlying skeleton. Yet Coleridge had noted precisely the same phenomenon in the picturesque scene, in which implied or "hidden" lines demarcating planes or screens had to be "felt" while the eye negotiated the visual variety intellectually.

As a kind of contrast, Coleridge then describes anothe-
er painting--this time one in which the circular form is not
hidden but immediately perceived. Allston accompanied Cole-
ridge when he went to see this painting--Raphael's Galatea--
in Rome. In this work, he says, the great variety and mul-
tiplicity of forms maintain visual interest despite the more
blatant appearance of the circular form. The painting il-
ustrates, says Coleridge, "the perfect reconciliation,
effected between the two conflicting principles of the FREE
LIFE, and of the confining FORM" (235). While I would not
suggest that Coleridge is thinking here about the pictur-
esque at all, it is interesting to note that this pleasing
tension which occurs when vibrant life threatens to break
out of confining forms is very much like the reconciliation
achieved in the picturesque scene or garden, where wild,
untrimmed elements continually threaten to overgrow and
obliterate the boundaries which attempt to confine them.

In these ways the essays On the Principles of Genial
Criticism offer hints that Coleridge never really expelled
the picturesque from his aesthetics. His definition of the
beautiful seems to perpetuate certain elements he admired in
the picturesque. Here and elsewhere, however, by placing
the picturesque in lists of aesthetic terms, Coleridge also
acts as if it exists independently as an aesthetic concept.
This ambivalence leaves us always uncertain whether he ever
satisfactorily answered the question he had posed in his
notebook in 1803: "... is there a real Difference between
the Picturesque & the Beautiful?" (CN 1: 1755). In the definitions cited by Allsop, Coleridge seems to give the beautiful a more substantial existence, ascribing to the picturesque only an "effect" of wholeness. He was nonetheless always curious about how this "effect" was produced—and few things helped him understand this effect better than the relationships he had with the visual artists who labored to produce it.
CHAPTER 5

MIXING POETRY WITH PAINTING:

TWO EKPHRASTIC POEMS AS PICTURESQUE PARADIGMS

The Coleridgean picturesque, as I have been defining it in the preceding chapters, is a clear acknowledgment that the realms of natural scenery, poetry, and visual art cannot be neatly isolated from each other—at least in terms of how they affect an audience. Our perception of nature, never pure, is always mediated by artistic representations; we likewise see poems or paintings colored by the lenses of their sister arts. Picturesque aesthetics exploits—even celebrates—the way art, poetry, and landscape become "fused," to use Hussey's term (4), or "entangled," as Hef-fernan describes it (6). All visual and verbal texts, I would argue, participate in this fusion to some degree. Certain poetic texts, however, call particular attention to this entanglement because the poet has either placed an artwork in the text or based the poem upon one. These two approaches were used by Coleridge in writing two poems which I believe are the most complete manifestations of his impulse to compose picturesque scenes. These poems go beyond picturesque images or framing devices to unite the poem and

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the picture in an even more literal way.

This kind of poem which makes a picture "speak out" or "speak up" is often referred to as an "ekphrastic" poem.1 John Hollander divides ekphrastic poetry into two kinds: "notional ekphrasis," in which a poet "invents a fictional visual object," and "actual ekphrasis," in which the poem "speaks to, or of, or for an image to which the reader of the text has like access" (131). As Hollander points out, ekphrastic poetry has a long tradition, examples of which can be found, for instance, in Homer's description of Achilles' shield or in Spenser's description of the tapestries in Book 3 of *The Faerie Queen*. In writing examples of both notional and actual ekphrasis, Coleridge not only adds to this tradition but finds in it another way to achieve the synthesis which his philosophic mind demanded. To a poet devoted to reconciling opposites and making "extremes meet," ekphrastic poetry offered a way to bring together the contrasting realms of the visual and the verbal.

Coleridge's two ekphrastic poems have unfortunately received little attention from Coleridge scholars, at least when compared with the mystery or conversation poems. Neither poem was written during Coleridge's period of intense poetic creation. "The Picture," his example of notional

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1Jean Hagstrum calls this kind of poem "iconic." In *The Sister Arts* (1958), Hagstrum traces the long history of iconic poetry, paying particular attention to eighteenth-century English poets.
ekphrasis, was written in 1802. While it was a product, then, of the decade which I have focused on in this study, it was not written during the most "poetic" years (1796-1798) but was rather composed during a period of extensive descriptive writing in his notebooks. "The Garden of Boccaccio," an example of actual ekphrasis, was written in 1828 at a time when Coleridge no longer wrote much poetry, when he had established his reputation instead as the eloquent philosopher, theologian, and critic--the "sage of Highgate."

While "The Picture" beautifully summarizes his interest in pictorialism in the midst of the "picturesque" decade I have been documenting, "Boccaccio" demonstrates that the impulse to compose a complex picture remained with Coleridge for the rest of his life.

The title of the 1802 poem, "The Picture," signals the audience to expect some kind of ekphrastic rendering of an artwork. Readers might be disappointed to find that--although there is a picture in the poem--it makes its appearance rather late in the text, which raises some questions as to the relative importance of the picture to the poem. These questions may explain why many critics have paid more attention to the poem's subtitle--"Or the Lover's Resolution"--than to the title. Most commentators focus on the fantasies of the poem's love-lorn youth and read it as a thinly-veiled autobiographical confession of Coleridge's vain "resolution" to give up his love for Sara Hutchinson.
Certainly this reading has biographical validity, but it tends to suppress the poem's actual title and overlook Coleridge's interest in the value of picture-making. It discourages us from asking why Coleridge chose the title he did. While his relationship with Asra certainly constitutes an important context for the poem, so does his love for landscape—and his interest in the pictorial representation of it. The immediate context for the poem's composition is the fell-walking of 1802, a point which Michael J. Kelly has carefully demonstrated by pointing out how the landscape descriptions of the August, 1802 notebooks contain both the visual and conceptual seeds of the poem. Coleridge had certainly written poems about natural scenes before, but never had he emphasized picturicity to the point of placing a painting inside a poem. The poem depicts other "scenes" besides the actual picture (natural bowers and a mirror image), but in the verbal picture of a picture—a scene doubly removed from the actual—Coleridge pays a special tribute to the artist's impulse to arrest unstable images in a fixed form.

"The Picture" emerges not only from images in Coleridge's notebooks, however, but also from the German poet Salomon Gessner's "Der Veste Vorsaz" ("The Fixed Resolution"), from which, as Max Schulz states, "Coleridge borrowed the conception of the lover's broken resolution" (137). Schulz goes so far as to call it an "adaptation" of
Gessner's prose idyll, but Kelly—in finding significant parallels in the notebooks—questions the extent of Coleridge's reliance on Gessner, seeing in Coleridge's own experiences the true center of the poem.\(^2\) Certainly the poem contains elements of both, with Coleridge functioning as a sort of picturesque "improver." In writing an "imitation" of Gessner, Coleridge takes liberties with the poetic scene, adding to it new elements from his notebooks and re-arranging the composition as an active viewer and reader. The most significant "improvements" Coleridge makes upon his source are the additions of the poem's two central "pictures," which are not part of Gessner's text. Since Gessner was a painter and an etcher, as well as a poet, there is a certain irony in the fact that it is Coleridge's poem, not Gessner's, which contains the picture.

The initial "picture" drawn by Coleridge (as well as the first scene of Gessner's idyll) is that of a youth wandering through nature, beckoned by a potential "new joy" in nature, claiming freedom from the "master-passion" of erotic love, which he says he has "quelled" (7-12). Gene Ruoff observes that the "rugged, spartan setting" in which the

\(^2\)As both Ruoff and Kelly have observed, the idea for the poem can be first seen in a journal entry from the spring of 1802, when Coleridge writes: "A Poem on the endeavor to emancipate the soul from day-dreams & note the different attempts & the vain ones--" (CN 1:1153). It is not clear whether this idea comes from Gessner's poem or his own yearning for Sara Hutchinson. Kelly also notes how the yearning for Sara expressed in CN 1:1601 provides "a rough but recognizable paradigm of 'The Picture'" (81).
lover wanders is "an erotic anodyne," a place where he can put erotic impulses "behind him in both space and time" (186). This decision to put passion behind him appears to be his "resolution," but, as Geoffrey Yarlott (among others) observes, the subtitle is actually ironic in that "the lover’s resolution fails utterly" (40); lack of resolution would be a more appropriate description of the lover’s behavior.

Coleridge emphasizes this split between the lover’s intention and his actual behavior by mixing first and third person narration, beginning with an "I" narrator who tells of his wandering but juxtaposing it with third-person commentary which looks critically at his actions. Ruoff says this split allows the narrator to "project and mock the ‘love-distempered youth’" (190)--a youth who Modiano says is "not a separate character but a facet of the narrator’s own personality" which he is "trying to exorcise through self-analysis" (91). The youth vainly hopes that retreat into a concealed bower of nature with deliver him from erotic fantasy; the opposite, in fact, occurs. "Every effort made," says Ruoff, "to proclaim the scene secure from the ravages of erotic impulse ends in erotic revery" (189). The third-person narrator, recognizing this failure, provides a mocking commentary.

What has not been recognized is the extent to which the youth’s "retreats" are bowers of picturesque repose and
composition. This fact seems particularly important to the extent that the picturesque is often seen as being allied with the erotic. As Alan Liu points out, both Price (in the 1794 *Essays*) and Knight (in the 1815 *Taste*) identify the connection between the picturesque and the erotic, both of which stimulate curiosity by partial concealment. Desire is "arrested," says Liu, in either case; beauty is "both bared to and barred from the eye of desire" (63). These similarities help explain why a picturesque retreat would certainly not assist the youth in suppressing erotic desire. The intricate, picturesque scene stimulates his curiosity and prompts a greater activity of mind, rather than a retreat from thought. The young lover, after traversing a rather difficult path "through weeds and thorns" (1), reaches what he feels is his place of safety, and proclaims:

This is my hour of triumph! I can now
With my own fancies play the merry fool,
And laugh away worse folly, being free.
Here will I seat myself, beside this old,
Hollow and weedy oak, which ivy-twine
Clothes as with net-work: here will I couch my limbs,
Close by this river, in this silent shade,
As safe and sacred from the step of man
As an invisible world . . . (46-50)

The lover's "safe" bower recalls Coleridge's favorite picturesque scenes from the notebooks and from other poems as well, especially the dell of "Lime-Tree Bower" and the lawn and brook of "Autumnal Evening" (the haunt of an earlier poetic lover). The lover's bower in "The Picture" contains a "seat" beside a decaying oak, partially concealed by en-
twined ivy. Yet the erotic nature of such a scene is emphasized by the reference to the ivy as a "network" of "clothes" (a detail borrowed from Gessner) which offers teasing glimpses of the oak. The shade of the dell adds an additional level of partial concealment to the scene. Far from providing a safe haven from fantasy, the picturesque scene produces a more curious look from the viewer. It is a place which provokes imaginative creation.

The lover, however, tries valiantly to claim the opposite. He commends the gentle breeze of the bower for not being "Love's accomplice" (59), saying that it "Ne'er played the wanton--never half disclosed / The maiden's snowy bosom" (62-63); the breeze, he says, only innocently lifts "the feathers of the robin's breast" (69). In the same way, he asserts that the stream's reflective pool never aided love by mirroring the maiden's face or "form divine" (75). But even as he makes this claim, the image of the maid appears suddenly in the pool and he exclaims:

. . . Behold! her open palm
Presses her cheek and brow! her elbow rests
On the bare branch of half-uprooted tree,
That leans towards its mirror! (76-79)

The young lover stares at the image, even "worships the watery idol, dreaming hopes / Delicious to the soul" (83-84). As he descends imaginatively deeper into the image, however, the maid in the pool "plucks / The heads of tall flowers that behind her grow" and "Scatters them on the pool" (87-91). Thus the lover's "phantom world" is de-
stroyed, reduced to a "thousand circlets" which collide on the water's surface (92-93). Although he waits until the mirror becomes smooth again, he is disappointed to find that the maid's image has vanished.

This episode becomes the focal point of most discussions of "The Picture"; Kelly calls it the "intellectual center of the poem" (84). These lines are, in fact, the only part of the poem that many readers know, since Coleridge quoted them in the preface to "Kubla Khan." He quoted them to compare the youth's inability to reconstitute the image in the pool to his own failure to remember the scattered images of his dream. "Kubla Khan" (in addition to being another poem of eroticized landscape) laments the inability to successfully "fix" the ebb and flow of images into a stable scene. Like "Kubla Khan," the pool scene from "The Picture" makes a statement, as Kelly says, about the "fragility, fleetingness, and ubiquitousness" of images, and "can be regarded as an allegory of the poetic imagination in the act of creation" (83-84). The fragility of the picture in the first part of the poem only underscores the need to make the picture stable—a need satisfied by the actual artwork in the poem's "resolution."

Before leaving this scene, however, we should note Coleridge's fascination with intertwined images—and his refusal to draw clear boundaries between them. When the "imagined" maid destroys her own reflection by throwing
flowers onto the mirrored surface, the "actual" impinges on the reflection. When the calming of the water fails to restore her image, the lover "turns" to find that "she is gone" (104)—apparently a turn not to the pool but to the branch above it where the actual woman would have been. Coleridge causes the reader to "turn" as well, in order to rethink the status of the image in the pool. Could an "imagined" image self-destruct by engendering an "actual" woman to throw petals at itself, or did an actual woman, now "gone" from the branch, destroy her image and flee the scene? Confused, our curiosity aroused by an inability to see this concealed, insubstantial woman, we turn as readers, along with the lover, to look for the actual maiden.

Our search is not a difficult one, for Coleridge's narrator begins to see her as increasingly "actual." "Home-ward she steals" he says, "through many a woodland maze / Which he shall seek in vain" (105-6). Seemingly "barred" from her presence, the lover pursues the vanished maiden. Equally barred are the readers, at least from any degree of certainty about her status, and so we join the chase, pursuing an ambiguous maiden/image. As readers, we are tempted to believe that the poem has started over, for we pursue the maid through a series of scenes that mirror the places in the first half of the poem, moving towards a bower more picturesque than the first. The end of the quest is again the apprehension of an image, but in this case the lover and
the reader find a picture not subject to the instability of a pool's reflective surface.

When the young lover, frustrated by the disappearance of the maiden's image in the pool, decides to pursue her, he rises to "trace" the "devious course" of the stream through "deeper shades and lonelier glooms" (120-21), even as he had done in the poem's opening lines. In another repetition of the opening scene, he foolishly calls himself a "freeman"--"emancipate / From Passion's dreams" (118-19). He wanders through his "chosen haunt" (118), noting items typical of picturesque scenes: a mossy rock dappled with sunshine, reflected clouds in the stream which he describes as "dimness o'erswum with lustre" (132)--a mixture of opposing qualities. Still thinking of love, he eventually reaches the second picturesque bower where he hears the sound of a waterfall and steps into the scene:

I pass forth into light--I find myself
Beneath a weeping birch (most beautiful
Of forest trees, the Lady of the Woods),
Hard by the brink of a tall weedy rock
That overbrows the cataract. How bursts
The landscape on my sight! Two crescent hills
Fold in behind each other, and so make
A circular vale, and land-locked, as might seem,
With brook and bridge, and grey-stone cottages,
Half-hid by rocks and fruit-trees. (135-44)

This picturesque scene--by including rustic cottages (half-concealed) and a bridge--mirrors the notebook descriptions from this period, which (as I noted in chapter 3) tend to mix natural and artificial elements. The scene also recalls the "fantastic sight" Coleridge imagined in "Lime-Tree Bow-
er," a similar waterfall scene canopied by an arching tree. Even as the waterfall of "Lime-Tree" fanned the leaves of a nearby tree, the waterfall’s breeze causes the smoke coming from the chimney of the nearest cottage to slant. Coleridge seems to have borrowed fragments both from prose descriptions and from previous poems to compose this picture.

In drawing the reader into this scene, however, Coleridge lays another trap of visual ambiguity which reminds us how easily artforms can be confused with nature--and with other artforms. As in the scene of confusion at the pool, Coleridge makes us reevaluate our understanding of an image. Our confusion stems from the fact that, as Modiano says, "the narrator imperceptibly slips from one kind of reality into another" (92). After describing the cottage smoke which slants with the waterfall’s breeze, he continues:

... But what is this?
That cottage, with its slanting chimney smoke,
And close beside its porch a sleeping child,
His dear head pillowed on a sleeping dog--
One arm between its fore-legs, and the hand
Holds loosely its small handful of wild-flowers,
Unfilletted, and of unequal lengths. (152-58)

A reader may initially guess that the youth is elaborating upon his description, probing the scene more deeply for details. One could also imagine the youth asking about the meaning or significance of "this" scene of domesticity. These tentative readings collapse, however, when we realize that we are reading the wrong "picture"--for "this" refers not to his verbal picture but to a painted one. In this
poetic "painting" of natural landscape we are suddenly confronted with an actual painting to view alongside nature's bower, both mediated by the poet's composing power.

What the youth has finally encountered is our poem's "ekphrastic" object: a "curious picture, with a master's haste / Sketched upon a strip of pinky-silver skin, / Peeled from the birchen bark!" (159-61). On a canvas of bark, with "those purple berries / Her pencil" (162-63), the maid has sketched the scene of the cottage and its rustic inhabitants. Kelly notes how the scene draws upon notebook descriptions of cottages on the Lakes tour of 1802 (87-88), but he also argues that the cottage is a symbol of peaceful domesticity--of the world Coleridge vainly longed to inhabit with Sara Hutchinson (90). While this seems plausible, the cottage could be more easily explained as common subject matter in the genre of picturesque painting--of which the maid's canvas serves as an example. Wordsworth, in his decision not to tear down the cottages in Beaumont's winter garden, exemplifies the suitability of cottages to such scenes. The maid's painting looks not only like Coleridge's fell-walking notes, but also like the notes he took on Beaumont's picturesque sketches over a year later. Her painting epitomizes the picturesque-genre style, exemplified in England by David Wilkie, Beaumont's protege and frequent visi-
tor to Coleorton. Even though Coleridge writes the poem a year before meeting Beaumont and beginning his intense artistic education, he shows us here a predisposition to such picturesque scenes of cottages and humble peasants.

Coleridge's increasing valuation of the visual arts is even indicated, I believe, by the behavior of the youth in finding the sketch. He seems instinctively to recognize it as the work of his love, exclaiming "Divinest maid!" (161). Tempted to keep the sketch as a "relique" (182), he realizes that it would only heighten the passion he is trying to quench, so he decides to return to her the inadvertently misplaced sketch. It is easy, of course, to see this simply as rationalization, as "a pretext for renewing the relationship" (Yarlott 39). Certainly passion does figure prominently in his renewed pursuit of the maid, who he believes will be alone at "her father's house" (178). As an artist, though, she has taken on an additional dimension; her appeal now is not only erotic but also aesthetic.

When he realizes that she painted the sketch on a nearby "patch of heath" (165), he reveres it as a holy place, partly, at least, because it was warm with the glow of creation. He asks that the evening sun might "rest bright, and linger long" upon it, the imaginative tinge of

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3One of Wilkie's best-known genre paintings, The Blind Fiddler, was painted at the Hall Farm of Coleorton.
twilight providing the perfect aesthetic benediction. 4 He calls her "Daughter of genius! stateliest of our maids" (170) -- terms of respect more suitable for an artistic genius than an erotic object. While primarily an erotic object when reflected in the pool, the maid becomes a more complex figure in her demonstration of artistic power. As a creator of images (not just a created image), she can stabilize the fleeting, insubstantial fragments of the pool, producing a painted composition far more "fixed" than is the youth's resolution. Although his desire to return her artwork is at least partly an excuse to keep pursuing her (an erotic impulse), he also sees the painting's inherent value as a tangible manifestation of the imagination, superior to his fragmented fantasies. Her canvas, then, is an object both picturesque and erotic -- as is the poem. The youth concludes by saying that, upon finding her, he will "be her guide the long wood through" (186) -- a particularly presumptuous remark concerning their roles. In aesthetic terms, at least, she seems more able to guide him, for she has demonstrated the power not only to fix the scene but to produce thereby a passionate response in the viewer.

While it could be argued that the poem ends with the young lover right where he began -- chasing the maid while

4Admittedly the lover, in locating her artistic bower by seeing the "pressure" that remains on the weedy "couch" and saying "She has been newly here" (164), sounds equally like a hunter in search of an erotic prey.
clutching an image--some progress, I believe, has occurred. His "master-passion" may still control him, but in his hand he holds a sketch drawn with a "master's haste" (159), an emblem of potential artistic mastery. As a poem about the power of picture-making (as well as its challenges and limitations), "The Picture" deserves its title. Coleridge altered Gessner's story—in which the youth renewed his search for love upon seeing a girl's footprint in the sand—to make the picture the force which renews the lover's passion. Even as love exerts power over individuals, so can Art, learns the youth. While certainly an example of notional ekphrasis, the poem goes far beyond a simple description of an artwork to demonstrate how completely we are immersed in pictures, be they poetic descriptions, landscape scenes, reflected images, or painted canvases. Destined to roam a maze that combines natural and artificial scenes, we can exercise some degree of control over the pictures—as the maid seems to do—or we can bemoan with frustration the instability of them.

In a poem of actual ekphrasis, the poet takes a significantly different approach to the entanglement of visual and verbal art. Rather than inventing a fictional artwork, like the birchen canvas of "The Picture," the poet writes about an actual artwork—a picture to which the readers would probably have access. In this case, then, the poet
must first be a "reader" of the picture. As a result, the poem is usually not just a rendering of the picture but a record of the poet's encounter with it. Often we can observe how the poet "worked on" the picture, altering it to create a new composition, somewhat like the "improvers" selectively altered or rearranged picturesque scenes. When the reader of such a poem has access to the picture on which it is based, a "superimposition" of images takes place in which one is seen and re-evaluated in light of the other—rather like the experience of a tourist reading Gilpin's description while looking at the scene.

Coleridge demonstrates how richly complex a response can be produced by such a poem in "The Garden on Boccaccio," which Marshall Suther calls his "last real poem" (182). Written in 1828 and first published in The Keepsake for 1829, "Boccaccio" affirms that Coleridge's love for pictures lived on long past the decade of landscape-touring and picture-viewing. While the poem lacks many of the conventional images seen in the picturesque scenes of 1796-1806, it "out-picturesques" every other work in its intermixture of painting, garden, and poem, all of which combine not only due to the "improving" eye of the poet—but also at the direction of the reader, who must negotiate a complex layering of text and image.

Susan Luther began her 1991 essay on "Boccaccio" by noting that, despite scattered bits of praise from a few
critics, the poem has been "virtually erased from most sur-
veys of the Coleridgean landscape" (24). As she points out,
only Jerome Christensen, in a 1984 essay on the poem's rela-
tion to associationist philosophy, has written at length
about the poem in recent years. To complement Christensen's
and Luther's useful readings of this neglected text, I would
like to argue that the picturesque provides an important
context for reading the poem--and that the poem may, in
fact, be Coleridge's greatest exercise in the picturesque.

Before looking at the poem itself, we need to gain a
broader perspective by stepping back and looking at the
background against which it was set--its original place of
publication. The poem originally appeared alongside the en-
graving which inspired it in The Keepsake, an annual liter-
ary miscellany. Literary miscellanies, as Barbara M. Bene-
dict points out, were collections of literary fragments,
frequently accompanied by illustrations, directed at the
members of the newly literate middle class (and especially
women) who hoped to "emulate the tastes and fashions of the
gentry" (407). Their appeal parallels, at least in part,
the appeal of the picturesque, which allowed anyone--for the
price of a Gilpin guidebook--to look at the River Wye as an
aristocrat might look at his garden. Benedict observes that
miscellanies taught the middle class "the aristocratic idea
of the 'sisterhood of the arts'" and the "predication of
sentimental literature on artistic appreciation, especially
of the 'picturesque' and the 'sublime'" (416). One year before Coleridge published "Boccaccio" in The Keepsake, Leigh Hunt graced its pages with an unusual poem called "An Evening Landscape," in which he placed the phrases of his landscape descriptions in various locations within a rectangle to indicate their actual location in the landscape. This novel attempt to paint with words, thus combining two common vehicles for the picturesque, affirms Benedict's suggestion that miscellanies often trafficked in the picturesque. Seeing Coleridge's "Garden of Boccaccio" in this context, I believe, provides strong historical grounds for exploring it as a picturesque text.

While the original readers of the poem read the text mediated by the accompanying illustration, the picture is not reproduced in any modern editions of Coleridge's poems. As a result, the contemporary reader sees the poem more like a piece of "notional ekphrasis"; the artwork appears in the opening lines to incite the poetic reverie which constitutes the poem. The original readers of The Keepsake, however, saw alongside the poem an engraving by F. Englehart of a painting originally by Thomas Stothard, whom Hussey describes as "an essentially picturesque painter" (264). The painting, according to Herbert G. Wright, was part of a

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5Hunt's poem was one of a series called "Dreams on the Borders of the Land of Poetry." John Hollander provides an interesting discussion of this poem's relation to the "ekphrastic poetry" tradition in his essay "The Gazer's Spirit: Romantic and Later Poetry on Painting and Sculpture" (1990).
series which Stothard had shown at the Royal Academy (541). Englehart’s engraving of the painting presents a garden scene peopled by aristocratic figures gathered around a central fountain, enjoying food, drink, song, and repose.

11. The Garden of Boccaccio. Engraving by F. Englehart, after a painting by Thomas Stothard. (Photo courtesy of The Newberry Library)

The figures in the scene, based on the story of the third day of Boccaccio’s Decameron, epitomize aristocratic life and manners, and thus are far removed from the rustic peasants which typically inhabit picturesque scenes. The design is not without picturesque qualities, however, for it
presents a series of planes receding into deep space, demarcated by two sets of arches which are covered with vegetation. The first series of arches is the central feature of the middle-ground (providing a backdrop to the figures of the garden), but the other half-concealed in the distance, where it recalls the bridges or aqueducts of Claude’s Italian landscapes. These compositional features, in addition to the obvious fact that the place it depicts is a garden, set the scene apart as picturesque.

Coleridge wants to bring his readers into this garden scene, but his poem cannot be said to accurately reproduce the picture at all. Using the illustration only as an inspiration, a "formal stimulus" (Christensen 39), he creates a garden of his own that contains few of Stothard’s details. As Christensen suggests, he "generalize[s] it as 'Idyll' (17), 'silent poesy of form' (18), and 'exquisite design' (14)" (Christensen 39). Like the picturesque scene-sketcher, Coleridge takes liberties with the drawing, interpreting it to make the details suit his own poetic purposes, and thereby also modeling the reader’s act of construing the text.

The picturesque scene, which at various times throughout Coleridge’s life provided consolation and rejuvenating power, functions similarly in this poem, though the scene in

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6A bridge of this kind (though composed of only one arch) can be seen, for instance, in the middle-ground of Claude’s Hagar and the Angel.
this case is a representation, not a natural landscape. The poem begins with the pensive poet sitting alone, unsuccessfully trying to rouse himself from his "vacancy" by recalling past pleasures or griefs. The dejected Coleridge barely notices the entrance of his "friend," who places on his desk a copy of Stothard's picture. "Slumb'ring," as he says, to everything but his own pain, he only "half saw" his friend place the "exquisite design" before him—"An Idyll, with Boccaccio's spirit warm, / Framed in the silent poetry of form" (13-18). Still not totally aware, looking with an "idle eye," he describes how the picture "stole upon my inward sight" in a "gradual" process, like "flocks . . . emerging from a mist" (20-24). As the scene becomes gradually internalized, a warmth fills his chest (an infusion of pleasure), followed by a string of memories. He calls them "All spirits of power that most had stirred my thought / In selfless boyhood . . . Or charmed my youth . . . Or lent a lustre to the earnest scan / Of manhood" (26-34). His life is remembered, however, largely as a series of encounters with texts--strain[s], hymn[s], minstrel lay[s]--even his own writing of Poesy, which he sees as the child that later matured into his adult preoccupation, Philosophy.

7 Although she is not named in the poem, the friend is Ann Gillman, hostess and close friend during his many years as a resident of Dr. and Mrs. Gillman's Highgate home.

8 By calling the picture "the silent poetry of form," he employs the traditional "mute poetry" definition of the visual arts, even as he had done in the Genial Criticism essays.
His biographical reverie completed, the poet utters a somewhat confusing exclamation, difficult partly because he shifts from the past tense he has used in recording this memory and says:

Thanks, gentle artist! now I can descry
Thy fair creation with a mastering eye,
And all awake! And now in fix’d gaze stand,
Now wander through the Eden of thy hand;
Praise the green arches, on the fountain clear
See fragment shadows of the crossing deer;
And with that serviceable nymph I stoop,
The crystal, from its restless pool, to scoop.
I see no longer! I myself am there,
Sit on the ground-sward, and the banquet share. (57-66)

Ambiguous in its delineation of the "now" of line 57 (is it the time of the poem’s composition or the moment immediately after the reverie?), the poem is equally ambiguous about why the awakened poet can now "master" the artist’s composition, rather than passively responding with unconscious reverie. It appears that the picture’s ability to evoke past associations in the viewer enables him to be totally present to the viewing experience—to contribute something to the "composing" of the scene. Christensen claims that the "mechanism of association" which had been operating up to this point—a mode only of Coleridgean "fancy"—seems to be transferred here to "an explanatory source that is the figure of the poem’s inconsistency. What has been bound by a designer," he says, "can be mastered by an observer" (41-42).

Like a picturesque observer exercising "control" over the viewing or sketching of a landscape, Coleridge has achieved a degree of "mastery" over the picture. As Luther
says, he has "awaken[ed] into the sensuous, animating powers of imagination" and "loses himself in . . . not simply the appreciation of another's, but the exercise of his own interpretive art" (28). He can choose to look fixedly at a particular spot or let his eye wander from place to place in the garden. So complete is his mastery that he breaks the barriers between life and art and enters the picture, even as he had depicted himself stepping into the Beaumont and Allston paintings he described years earlier. As in "The Picture," distinctions between art and life become blurred—and again it happens at a pool. This time, however, the pool does not frustrate the poet with an insubstantial image but rather acts as the vehicle by which he makes contact with the garden world. He joins the nymph which Stothard shows by the fountain, reaching—along with her—to draw real water from the pool.

Adopting some other details from Stothard's picture, he takes on the persona of the lutist seated on the ground, thus inscribing himself into the scene as a kind of artist, engaged in "gaz[ing] upon the maid who gazing sings" (68). Suddenly he claims, "With old Boccaccio's soul I stand possesst, / And breathe an air like life, that swells my chest" (71-72). Even as the artist had internalized "Boccaccio's spirit warm" (17) in order to make the picture from Boccaccio's text, now the poet is possessed with Boccaccio's soul, which fills his chest with "air like life." As Boc-
caccio, he finds the garden merging with Florence, the "rare land of courtesy . . . with the Tuscan fields and hills / And famous Arno, fed with all their rills" (73-74). On one level this Florence is an exotic place of literary associations, but at the same time it reflects Coleridge's actual visits to Florence, the Tuscan hills, and the Arno, all of which he saw during his Italian travels. By blending his own observations of nature with Boccaccio's, he creates a kind of utopia in which, as Yarlott says, "'art' [is] organically integrated with 'nature'" (136). Coleridge calls it "the embrace and intertwine / Of all with all in gay and twinkling dance" (92-93).

It is clear that the garden has evolved into something beyond Stothard's illustration, for Coleridge then asks us to look and "see" the place where "Boccace sits," brought imaginatively to life in his garden, "Mid gods of Greece and warriors of romance" (96-97). Placed in his lap is a scroll of Homer, from which he reads, while partially concealed by the mantle over his breast lies "Ovid's Holy Book of Love's sweet smart!" (100). The sight of these books, representing contrasting literary styles and genres, helps the poet draw his final conclusion about Boccaccio:

O all-enjoying and all-blending sage,  
Long be it mine to con thy mazy page,

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9Donald Sultana notes how Coleridge's description of his trip along the Arno (CN 2:2856), which he described as "a heavenly country," leads us to believe that his own journey provided some of the inspiration for the poem.
Where, half conceal'd, the eye of fancy views
Fauns, nymphs, and winged saints, all gracious to thy
muse! (101-4)

By his act of reading and writing, Boccaccio blends together
diverse textual material to create a garden scene that is
picturesque both in its mixture of contrasting material (the
juxtaposition of Biblical and mythological figures) and in
the "half-conceal'd" state in which we see the figures—all
of which impels the viewer to look more closely. But as
Luther points out, the Boccaccio brought to life in the
midst of the garden "metonymically figures S. T. Coleridge,
the present ideal, great reader who 'unfolds' the text"
(28). The inscribed Coleridge/Boccaccio recalls the in-
scribed viewers who looked at landscapes in the conversation
poems, with one important difference: the viewer looks not
out at the landscape but down at a text, perhaps a testimony
to the aging poet's re-orientation away from nature's scenes
and toward a world of literature, art, and criticism.

Not exclusively the philosopher/critic, however, Cole-
ridge shows in "Boccaccio" clear signs of his once-prominent
poetic power. Having taken Boccaccio's "mazy page" and S-
tothing's "exquisite design" as models, Coleridge has cre-
ated his own multi-layered poetic maze, an intricate mixture
of text, visual art, and garden which draws the
viewer/reader into curious contemplation. While journeying
through the receding planes in pursuit of a textual horizon,
the reader is continually reminded of the "mediated" nature
of aesthetic experience. Coleridge's original audience read the poem mediated by Stothard; both Coleridge and Stothard composed their gardens via Boccaccio, whose vision of the world—as the poet shows—was mediated by Homer and Ovid. Behind each horizon is another distance, a deeper point of regress to which we can infinitely defer. As readers, we feel compelled to keep looking. The poem is like those artworks which Coleridge discussed in an 1819 lecture, pictures which cause us to "muse on them" even after we have "seen their outlines" and "determined what they appeared to the eye." These works possess a special quality:

... a divine something corresponding to [something] within, which no image can exhaust ... The same unwearied form presents itself, yet still we look on, sinking deeper and deeper, and therein offering homage to the infinity of our souls which no mere form can satisfy. (PL 193-94)

In his conversation poems, Coleridge typically made excursions out into landscapes, only to "return" at the end (as Harper calls it) to the original spot. As I suggested in the second chapter, this is like going from the frame into the depths of the picture—and coming out again. What separates "Boccaccio" from those poems is the poet's refusal to return: the poem concludes, as Christensen says, "not with the restoration of the self to itself but with the 'me' (105) still in the garden that is the poem's design" (Christensen 38). The poem's coda reads:

Still in the garden let me watch their pranks,  
And see in Dian's vest between the ranks  
Of the trim vines, some maid that half believes
The vestal fires, of which her lover grieves,
With that sly satyr peeping through the leaves!
(105-10)

Even as the older Coleridge seemed to elevate the text and the picture over devotion to nature, here he portrays himself sinking into a picture—and not returning. Instead he chooses to remain inside the visual/textual garden. As the "sly satyr peep[s] through the leaves" at a vestal maid (another blending of the erotic with the picturesque), the poet looks on as well, allowing the leaves and vines to frame the scene and even partially conceal the image of the vestal maid. Coleridge, not only part of the scene he had composed and then entered, takes on one final time the role of viewer.

The layers of text and image (and their accompanying associations) become so complex in "Boccaccio" that the poet seems almost unable to extricate himself from the artistic world he enters. Although this may seem like a kind of entrapment, it becomes less so as we remember that Coleridge did not see the picturesque as a trap, like many others did. In this poem, as in all the manifestations of the picturesque, Coleridge is not only intrigued but also consoled by the complex mediations of aesthetic experience, finding in the composed scene a realm of intellectual and emotional pleasure. The poem makes a similar offer to its readers, who learn—as they journey through the text—not only how the arts combine in Coleridge's work, but also how their own
act of reading brings together the parts of this composition—while simultaneously tempting them to linger inside it. The "picture" in "Boccaccio" has been constructed, indeed, but it is difficult to say just who has constructed it. As Christensen says, "the scene itself belongs to no one, not Stothard, Boccaccio, Ovid, or, least of all, Coleridge" (44). Like the picturesque scene, it has been composed by all of us.

"The Garden of Boccaccio" demonstrates not a return to an earlier fascination with landscape viewing but rather an expansion into a more broadly-conceived picturesque. The world in which the aging Coleridge lived provided its share of "pictures," even if he no longer climbed Lakeland fells or toured the country documenting landscape scenes. His later life centered, instead, on his peaceful domesticity with Dr. and Mrs. James Gillman, into whose Highgate home he moved in 1816, in order that he might control his opium addiction under Dr. Gillman's supervision. Coleridge became a permanent house-guest of the Gillmans, moving with them in 1823 to their new home at #3 The Grove, where Coleridge lived until his death in 1834. Upon moving into the house, Coleridge first took a second floor room but later discovered an attic room on the floor above which offered an exquisite view of the garden below and of Caen Wood beyond. He asked and was granted permission to move his room up-
stairs; the Gillmans, in fact, remodeled the room, extending the slanting roof of the dormer to allow for the installation of floor-to-ceiling shelves to house his books. Here, in the room where Mrs. Gillman undoubtedly handed to him the engraving of Boccaccio's garden, Coleridge lived surrounded both by the world of books and the world of nature as seen outside his window. Like the window-frame at Clevedon, the frames of the various windows at Greta Hall, and the "room with a view" in Malta, the window of his chosen room in Highgate testified to his continued devotion to the composed scene.

Coleridge spoke fondly and frequently of the views from his window and also of the pleasure afforded by walks in the garden and nearby woods. He once called the views "a substitute for Cumberland," adding that "Mr. Gillman has shewn much taste in smart-smoothing and re-creating the garden a gloomy wilderness of shrubs" (Lucy Watson 51). Because his window faced west, Coleridge was able to enjoy from his room the gleam of sunset. According to Mrs. Gillman's granddaughter, Coleridge's enjoyment of the sunsets was "one of the solaces of his later years"--the sight of which would often compel him to call the "other members of the household to join him in his admiration" (Lucy Watson 52). Coleridge also enjoyed walks about the grounds, sometimes walking with Mrs. Gillman, who liked to cheer him up by accompanying him on "sunset" excursions. He also walked
with some of his visitors, including his friend C. R. Leslie, professor of painting at the Royal Academy. According to Leslie, Coleridge once took him up a hill in Caen Wood and told him that "the assemblage of objects as seen from that point reminded him of the passage from Milton beginning: 'Straight mine eyes hath caught new pleasures / Whilst the landscape round it measures'" (qtd. in Lucy Watson 57). In moments such as these we see that Coleridge never completely abandoned the roles of picturesque observer or landscape poet, even though they were partially concealed by his "sage of Highgate" persona.

This aging philosopher was most noted, after all, not for his power of sight but for his power of speech. Guests flocked to his regular Thursday evening receptions, mesmerized by the sound of his discourse. If we were to apply the prevailing aesthetic terminology to conversation, as Uvedale Price argued we could do, we would have to conclude that even Coleridge's discourse had picturesque qualities. As Price argued, the speech of the "picturesque" conversation-alist abounds in "unexpected turns," "flashes of light," and "unthought-of agreements and contrasts" (1:341-42), all of which describe the reports of Coleridge's conversation. In a description from The Metropolitan on one of the Thursday receptions, a reporter stated: "... whether you understand two consecutive sentences we shall not stop too curiously to inquire; but you do something better, you feel the
whole just like any other divine music" (qtd. in Lucy Watson 85). As if he had borrowed Coleridge's own rhetoric on the picturesque, the reporter identified the effect of Cole-
ridge's speech (like the effect of an intricate landscape or painting) as "felt wholeness."

This "wholeness" or "unity," which so dominated Cole-
ridge's discussions of the picturesque (and of aesthetics in general) can be seen in one more significant example from the final years of Coleridge's life: his last major encoun-
ter with the visual arts. In 1831 he visited an exhibit at the British Gallery in Pall Mall; his reactions are recorded in the Table Talk, and his relationship with pictures is beautifully summarized in one particular striking description of his behavior at the exhibition:

I can yet distinctly recall him, half leaning on his old simple stick, and his hat off in one hand, whilst with the fingers of the other he went on, as was his constant wont, figuring in the air a commentary of small dia-
grams, wherewith, as he fancied, he could translate to the eye those relations of form and space which his words might fail to convey with clearness to the ear. His admiration for Rubens showed itself in a sort of brotherly fondness; he looked as if he would shake hands with the pictures. (TT 2:133)

Never simply a passive observer, Coleridge is depicted standing before the painting and "composing" it--even as he had actively composed landscape scenes and paintings throughout his life. The "diagramming" movements of his hand, designed to "translate" the meaning of his words, recall the sketchy diagrams of his notebooks, which accompa-
nied descriptions especially when Coleridge felt that words
alone could not recreate the composition. The primary objective of his active viewing—as with all his encounters with scenes—was to understand those "relations of form and space" by which the accumulation of data becomes a composition.

Even his desire to "shake hands" with Rubens's canvases reminds us of his lifelong fascination with immersing himself in composed scenes. Never content to see the picture simply as something outside himself, he was always determined to either enter into its world (as he tried to do with Beaumont's or Allston's pictures) or to bring the outside world into his own mind. In either case, Coleridge foregrounds the subject's vital role in activating a sense of "wholeness" only latent in the object. It was "wholeness" (his all-important "multeity in unity") which Coleridge saw in those paintings by Rubens. According to Coleridge, Rubens succeeds by using nature's methods: he takes "every-day ingredients" and "throws them into a vast and magnificent whole" (TT 2:134). As a further explanation of Rubens's ability, Coleridge adds:

He extracts the latent poetry out of these common objects,—that poetry and harmony which every man of genius perceives in the face of nature, and which many men of no genius are taught to perceive and feel after examining a picture such as this. (TT 2:134)

Coleridge presumably puts himself in the former category, but he was also aware that anyone's perception of nature's harmonies (even his own) revealed a debt to the artists who
taught the world to see in compositional terms.

If we look behind these words and actions of Coleridge at the art exhibit, we can see a long process of aesthetic development pointing backwards toward the picturesque. Certainly Coleridge's aesthetics went far beyond the simple-minded thinking of tourists enslaved to guidebooks. At the theoretical root of the picturesque, however, Coleridge found fascinating questions about the role played by the viewer or reader in realizing a text's or a scene's "effect." In the "composing" of a picturesque scene, whether by "fixing" its elements in an artistic medium or simply unifying the fragments by a perceptual process, Coleridge saw an opportunity for the exercise of the imagination. To fully understand his poetry, his descriptive prose, or his comments about the visual arts, we must acknowledge his debt to this aesthetic which taught its advocates how to look at the world in pictorial terms--and to see themselves as co-creators of the pictures they perceived.


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