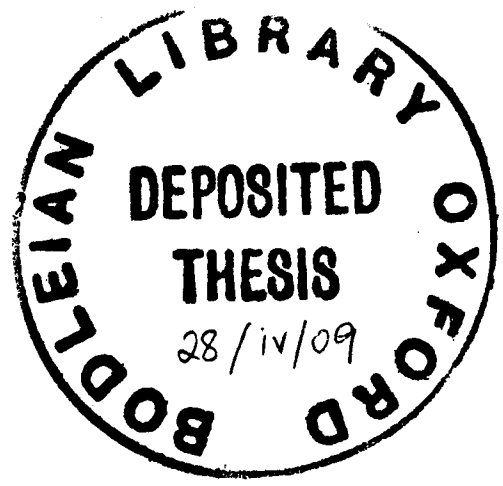
Shining Through the Surface: Washington Allston, Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Imitation in Romantic Art Criticism

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Thesis submitted for the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Trinity Term, 2005 [i.e. 2006 - viva 27/iv/06]

ABSTRACT

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This thesis has evolved from William Blake's phrase, "Imitation is Criticism" written in the margin of Sir Joshua Reynolds's *Discourses on Art.* As a concept central to the production and criticism of art, imitation has largely been explored in the philosophical context of aesthetics rather than in terms of its practical application in image-text studies of the Romantic period. It has also traditionally served as a marker for the period designation 'Romantic', which in image-text studies continues to be played out in terms of the transition from imitative to expressive modes of making and response.

Yet this notion of periodization has proven problematic in studying the response to 'false criticism' within what Wallace Stevens calls that 'corpus of remarks about painting'. These remarks reveal an important tension within imitation as a way of making something like something else, but also as a means of characterizing the relationships that underpin that resemblance. This tension not only occupies a central place in the concurrent development of art criticism and literary criticism in the period, but also offers a new foundation for the interdisciplinary study of image-text relationships in the period.

The thesis is divided into two parts, each guided by the important role that imitation plays in the fight against 'false criticism' with respect to the visual arts. The first part examines the tension within imitation from the standpoint of artists and connoisseurs who expressed concern about the excesses of description in asserting the need for a credible art criticism while at the same time realizing its inevitability. The second part examines the tension within imitation from the standpoint of the American artist Washington Allston and his friend Samuel Taylor Coleridge, both of whom used this tension to advantage in setting forth a lexicon and methodology that could account not only for the 'specific image' described, but also the geometrical and structural relationships that underpin that image.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to thank the supervisors who have seen me through the final stages of this thesis: to Professor Lucy Newlyn, not only for her patience, encouragement, and support, but also for her interest in expanding the scope of this project, and to Dr. Marius Kwint for providing me with much needed guidance from the other side of the disciplinary fence. Heartfelt thanks too, to Dr. Michael John Kooy, who helped me take those first tentative steps into this project, and to Professor Paul Crowther who provided an early art historical perspective on the subject.

I would also like to thank the Massachusetts Historical Society for the Andrew Oliver Research Fellowship, which allowed me to research manuscript material by and about Washington Allston in the Dana Family Papers. The staff at the Pierpont Morgan Library kindly helped me with manuscript material from the Coleorton Papers. I am grateful, too, to Cheryl Leibold, the archivist at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, for her assistance in locating Washington Allston's exhibition catalogue.

Finally, I would like to thank my family for their warmth, good humour, and faith that my 'paper' might appear in material form one of these days; my 'schoonfamilie' for already thinking about the party; Nick Smith, Helen Williams and Joy Wang for keeping me sane, and of course my husband, Jeroen Kortmann, for everything.

Table of Contents

Part One

Introduction		1-8
Chapter 1:	Interdisciplinary Difference	9-38
Chapter 2:	Imitation in Art Criticism: Bridging the 'Creative-Critical Divide'	39-62
Chapter 3:	Imitation and Periodization	63-96
Chapter 4:	Description, Criticism and the Connoisseur	97-138

Part Two

Introduction		139-142
Chapter 5:	Allston, Coleridge and a 'visual language to the understanding'	143-177
Chapter 6:	Imitation, Intuition and the 'self-unravelling clue'	178-214
Chapter 7:	The Bristol Exhibition, 1814 and Washington Allston's *The Dead Man Revived by Touching the Bones of the Prophet Elisha*	215-247
Chapter 8:	Washington Allston and the *Lectures on Art*, 1850	248-280
Conclusion		281-286
Bibliography		287-296

List of Abbreviations

BL	Coleridge, S.T., *Biographia Literaria*, ed. James Engell and W. Jackson Bate (Bollingen Series; 2 vols., Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983).
Corresp.	*The Correspondence of Washington Allston*, ed. Nathalia Wright (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1993).
Friend	Coleridge, S.T., *The Friend* (Bollingen series, 2 vols, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969).
Lectures	Coleridge, S.T., *Lectures 1808-1819 On Literature*, ed. R.A. Foakes (Bollingen Series; 2 vols., Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987).
LA	Washington Allston, *Lectures on Art, and Poems 1850,* ed. Richard Henry Dana, Jr. (New York: Baker and Scribner, 1850). Facsimile reproduction with a forward by Nathalia Wright (Gainesville: Scholars Facsimiles and Reprints, 1967).
Notebooks	*The Notebooks of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. Kathleen Coburn, (Bollingen Series; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957-1990).
PGC	Coleridge, S.T., "Essays on the Principles of Genial Criticism", *Shorter Works and Fragments*, ed. H. J. Jackson and J. R. de J. Jackson (Bollingen series; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995).
SWF	Coleridge, S.T, *Shorter Works and Fragments*, ed. H.J. Jackson and J.R. de J. Jackson (Bollingen Series; 2 vols., Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995).
TM	Coleridge, S.T., "Treatise on Method", *Shorter Works and Fragments*, ed. H. J. Jackson and J. R. de J. Jackson (Bollingen series; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995).
WA	Washington Allston

Introduction

On 15 January 1951 the poet Wallace Stevens was invited to deliver an address on the *Relations between Poetry and Painting* at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, where he made the following observation:

> Generalizations as expansive as these: that there is a universal poetry that is reflected in everything or that there may be a fundamental aesthetic of which poetry and painting are related but dissimilar manifestations, are speculative. One is better satisfied by particulars....The truth is that there seems to exist a corpus of remarks in respect to painting, most often the remarks of painters themselves, which are as significant to poets as to painters. All of these details, to the extent that they have meaning for poets as well as for painters, are specific instances of relations between poetry and painting.[1]

While Stevens's talk was to have been 'limited to the relations between modern poetry and modern painting', he continually defines this modern relationship through and against the terms of its Romantic manifestation. Stevens posits his modernist emphasis on the significance of 'particulars' in direct contrast to phrases such as 'universal poetry' and 'fundamental aesthetics', phrases that invoke the Romantic conception of painting and poetry as 'twin facets of a unified poetic experience'.[2] Through appealing to the traditional manifestations of the relationship between poetry and painting found in the *ut pictura poesis* analogy and the more modern focus on the nature of the specific activity within the boundaries of that analogy, Stevens defines painting and poetry in terms of the other, while at the same time defining each against the other.

However, the significance of Stevens's observation comes not from questioning the way in which painting and poetry relate to each other, but the way in

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[1] Wallace Stevens, "Relations Between Poetry and Painting", *Poets on Painters: Essays on the Art of Painting by Twentieth-Century Poets*, ed. J. D. McClatchy (Berkeley: University of California Press,1988), 111.
[2] Roy Park, "Ut Pictura Poesis: The Nineteenth-Century Aftermath", *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 28 (winter, 1969), 156.

which each of these art forms relates to the 'corpus of remarks' made *about* them. In shifting attention away from painting itself to writing about painting, Stevens expands the traditional parameters set by the *ut pictura poesis* doctrine, which advanced painting and poetry as the primary objects of critical interest. Stevens tests the boundaries of this doctrine through emphasizing the role that medium-based differences play in shaping two distinct disciplinary perspectives. He argues:

> We may regard the subject, then, from two points of view, the first from the point of view of the man whose center is painting, whether or not he is a painter, the second from the point of view of the man whose center is poetry, whether or not he is a poet.[3]

For Stevens, one does not have to be a painter or poet to be 'centered' in poetry or painting. Rather, he suggests that those centered in painting (the painter, art historian or critic) learn not only from their continuous mediation, acceptance or rejection of the sister art poetry, but also from the interpretive models and vocabularies that have evolved in response to poetry. Likewise, those centered in poetry learn not only directly from the material language of the painter, the shapes, forms and gradations of color that appear upon the canvas, but also from attempts to negotiate this language of paint within the terms and conventions of the language of words.

However, classification of these remarks with respect to either 'center' is not as simple nor as straightforward as it might at first appear. Comprised of forms as diverse as reviews, ekphrastic fragments, catalogue descriptions and notebook entries, these remarks are found in an equally diverse array of public and private media, such as newspapers, periodicals, diaries, notebooks and correspondence. This makes them notoriously difficult to define and classify, much less negotiate within the disciplinary boundaries of literary criticism or art history. Determining their disciplinary status is further complicated by the creative-critical nature of the remarks themselves, as much of the writing on art within this 'corpus of remarks' makes use of a number of literary

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[3] See Stevens, "Relations", 112.

devices such as poetic diction, alliteration, internal rhyme, metre, implied lineation, and direct quotation in responding to works of visual art. This is partially the reason for the inability to settle on one term with which to refer to these texts: unlike 'literary criticism', which is relatively broad in its application, the 'corpus of remarks on painting' has been referred to variously as 'art criticism', 'art literature', and 'art writing'.

This disciplinary ambiguity has, to a large extent, been overcome through adopting methodologies rooted in theory or cultural history – movements that have enabled critical consideration of texts formally outside, beyond, or between disciplinary boundaries. As William Germano argues, the success of theoretical approaches rests in the fact that 'theory itself constitutes the bounds, it is the discipline transcendent'.[4] Likewise with cultural history, which has also absorbed the impact of disciplinary differences so as to enable critical consideration of a broad range of dissimilar materials. Both approaches have resulted in tremendous gains, not only in providing interpretive models for non-canonical texts but also in providing a platform from which to question and challenge a definition of 'disciplinarity' rooted in medium-based differences. Yet in questioning the traditional lines of demarcation between art history and literary criticism, approaches based on theory and cultural history have, perhaps unwittingly, provided space for a more concentrated disciplinary presence to emerge – one encoded in the histories, vocabularies and interpretive models that constitute the internal development of both literary criticism and art history. This suggests that, rather than locate 'disciplinarity' in the *object* of the discipline (the painting or the poem), it may be more productive to locate it in the responsiveness of a wide range of works not only to that object, but also to the

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[4] William P. Germano, "Why Interdisciplinarity Isn't Enough", *The Practice of Cultural Analysis: Exposing Interdisciplinary Interpretation*, ed. Mieke Bal with Bryan Gonzales (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 332.

tradition of writing *about* that object. In doing so, new interpretive models can be discovered that might enable a more effective understanding and articulation of the relationships within and between disciplines.

In turning to painting, for example, it is evident that the 'corpus of remarks about painting' to which Stevens refers should not be confined to written remarks alone, but opened up to include visual 'remarks' on visual art, an example of which is the designation rather common in art history of a work 'after' another work. This designation is the art-historical equivalent of 'imitations' of literary works. In a visual imitation of a visual work, the artist deliberately gestures to the pre-existing work of another. This is achieved either verbally, through a direct reference in the title as in Howard Hodgkin's painting *After Degas*, or pictorially, through creating a visual resemblance which prompts recognition of the original work. Important differences are revealed through that resemblance, as the handling of a shared vocabulary of form reveals the artist's commentary, response, and judgment, as well as his sympathetic engagement with the work. In this respect, works 'after' other works reveal a notion of imitation that is both generative and reflective: generative in the sense that it is a creative interaction with a pre-existing work, and reflective in the double sense of 'mirroring', or 'reproducing' selected elements of the original and responding to the relationships deep beneath those forms of resemblance.

Through opening up the corpus of remarks on painting to include visual imitations of visual art, a new perspective can be achieved with respect to the specific question of the role of imitation in the development of art criticism in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and the broader (but related) question of the nature of the relationship between the 'two centers' of art criticism and literary criticism. In contrast to interpretive models based on translation, conversion and analogy (models central to the *ut pictura poesis* tradition), imitation-based models focus on creative-critical relationships that exist between picture and picture,

language and picture, or language and language, as one specialized vocabulary emerges in response to another. In expanding the range of sources beyond the painting and the poem, imitation-based models offer more flexibility than cross-disciplinary models based on the word-image opposition. While the latter plays itself out in claims for and against the primacy of language in the interpretation and fulfillment of a work of art, imitation-based models recognize that written language ought not to be resisted, but to be accepted as one of many 'visual languages'.

The model suggested by visual imitations of visual works also undermines two assumptions that continue to be made in image-text studies of the Romantic period. The first is the assumption of a parallel development in literary criticism and art criticism that mirrors the parallel relationship between painting and poetry. The second is the assumption that the 'denial of mimesis' which marked the turn toward more expressive modes of making for both art and literature, resulted in a like 'denial' in modes of response. The latter is particularly striking given the necessity of description in the critical appraisal of paintings at the time. These questions can be addressed through recognizing that imitation is both a mode of making something like something else, but also a means of characterizing the relationships that underpin those forms of resemblance. This tension not only occupies a central place in the concurrent development of art criticism and literary criticism, but also offers a new context for exploring that 'corpus of remarks about painting'.

It may perhaps be best to mention at the outset that despite the prominence of Washington Allston and Samuel Taylor Coleridge in the title, neither of them makes an appearance until part two. The reason for this is twofold: given the limitations that comparative image-text studies have placed on our understanding of the relationship between them, it will be necessary to establish an alternative interdisciplinary methodology, one that recognizes the different disciplinary perspectives that shaped their respective responses to the problem of false criticism in

the arts. Secondly, an indication of the context, particularly the *disciplinary* context of writing about art and art criticism will be required to fully appreciate the critical issues with which Allston and Coleridge engaged.

This thesis, therefore, is divided into two parts, the first of which examines the tension within imitation from the standpoint of artists and connoisseurs who were concerned about the excesses of description while at the same time realizing its inevitability. The first chapter, 'Interdisciplinary Difference' provides some context with respect to the challenges posed by interdisciplinary study, and suggests that rather than define this 'corpus of remarks about painting', it is perhaps best to preserve its ambiguity through exploring the descriptive and critical tendencies within that body of writing. The second chapter, 'Imitation in Art Criticism: Bridging the "Creative-Critical Divide"' takes up the subject of imitation and provides the theoretical underpinning for the exploration of the tension within imitation that occurs in the following chapters. Chapter Three, 'Imitation and Periodization' explores the role of imitation in defining Romanticism against Neoclassicism. It examines the way in which imitation was drawn upon in a critical capacity: both by satirists who relied upon it in pointing to the deficiencies in terminology and methodology with respect to art criticism, and by figures such as Sir Joshua Reynolds and Samuel Johnson who redefined imitation to account for its non-representational properties. The fourth chapter, 'Description, Criticism and the Connoisseur' examines in greater detail the concerns expressed by connoisseurs such as Sir George Beaumont and Uvedale Price as to the excesses of description in writing about art. It demonstrates the difficulty posed by the necessity of description, but also the need to articulate the structures beneath that image so as to provide a more credible commentary upon the picture.

The second part examines the tension within imitation from the standpoint of the American artist Washington Allston and his friend Samuel Taylor Coleridge, who used this tension to advantage in setting forth a lexicon and methodology that could

account not only for the 'specific image' described, but also the geometrical and structural relationships that underpin that image. Chapter Five, entitled 'Allston, Coleridge and a "visual language to the understanding"' focuses on the time the two spent together in Italy and on Coleridge's accumulation of disciplinary knowledge with respect to painting provided by Allston. Both Coleridge and Allston were aware of the importance of developing a language to speak about art that was descriptive *and* critical – one that drew upon imitation not only to communicate aspects of the 'specific image', but that also drew upon imitation without the expectation that the word bear any resemblance to the image in communicating the geometrical structures deep beneath the surface. The latter was achieved by Coleridge in his development of a sophisticated language that 'imitates' the effects of form and color – a language that he had gradually built from images of light, transparency, opacity, depth and distance. Both this language and Allston's adaptation of it in his own practice and writing is examined in Chapter Six, 'Imitation, Intuition and the "self-unravelling clue"'.

Chapter Seven is called 'The Bristol Exhibition, 1814 and Washington Allston's *The Dead Man Revived by Touching the Bones of the Prophet Elisha*'. It contrasts Coleridge's critical approach to others who were writing on art at the time, primarily William Hazlitt and Robert Hunt. Each offered commentary on Washington Allston's painting *The Dead Man Revived by Touching the Bones of the Prophet Elisha*, which was shown at his Bristol Exhibition in 1814. These are, in turn, contrasted with Allston's own description of his picture for the catalogue. The final chapter, 'Washington Allston and the *Lectures on Art*, 1850' examines the language and methodology of Allston's unfinished work, in which he adapts Coleridge's critical language to his understanding of the terminology and practices of his own art. His writing reveals the tension within imitation as it plays out in his attempts to describe not so much the elements within the picture as the movement of the artist's *mind* through the picture. Yet it also reveals another tension between paint as the

object of criticism and language as a critical vehicle, one that is reflected in the many allusions to Wordsworth's poetry that appear throughout his philosophical argument.

It is hoped that, through focusing on imitation in relation to that 'corpus of remarks about painting', new inroads may be made in understanding the continued relevance of this concept to image-text studies of the period. This, in turn, requires a practical engagement with the disciplinary orientation from which these remarks proceed, and through which they have been shaped. Through asserting the connection between these remarks and the works to which they gesture, I have attempted to explore alternative facets of the relationship between Allston and Coleridge, which have been obscured by comparative methodologies, or treatments of the subject that proceed from German aesthetic thought. In doing so, a fresh understanding of the past and present relevance of imitation within art criticism, as well as an alternative approach to interdisciplinary criticism, may be achieved.

Chapter One

Interdisciplinary Difference

> One would like to imagine some useful analogy between the two arts. But just try brushing-in words in Monet's manner, or Van Gogh's, or telling your student that her poem needs warmth in the lower left corner, and see how far you get. What *can* be learned from pictures, perhaps, is how to bring out the mysterious tale told by interlocking forms, by things themselves – which comes through to the degree that the painter is also, in his way, a 'poet'.[1]
>
> ...it is the rare person who can look at anything for more than a few seconds without turning to language for support, so little does he believe his eyes.[2]

In his 'Notes on Corot', the poet James Merrill acknowledges the desirability of 'some useful analogy' between the arts of painting and poetry, but demonstrates that such an analogy is largely illusory, both from a creative and critical perspective. For Merrill, the futility of creative translations of paint into language ('try brushing-in words in Monet's manner, or Van Gogh's') is matched by the correspondent futility of extending the analogy into critical terms ('try...telling your student that her poem needs warmth in the lower left corner and see how far you get'). Of course just as Merrill's desire for some useful analogy between the arts derives in large part from a strong *ut pictura poesis* tradition, so also does his refutation of the analogy draw on a long tradition of the differentiation between the arts. In his appeal to space and time as the differential not only between poetry and painting but also in written responses to poetry and painting he draws most obviously upon the criteria for differentiation established by Gotthold Ephraim Lessing in his *Laocoön*.[3]

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[1] James Merrill, "Notes on Corot," *Poets on Painters: Essays on the Art of Painting by Twentieth-Century Poets*, ed. J.D. McClatchy (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 312.
[2] See Merrill, "Notes on Corot", 312 .
[3] Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Laocoön: an Essay on the Limits of Painting and Poetry*, translated, with an introduction and notes by Edward Allen McCormick and a forward by Michael Fried (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984).

However, in an interesting twist, Merrill seems to impose a sense of likeness upon the very terms of that difference. Composed as it is of color and line, the elements of painting cannot, perhaps, be assimilated into the language of poetry element for element. However, this is more than compensated for through recasting painting in literary terms and conventions. Within the language-based domain of the *ut pictura* poesis analogy, poetry is not compared to or discussed within the physical context of color and line, but rather stands in comparison to the verbal approximation of this context. Thus, the viewer is posited as reader and the painter as poet as Merrill writes that from pictures, we must exact a 'tale', one 'told by interlocking forms', but 'told' nonetheless. This recasting is made complete the moment the painter becomes a 'poet', a transformation through which the terms of differentiation disappear but for Merrill's soft assertion that the poet is a painter 'in his way'. Rather than reflect a true analogy (which some may argue is impossible given the fundamental difference in medium), Merrill's metaphor appears to reinforce the illusion of that analogy, as the transformation of painterly elements into lexical units enables not only the articulation but also the critical application of the analogy itself.

However, as Merrill's second comment suggests, recourse to the *ut pictura poesis* analogy (even if an illusory one), masks a deeper and more fundamental question, namely, whether language is necessary for the understanding and apprehension of painting, and moreover, what impact this question of necessity has on the development of a critical method and lexicon for the visual arts. For Merrill, the 'language of language' is not only imposed retrospectively upon the 'language of paint', but importantly, enables and sustains the very act of looking. Turning to language 'for support' also suggests that the *articulation* of the gaze is an essential facet of the experience and understanding of the picture – it allows, perhaps as Nelson

Goodman would argue, the very fulfillment of that work of art.[4] Through phrasing this possibility in terms of belief – in positing spoken or written language as that which can give a 'real presence' to a picture, Merrill questions not only the autonomy of the painting, but also the nature of the relationship between painting and that 'corpus of remarks' about it.[5] Importantly, these remarks are not dominated by, or confined to painting's sister art, poetry, and therefore to the traditional parameters of *ut pictura poesis*, but rather reflect a broader engagement between the painting and the distinctive creative-critical shape of the writing about it.[6] Through shifting the analogous relationship to one of necessity, the old rivalry between painting and poetry is, for a moment, gently and quietly diffused. Painting no longer competes with poetry as a different, but related way of representing the world, but rather depends upon a broader range of languages both to explain and fulfill it.

In this respect, Merrill's comments exemplify the challenge posed to contemporary literary criticism and art history both by the lingering presence of the *ut pictura poesis* analogy, and the influence this analogy exerts on the way in which image-text relations are understood within different disciplinary structures. Put simply, this challenge consists of recognizing what Mieke Bal describes as the 'presence of the past in the present'.[7] A presence, in other words, discernable not

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[4] See Nelson Goodman, *Languages of Art: An Approach to a Theory of Symbols* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1976). See also Catherine Lord and José A. Benardete, "Baxandall and Goodman", *The Language of Art History*, ed. Salim Kemal and Ivan Gaskell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 84. According to Lord and Benardete, Goodman's is an essentially 'literary approach' in which 'even the most non-representational painting refers outside itself to...words'.

[5] Svetlana and Paul Alpers, "'Ut Pictura Noesis?' Criticism in Literary Studies and Art History", *New Literary History* 3 (Spring, 1972), 437. Alpers refer to the assumption that 'a slide or photograph introduced into a literary analysis or exposition has a real presence to which it is unnecessary to add any words of explanation or interpretation'.

[6] Michael Ann Holly, "Art Theory", *The Johns Hopkins Guide to Literary Theory and Criticism*, ed. Michael Groden and Martin Kreiswirth, (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997). <http://www.press.jhu.edu/books/hopkins_guide_to_literary_theory/free/art_theory.html>. Holly points out that 'Literary critics seem recently to have discovered for art historians the idea that the domain of the visual is not limited to images, let alone to the objects traditionally studied as art'.

[7] See Mieke Bal, introduction, *The Practice of Cultural Analysis: Exposing Interdisciplinary Interpretation*, ed. Mieke Bal with Bryan Gonzales (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999) in which Bal argues that 'cultural analysis seeks to understand the past as *part of* the present, as what we have around us, and without which no culture would be able to exist'.

only in paintings and poems, but also in the way we approach the scholarship about them. Through looking to contemporary critical models, it is possible to gain a better understanding of the biases and assumptions that constitute the critical legacy of the *ut pictura poesis* analogy, as well as the persistent desire to refashion that analogy in ways that reflect the different disciplinary concerns of the literary critic or art historian.

This 'presence of the past in the present' is immediately evident in contemporary examples of image-text studies. Within the disciplinary domain of literary criticism, the most cursory selection of critical titles demonstrates the persistence of the traditional analogy not only as it is embedded within the critical lexicon, but also as it guides critical methodologies. In the following titles, various reworkings of both the *ut pictura poesis* analogy and the concepts of space and time (concepts that traditionally undermine that analogy) appear. For example, word combinations such as 'rhetoric' and 'color', 'space' and 'narrative', 'painter' and 'poet' are juxtaposed or their referents mixed. This is evident in W.J.T. Mitchell's *The Language of Images*, Wendy Steiner's *The Colors of Rhetoric*, Michael Bath's *Speaking Pictures*, Ronald Paulson's *Literary Landscape: Turner and Constable*, and any number of books and articles with parallels of painting and poetry implied within their titles. These titles demonstrate not only the pervasiveness of the analogy in its critical application, but also the interpretive possibilities harnessed in that point of tension between acknowledged difference and desired likeness.[8]

The *ut pictura poesis* analogy has not only dominated the image-text lexicon, but continues to shine through critical approaches to image-text studies. As Morris Eaves argues, the link between the *ut pictura poesis* analogy and comparative

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[8] See W.J.T. Mitchell, *The Language of Images* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980); Wendy Steiner, *The Colors of Rhetoric: Problems in the Relation Between Modern Literature and Painting* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982); Michael Bath, *Speaking Pictures: English Emblem*

methodologies has been particularly problematic in image-text studies of the Romantic period, where the Romantic conception of art 'as the single revelation that...creative personalities seek in complimentary modes' tends to bolster rather than question the presence of what Jerome McGann refers to as the 'Romantic Ideology'.[9] Image-text studies of paintings and poems have, as a result, either conformed to the bounds of the 'sister arts' analogy (as in Karl Kroeber's book *Romantic Landscape Vision* in which he seeks 'to establish analogies between the art of Constable and Wordsworth')[10], or, alternatively, have worked to mingle and dissolve the bounds of that analogy through seeking instances of 'vision in poetry' or 'poetry in painting'[11] as in Matthew C. Bennett's attempt to determine whether Constable or Turner has the greater claim to being the 'Wordsworth of Landscape'.[12] While comparisons such as these have promising potential, Eaves feels that this comparative methodology can be open to abuse, as some comparisons may span various writers, artists, styles and centuries linked by little more than 'implausible, anachronistic models of intellectual association'.[13] This, Eaves argues, is at the expense of subjects 'joined by strong filaments', the 'big obvious subjects', that 'have not received sustained or sophisticated attention'. Among these, he points out, are 'Coleridge's association with Washington Allston...Wordsworth's with his painter-patron George Beaumont', and the significance of 'Hazlitt's experience as a trained portrait painter' in shaping his literary criticism.[14]

Books and Renaissance Culture (London: Longmann, 1994) and Ronald Paulson, *Literary Landscape: Turner and Constable* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982).

[9] Morris Eaves, "The Sister Arts in British Romanticism", *The Cambridge Companion to British Romanticism*, ed. Stuart Curran (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 267-269. See also, Jerome McGann, *Romantic Ideology: a Critical Investigation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983).

[10] Karl Kroeber, *Romantic Landscape Vision: Constable and Wordsworth* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1975), 9.

[11] See Eaves, "Sister Arts", 237.

[12] Matthew C. Brennan, "The Wordsworth of Landscape: Constable or Turner", *South Atlantic Quarterly* 85:3 (summer, 1986), 253.

[13] See Eaves, "Sister Arts", 238.

[14] See Eaves, "Sister Arts", 238.

As an alternative to comparative methodologies, and in response to the disestablishment of the 'Romantic Ideology', Eaves turns to cultural history as a means of grounding further exploration of the image-text relationship. In his view, establishing 'adequate histories that allow one to assess the complexities of the cultural situation' will discourage the 'uninhibited reaching across strong and significant geographical, linguistic, cultural and chronological borders in search of comparisons'.[15] Through exploring 'histories of institutions...of crafts, technologies, and social groupings', Eaves hopes to widen the critical perspective on familiar subjects such as 'neoclassicism, the sublime, the picturesque', which in his mind have been 'severely stunted by a too exclusive attention to words or pictures'.[16] Likewise, through positing image-text relations that are not united by formal or stylistic similarities, but rather torn by 'awesome combinations of failure, difference, distance, lag, divergence and conflict', Eaves provides a space in which image and text may coexist as 'incompatible propositions' rather than complimentary modes.[17]

However, Eaves stops short of following through at least two of the implications of his argument. While he attributes the failure of image-text studies of the Romantic period to the 'exclusive attention to words and pictures' characteristic of comparative methodologies, he fails to acknowledge that perhaps one of the greatest shortcomings of this methodology is the denial of art history and literary criticism as two distinct disciplinary orientations – 'two centers', as it were. Just as there is an impulse to want to imagine a useful analogy between words and pictures, so also do a number of image-text studies reveal a like impulse to imagine an analogy between art history and literary criticism. It follows that while the acknowledgement of image and text as 'two incompatible propositions' reflects the modern inclination to

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[15] See Eaves, "Sister Arts", 238.
[16] See Eaves, "Sister Arts", 268.
[17] see Eaves, "Sister Arts", 269.

differentiation, it is more so an allusion to the fundamental difference between word and image in relation to one another. It is far less frequently an allusion to difference in the disciplinary perspectives guiding our engagement with those works. It is perhaps due to the lack of engagement with the disciplinary orientation of painters like Washington Allston and Benjamin Robert Haydon, and connoisseurs like Uvedale Price and Sir George Beaumont that studies of the relationships between these figures and their literary 'counterparts' has remained limited.

Secondly, despite Eaves's emphasis on word and image as 'incompatible propositions', there is a sense in which interdisciplinary study itself depends upon assumptions of compatibility for its very survival. The interdisciplinary critic's ability to articulate image-text relationships depends upon the extent to which he or she is able to build within critical language the capability or capacity to handle an object that exists in a visual medium and to reflect in that language the disciplinary context to which that object responds. Criticism is, after all, conventionally thought of in terms of the language of words rather than the language of paint. Paradoxically, it is this assumption of compatibility not between the painting and poem, but between the verbal exegesis of the painting and the poem that allows the critic to emphasize painting and poetry as 'incompatible propositions'.

Through suggesting that image-text studies of the Romantic period be conducted with an eye to cultural history, Eaves asserts a means of dissolving medium-based differences – a contemporary reflection of the same power harnessed in *ut pictura poesis*. However, in the breadth of its appeal, cultural history also reflects a more contemporary counterpart in theory, an approach in which 'no subject matter is out of bounds'.[18] As William P. Germano points out, 'Because theory itself constitutes the bounds, it is the discipline transcendent…'.[19] Like theory, cultural

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[18] See Germano, "Why Interdisciplinarity Isn't Enough", 332.
[19] See Germano "Why Interdisciplinarity Isn't Enough", 332.

history provides a lexicon capable of absorbing the 'language of paint' into the 'language of language', while leaving the art object autonomous and intact. Through dissolving disciplinary boundaries, interpretive models based on cultural history have enabled the inclusion of texts formerly between those boundaries, thus reflecting an important transition in the *kind* of text used in image-text studies. As a result, direct comparatives between paintings and poems have given way to indirect comparatives between paintings and the social and political texts that inform them, texts that define their cultural context.

This shift in the object of image-text studies (from comparisons between paintings and poems based on formal and stylistic aspects to comparisons between paintings and alternative texts) means that for Eaves, word and image are allowed to function as 'incompatible propositions' not within the unity asserted by the *ut pictura poesis* analogy, but through the unifying force provided by cultural history. However, as Mieke Bal suggests, cultural history itself is subject to the conflicting impulses of its many disciplines, which, on the one hand seek greater integration with one another, and on the other, instinctively seek to preserve their autonomy from one another. The complexity of this divided impulse has been captured and theorized by Bal in the practice of 'cultural analysis'.[20] While 'a focus on culture implies that boundaries between disciplines are bracketed, ignored, or subordinated to the larger vision that binds the different disciplines in the humanities together, the word 'analysis' gives precedence to detailed examination of cultural objects as they exist and function today...'.[21] John Neubauer explains that the 'two sentences, one pertaining to 'culture' and the other to 'analysis', are clearly working at cross-purposes: if thinking

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[20] Mieke Bal, introduction, *The Practice of Cultural Analysis: Exposing Interdisciplinary Interpretation*, ed. Mieke Bal with Bryan Gonzales (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999).
[21] John Neubauer, "Cultural Analysis and the Ghost of 'Geistesgeschichte', *The Practice of Cultural Analysis: Exposing Interdisciplinary Interpretation*, ed. Mieke Bal with Bryan Gonzales (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 287. Neubauer quotes Mieke Bal.

about culture is a synthetic activity that breaks down barriers as it strives for 'the larger vision that binds the different disciplines in the humanities together', then analysis detaches and takes apart, isolating the individual text or event'.[22]

This dilemma has also been identified by Stephen Melville and Bill Readings, although cast in slightly different terms. For Melville and Readings, this dilemma is characterized by an 'ongoing struggle to find adequate terms of translation both within and among the arts, torn between an impulse towards reintegration and a drive towards increased specificity and particularity'.[23] This tension exists not only in the

> ...relations between the disciplines but has repeatedly emerged within them: the practice of the social history of art as well as the persistent re-emergence of concerns for the decorative and such like within art history are, like the emergence of 'cultural studies' and related fields within national literature departments, symptoms of a pressure within the disciplines themselves to transgress the existing boundaries.[24]

Melville and Readings point out the difficulty in negotiating language-based elements of art history such as the 'social history of art' and more medium-based concerns that dominate the decorative, commercial and fine arts. The pressure on disciplinary boundaries that results from this tension poses special problems for studies of literature and the visual arts as it yields certain anxieties that shape the perspective of both the literary critic and art historian.

For example, within Romantic literary criticism alone, there has been a movement toward the wider vision of culture and a subsequent dissolution of the disciplinary boundaries such a movement entails. This movement was initiated in response to the New Criticism by Historicists, developed according to revised principles by New Historicists, and continues to be adapted and revised in the field of Cultural Studies. This critical trend reflects a profound shift in the perception of the

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[22] See Neubauer "Cultural Analysis", 287-288.
[23] Stephen Melville, introduction, *Vision & Textuality*, ed. Stephen Melville and Bill Readings (London: Macmillan, 1995), 10.
[24] See Melville, *Vision & Textuality*, 15.

objects of literary criticism, which were no longer considered works whose value derives from the 'qualities of form', but an entire body of written works or compositions whose value stems from their identity as 'form(s) in which the knowledge of a country is registered'.[25]

As John Beer suggests in *Questioning Romanticism*, traditional attempts to define Romanticism based on 'unifying concepts' derived from shared qualities of form have faded. According to Beer, it is possible to consider Romanticism not as a function of literature, but as a function of culture – a function of place and time at which various political, economic, social and creative forces intersect. This shift of emphasis is reflected in Beer's suggestion that we think of Romanticism itself as a place of fragmentation:

> Having pursued the aspiration to unity that was characteristic of much thinking in the Romantic period itself, therefore, it may be time to learn from that side of it which is sensitive to disparities and displacements in the culture—and in the human mind itself. Instead of searching for and hunting down the great unifying concepts to contain and account for Romanticism it may be more profitable to consider it as a site of fragmentation.[26]

This sense of fragmentation appears to undermine more traditional definitions of the word gleaned through the 'discrimination' of its many forms, or discovered within structures of symbolic meaning.[27] However, like Eaves, John Beer also acknowledges a sense of 'desired unity'. For Beer, the idea of fragmentation seems to imply the presence of a whole (perhaps no longer extant, perhaps ultimately retrievable) to which that fragment belongs. Likewise, despite his emphasis on 'disparities and displacements', Beer appeals to a sense of unity in choosing to locate such fragments both 'in the culture' and 'in the human mind itself'.[28]

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[25] "Literature", *Oxford English Dictionary*, Compact Edition, 1979.
[26] John Beer, introduction to *Questioning Romanticism*, ed. John Beer (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), xiii.
[27] See Beer, introduction to *Questioning Romanticism*, xiii. See also A. O. Lovejoy, "On The Discrimination of Romanticisms", *PMLA* 39 (1924); reprinted in *English Romantic Poets: Modern Essays in Criticism*, ed. M.H. Abrams (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), 3-23.
[28] See Beer, introduction, *Questioning Romanticism*, xiii.

The cohesion supplied by the implications of the word fragment and the location of these fragments within culture and the individual is illustrative of the incorporation of holistic thinking into critical discourse that tends to emphasize 'the fractures and breaks within a culture'.[29] Implicit in Beer's attention to the 'disparities and displacements' of Romanticism, or Eaves's emphasis on 'difference, divergence and conflict' in image-text relationships, is a vision of the 'interdisciplinary study of culture' which 'binds the different disciplines in the humanities together'.[30] This cohesion is evident in critical methodologies that reach beyond the more traditional realms of literary inquiry to consider objects and texts in their cultural context. Such methodologies consist of the discrimination of qualities, characteristics, definitions and ideas of 'romanticism' not as they function or evolve within a single discipline, or a single work, but as they evolve simultaneously across a number of different disciplines. Publications such as the *Oxford Companion to the Romantic Age* reflect this trend. The *Companion* contains entries on topics as diverse as politics, history, print culture, visual art, biography, theology, gender and economics collected under the rubric, idea, or organizing principle of the Romantic age, itself defined in terms of a historical period. In this respect, it demonstrates a marked difference in emphasis from critical works such as the *Cambridge Companion to British Romanticism*, in which the term Romanticism does not serve as an organizing principle as such, but as the elusive descriptor for the *literary* period roughly identified as 1770-1830.[31]

Yet despite the success of reference works such as the Oxford *Companion*, there seems to be an underlying anxiety about the extent to which the boundaries between disciplines can be effectively 'bracketed and ignored'.[32] If, broadly

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[29] See Neubauer, "Cultural Analysis", 288. Neubauer quotes Mieke Bal.
[30] See Neubauer, "Cultural Analysis", 288. Neubauer quotes Mieke Bal.
[31] See Iain McCalman, et al., eds., *The Oxford Companion to the Romantic Age* (Oxford: Oxford University Press,1999) and Stuart Curran, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to British Romanticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).
[32] See Neubauer, "Cultural Analysis", 287. Neubauer quotes Mieke Bal.

speaking, literature is the common property of all disciplines, how are we to reconcile this claim with the very real existence of the different critical apparatus that upholds and defines disciplinary boundaries? While some may point to interdisciplinary studies of literature and philosophy, or history and politics and argue that this has been resolved, this resolution can only be claimed for language-based disciplines. It is still far from resolution in terms of the interdisciplinary study of images and texts.

While the restoration of works into their cultural context overcomes a certain kind of cultural and historical isolation, this restoration itself is responsible for a different kind of isolation -- one more directly concerned with the classification of those materials. The emphasis on cultural history means that procedural models used by art historians and literary critics are often no longer based solely on the formal aspects of images or texts – aspects that have historically determined the boundaries of their respective disciplines. Access to images and texts in the broadest sense is no longer limited by formal, linguistic or stylistic considerations, as materials may, and have been integrated on a grand scale based on a shared cultural context and the meanings corroborated by that context. Politics and poetry, art and economics are able to mix far more easily as registers of knowledge than as distinct literary forms. However, as a result, those literary, artistic, philosophical and historical works that no longer suffer isolation from their cultural or historical contexts have, to some degree, become fractured and broken from the traditions of scholarship attached to them. These works may become isolated from the depth of their disciplinary contexts as a result of their introduction into a cultural dialogue that exists spatially, across a number of subjects within a specific time frame.

The increasingly neglected engagement with specific traditions of scholarship indicates a potentially problematic situation. This situation was anticipated by René Wellek and Austin Warren in the *Theory of Literature*, in which they argue that the literary historian's treatment of theologians, philosophers, moralists, politicians, etc.

> ...though usually much briefer than that of poets, playwrights, and novelists, is rarely limited to their strictly aesthetic merits. In practice, we get perfunctory and inexpert accounts of these authors in terms of their speciality. Quite rightly, Hume cannot be judged except as a philosopher, Gibbon except as a historian, etc. But in most literary histories these thinkers are discussed in fragmentary fashion without the proper context – the history of their subject of discourse – without a real grasp, that is, of the history of philosophy, of ethical theory, of historiography, of economic theory. The literary historian is not automatically transformed into a proper historian of these disciplines. He becomes simply a compiler, a self-conscious intruder.[33]

While their emphasis on maintaining the integrity of particular disciplines has been successfully challenged by contemporary critical practice,[34] there is a sense in which Wellek and Warren's observations do perhaps continue to ring true in studies of literature and the visual arts. For example, Wellek's image of the 'self-conscious intruder' seems to be unconsciously invoked by the art historian Robert Wark in his cautionary essay aimed at literary historians who pursue comparative studies of literature and medium-based aspects of the visual arts. In his article, 'The Weak Sister's View of the Sister Arts',[35] he identifies and addresses the intrusion:

> Where art historians are concerned, the most useful interdisciplinary studies by literary historians are those in which the literary scholar is concerned with verbal aspects of art: theories of art, aesthetics, the identification of literary themes in narrative paintings....The most helpful interdisciplinarians are those who keep their feet firmly planted on their own side of the fence while surveying their neighbor's yard.[36]

In advising the literary historian to stay on his side of the 'fence' Wark instructs him to remain within the boundaries of his own discipline. This admonition is strengthened by his emphasis on the *word* as the primary tie between the two disciplines, a tie that prohibits the literary critic from engagement with the artifact as

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[33] René Wellek and Austin Warren, *Theory of Literature*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1963), 21.
[34] See Frank R. Ankersmit's attempt to unearth aspects of Gibbon's style through a comparison with Ovid, in Frank R. Ankersmit, "History and/ as Cultural Analysis: Gibbon and Ovid", *The Practice of Cultural Analysis*, ed. Mieke Bal with Bryan Gonzales (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 171-188.
[35] For the ways in which such phrasing implies a value judgment commonly associated with the *ut pictura poesis* debate, see Robert R. Wark, "The Weak Sister's View of the Sister Arts," *Articulate Images*, ed. Richard Wendorf (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 1983).
[36] See Wark, "The Weak Sister's View", 35.

such – with its form, attribution and style. In surveying his 'neighbor's yard', the literary critic is granted a selective field of vision in that he is encouraged to engage with the artifact in terms of what it actually *represents* as an image. Moreover, his qualifications restrict him to the identification of 'literary themes in narrative paintings' with which he is most likely already familiar.

While Wark's stance may seem excessively prohibitive, his remarks were motivated by genuine concerns over errors of interpretation committed by literary critics. Such errors follow largely from mistaking a 'general and meaningless pictorial convention for something of special significance', yet may also follow from a lack of acquaintance with and awareness of certain traditions and technological processes.[37] For example, Wark claims that the historical or technical traditions that inform a work of art may be obscured from the imperfect view attained from the other side of the disciplinary fence – a view shaped and determined by the disciplinary orientation of the viewer. In addition to this, the 'technical processes and physical condition' of art works may also prove misleading. Wark cites as an example the mistaken notion that the 'semi-transparent' and 'diaphanous effects' of Gainsborough's late paintings were intended, when in actuality these effects were the combined result of the manner in which he applied his paint and the passage of time.[38]

Wark's misgivings about the literary critic's engagement with medium-based aspects of painting seem to follow from his account of the fundamental difference between word and image. Wark articulates the difference between the language of words and the language of paint as follows: unlike words that 'have definable meanings',

> No such commonly acknowledged meaning inheres in the component particles of a painting: color, line, shape, suggested depth, or even signs, symbols and images....It is only in a given context that these elements take on specific meanings. Signs, symbols and images are likewise neither constant nor

[37] See Wark, "The Weak Sister's View", 31.
[38] See Wark, "The Weak Sister's View", 31.

> universal in meaning. Because of these factors, it may be that corroboration from the interpretation and meaning of a work of literature is legitimately sought within the work itself, whereas corroboration for the interpretation of a work of art is sought in the context and things external to the work.[39]

Wark argues that the fundamental difference in medium that accounts for the instability of meaning as it inheres in the elements of a painting and the relative stability of meaning as it inheres in defined words, produces two distinct critical orientations. He argues that while the art historian must look outward, through an individual work to its context (i.e. the other works by its maker, historical context, etc.), the literary critic is able to find 'corroboration' for his interpretation of the work 'within the work itself'. Yet this account is problematic, as despite his emphasis on the differences in medium, Wark couches his discussion of difference in terms of the language of words and the language of paint. While at the outset, these languages appear to some extent incompatible, there is a sense in which, through the ambiguity of the word 'context', Wark himself opens the way for an alternate word-based 'tie' between the disciplines – one that would appear to sanction the literary critic's 'intrusion' into the more medium-based concerns of the art historian. The 'given context' to which Wark refers differs from the word-based ties of literary themes, represented objects, and aesthetics in that it invites the literary critic more concretely into the way in which stylistic and medium-based elements are examined and communicated by the art historian. Importantly, the art historian's use of selected contexts through which to interpret the 'specific meanings' inherent in 'color, line shape... and signs, symbols and images' leaves room for a language-based space which, while in essence familiar to the literary critic, is not necessarily dominated by literary critical models. Through the use of such contexts, the art historian has, in effect, pulled down part of the fence separating his from his neighbor's yard.

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[39] See Wark, "The Weak Sister's View", 34.

Like Wark, Svetlana and Paul Alpers also argue for the importance of 'context' in creating a foundation for interdisciplinary studies of art and literature. However, they argue that the way in which one views, selects and constructs this context largely depends on one's own disciplinary background. In support of this view, they argue that there is no discernable parallel between art *history* and literary *criticism* to echo the traditional parallels between painting and poetry. As a consequence, they charge, literary critics have neglected the language and methodologies employed by the art historian in the practical hope of finding something familiar over the disciplinary fence. Yet this hope is rarely realized, as according to Alpers, the student of literary criticism fails to notice the 'complete absence...of the kind of critical considerations which are normal...in the academic study of literature'.[40] These critical considerations consist of interpretations based on form and content which are 'to some extent inseparable, working together to produce individual meanings, attitudes, and revelations of reality'.[41] 'Unlike the literary critic who takes this as axiomatic' they continue, 'the methodology of the art historian...is based on a clear separation between style and iconography, form and content'.[42]

According to Alpers, style can be interpreted as a historical or medium-based element and therefore assumes different functions for the art historian and the literary critic. For the art historian, style can be interpreted as a 'historical concept' which 'transcends considerations of individual works and individual artists',[43] whereas for the literary critic, style is a gateway to this kind of individual interpretation. It follows, they explain, that the literary critic tends to view style as an 'instrument of expression' -- a 'manifestation of the essential life of the work or an author's

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[40] Svetlana and Paul Alpers, "'Ut Pictura Noesis?' Criticism in Literary Studies and Art History," *New Literary History* 3/3 (spring, 1972), 437.
[41] See Alpers, "Ut Pictura Noesis?", 437.
[42] See Alpers, "Ut Pictura Noesis?", 439.
[43] See Alpers, "Ut Pictura Noesis?", 441.

imagination'[44]. It is something that emerges from the work, not something that is a 'self sufficient phenomenon', pressed upon the work by virtue of historical circumstances. In providing an illustration of this difference, Svetlana and Paul Alpers implicitly acknowledge the limitations of the painterly medium when considered without benefit of its context. There is, they argue, a 'certain imbalance' between a work of art and a work of literature that becomes increasingly evident in comparative studies. Comparatives between a single painting and a single work of literature (such as, they suggest, Rubens's *Kermess* and Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair*) are essentially limited as finding 'variety and complexity' within the *Kermess* which is comparable to that of *Bartholomew Fair* requires one to 'link the *Kermess* to other works which share with it certain features of style and subject matter'.[45] This approach is fundamentally different from the criticism of a single literary work, which for Alpers, does not necessarily *require* an engagement with 'the traditions out of which it comes' as does the work of art.[46]

While this is, to some extent, a simplified account of the problem, Alpers' initial assessment does provide the background for some important transitions that have occurred within literary criticism and art history in recent years, transitions that cannot help but shape the way we view the relationship between them. These transitions have resulted in the rethinking of the role that style and iconography, form and content play in defining the methodology of art historians and literary critics. The polemical nature of their assessment (literature as autonomous, art as dependent upon a 'given context') has been tempered by critical movements in both disciplines. Literary criticism has witnessed the emergence of scholarship that attaches a greater importance to the context of literary works, and allows (and indeed oftentimes

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[44] See Alpers, "Ut Pictura Noesis?", 442.
[45] See Alpers, "Ut Pictura Noesis?", 444. See Peter Paul Rubens, *La Kermess*, c. 1635-38, The Louvre, Paris, France. See also Ben Jonson, *Bartholomew Fair* (London: D. Midwinter, 1739).
[46] See Alpers, "Ut Pictura Noesis?", 446.

depends upon) this context to corroborate interpretations of particular texts. Equally, art historians have benefited both from the extension of 'history' to 'cultural history' which has enabled more varied explications of particular paintings, and developments in theory, which have enabled art to be considered as 'a signifying system' in itself, as well as one 'actively involved with other systems of signification'.[47]

For example, in literary criticism, proponents of New Historicism have attempted to dismantle the 'absolute' unity of form and content described by Alpers as axiomatic for the literary critic. This is evident in the work of Marjorie Levinson, who asserts the incompatibility between meaning as it is derived from formal elements within the work and meaning as it is assigned to those elements through its historical situation and context. For Levinson, the 'literary mode of production (roughly, form) and the ideology as it operates to realize this given productive mode in particular ways for particular writers (roughly, style)' are concerns that do not factor into her criticism.[48] Indeed, form is dismissed so as to prevent complicating the reading of politics into the 'allusive structure' of the work, and so with style, which if 'read' at all, is read as 'an authorial selection of a particular political code.'[49] Through privileging the political context of a work over formal and stylistic elements, Levinson succeeds not only in moving 'beyond the interpretive norms imposed by the poetry' (as a form) but also beyond the interpretive norms which allow for selections and choices made by the author to stand independently of the politicized space which his or her work may occupy. Levinson might agree with Alpers that style is 'an instrument of expression or a set of rhetorical possibilities', but divides these instruments from the artist, and secondly, redefines the object of this expression as political, not individual. Likewise, in prohibiting form and style from existing in

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[47] See Holly, "Art Theory", 4.
[48] Marjorie Levinson, "The New Historicism: Back to the Future", *Rethinking Historicism: Critical Readings in Romantic History*, ed. Marjorie Levinson et al. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), 20.
[49] See Levinson, "The New Historicism", 20.

other capacities, Levinson excludes them from functioning as 'a manifestation of the essential life of the work or an author's imagination'.

While critical orientations like New Historicism have attempted to dismantle the traditional 'unifying concepts' that have previously dominated literary criticism, dominant assumptions in art history (most notably those drawn from Erwin Panofsky and Ernst Gombrich) have also been called into question by the emergence of art theory. The view of theory as 'ideologically opposed to "history"' produced something of a crisis in the discipline, as critics like Norman Bryson looked to the development of post-structuralism in literature as a means of invigorating art history. Bryson argued that in contrast to the 'extraordinary transformations' that disciplines such as literary criticism had undergone from the 1950s through the 1980's,

> ...the discipline known as the History of Art has over the same period come to seem less and less capable of growth, static where it is not stagnant, and increasingly out of touch with developments in what once had been its intellectual vicinity. While elsewhere innovations have occurred which might have provided art history with an infusion of fresh ideas and techniques, art historical scholarship in general, and the study of painting in particular, has remained largely isolated, or unresponsive.[50]

Among the reasons for this stagnation, Bryson emphasizes a 'theoretical paralysis' arising from the strong bond between art history and a 'prior historical and cultural context'.[51] This context had been constructed from stylistic and iconological approaches, largely the legacy of Panofsky, which 'continue to occupy the operational center of the modern discipline of art history'.[52] According to Bryson, these approaches have stunted growth in the discipline because stylistics 'denies or brackets

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[50] Norman Bryson, *Vision and Painting: The Logic of the Gaze* (London: Macmillan, 1983), 37.
[51] See Bryson, *Vision and Painting*, 37. Bryson lists additional reasons, among them the 'distortions' caused by a 'market interested in the pursuit of attribution, in the use of documentary sources as confirmation of provenance, in the exploitation of journals for the purposes of trade, in the construction of expertise capable of direct insertion into market transactions, and in the cultivation of a general climate of positivism in keeping with the status of the art-work as commodity, alongside these should be included a state of intellectual *impasse*...'.
[52] See Bryson, *Vision and Painting*, 37.

out the semantic dimension of the image' while iconology 'tends to disregard the materiality of painting practice'.[53]

Bryson argues that only through a 'radical re-examination of the methods art history uses' might art history be able to extricate itself from what he sees as this self-imposed isolation. Critics like Norman Bryson, Svetlana and Paul Alpers and Mieke Bal have challenged prevailing art historical methodologies through drawing upon literary critical models to address the problems faced by art history as a discipline. As Alpers argued, this required the acknowledgment that art history 'could learn a lot from literary criticism', and stood to benefit from the coupling of developments in literary theory (which authorized the reading of the image as a sign) with those more traditional 'critical considerations' of the literary critic (such as the union of form and style). This eased the introduction of new 'contexts' into the study of art history through converting the materiality of paint into an essentially linguistic structure. Thus, the formal elements of the work were interpreted not only in relation to the work itself, but also in relation to 'meaning[s] purely outside the work'.[54] Through taking advantage of the dissolution of disciplinary boundaries enabled by literary theory, proponents of the New Art History were able to achieve the coexistence of two seemingly incompatible propositions: as a 'sign', art could be at once an autonomous entity (no matter how strongly suppressed) *and* function within a given context.

However, this movement has met with some resistance by art historians like Merlin James who has argued against what he sees as an implied parallel between art history and literary criticism. According to James, the adoption of theoretical developments in literary criticism by proponents of the New Art History seems forced, as art history itself has never quite experienced the kind of close 'reading'

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[53] See Bryson *Vision and Painting*, 37.
[54] This is an important modification to structuralism made by Bryson.

characteristic of literary movements like the New Criticism. He argues that there has never been a union of form and style in art historical scholarship like that achieved in the New Criticism:

> ...overall, the precision and depth of literary criticism's attention to the nature of the text quite simply outstrips what in the field of visual art is written on the nature of the image.[55]

For James, the 'notion of a work's identity and coherent meaning, which post-modern criticism seeks to destabilize, has never, for the visual arts, been seriously constructed in the first place'.[56] Thus, while critical orientations like New Historicism have successfully dismantled the traditional 'unifying concepts' that previously dominated literary criticism, James argues that similar success has been claimed by movements such as the New Art History despite the fact that such 'unifying concepts' have yet to be established.

Moreover, he argues, attempts to corroborate meaning through retrieving evidence from the work's historical context cannot be responsive to (even if it is a more or less hostile response) the formal and stylistic unity that might have been established and validated by this equivalent of the New Criticism.[57] Yet despite this, he observes, art historians continue to read outward from the work,

> ...decoding some kind of symbolism in the work, whether traditional or 'private'....This often makes for a neglect of the specific form of the work, treating it as more or less a signpost to an independently existing meaning. This in turn helps to suggest that the meaning is located wholly in the moment of the work's historical execution, condemned to recede forever from us, to be retrieved only by art historical research into the relevant period.[58]

James's approach is quite the reverse of Levinson's in that, for him, meaning is revealed not through history, but in the 'specific form' of the work. James is wary of art-historical research that fails to recognize the 'paradox' of practical criticism, that

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[55] Merlin James, *Engaging Images: 'Practical Criticism' & Visual Art* (London: Menard, 1992), 16.
[56] See James, *Engaging Images*, 18.
[57] See James, *Engaging Images*, 10.
[58] See James, *Engaging Images*, 13.

'individual texts...while rightly and inevitably defined by their contexts, are at the same time somehow autonomous; capable of making statements and expressing perceptions that are not totally explicable...in terms of their governing circumstances'.[59]

In asserting the work's material autonomy, James seems to rephrase Alpers question as to whether the 'different treatment of individual works is due to intrinsic differences between art and literature', and whether this necessarily implies that 'there simply [is] not much one can *say* about an individual work, taken by itself'.[60] James questions not whether there is much one can say about a painting (this he takes for granted), but rather *how* to say it – how to make the 'statements and... perceptions that are not totally explicable...in terms of their governing circumstances' explicable in *other* terms. Finding such terms is particularly problematic for the critic of visual art, as he or she must engage not only with the non-verbal meanings and effects of that work, but discover a vocabulary in which the correspondence between meaning and material specifications may be expressed. This points to a fundamental conflict between language as the critical vehicle, and paint as the object of criticism, and poses questions as to the viability (or even possibility) of a system of practical criticism for the visual arts.

As is evident from James's response, the emphasis placed on cultural studies as a means of overcoming this conflict has provoked some anxiety amongst art historians. This anxiety does not stem from the more flagrant errors of interpretation like those identified by Wark, but rather from the fundamental questions that the appeal to cultural history raises about art historical practice and the impact that the dissolution of disciplinary boundaries has had on that practice. As Mieke Bal suggests, the appearance of books like *The End of the History of Art*, reflect fears

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[59] See James, *Engaging Images*, 10.
[60] See Alpers, "Ut Pictura Noesis?", 446.

about the future of the discipline.[61] Such fears, she argues, stem from the 'expansive absorption of art history into other fields like cultural studies, visual poetics and comparative arts' and the use of art objects as a means of invigorating other disciplines, oftentimes willfully ignorant of the procedural methods and language of art history itself.[62]

Yet the dissolution of disciplinary boundaries encouraged by cultural history has, paradoxically, allowed space for art history, as a disciplinary orientation, to reassert its presence and continued relevance. This space has been created at the prodding of cultural history, as art historians, like literary critics, have been forced to move beyond the objects of culture (such as paintings and poems), to the interpretive models and vocabularies embedded within the texts about them. In the words of Mieke Bal:

> The juxtaposition, in an interpretive venture, of verbal and visual 'texts' has among many other advantages that of making the student of visual art and literature aware, not so much of those aspects of the works that inhere in the medium but more importantly of those that do not. This kind of interpretive juxtaposition can generate insight into the strategies of representation and of interpretation, as distinct from medium-bound devices, and can help generate a broader perspective on other cultural issues.[63]

Through juxtaposing works of art with texts that refer to, describe, or depict that work in language, new insights may be achieved into 'strategies of representation and of interpretation' as Bal suggests, but also into the role of representation *within* structures of interpretation. Importantly, reassessing the role of representation in this 'corpus of remarks about painting' depends not only upon the content of these texts (the interpretive models and vocabularies within them) but also upon the extent to which our own disciplinary orientation shapes the way we read, understand and interpret the role of representation within them.

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[61] Mieke Bal, *Reading Rembrandt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 25.
[62] See Bal, *Reading Rembrandt*, 25.
[63] See Bal, *Reading Rembrandt*, 5.

Yet a reassessment of this kind has been complicated by the fact that these 'visual texts' are themselves prone to a certain tension between 'representation' and 'interpretation' as the difference in medium demands that such texts *describe* the visual work while at the same time maintain a critical distance from that work. The creative-critical nature of these texts has contributed to a certain disciplinary ambiguity, which has been a factor in the neglect of these texts by literary critics and art historians alike. As Richard Wrigley observes:

> In an academic sense, the study of art criticism has fallen between disciplinary stools, neither a primary object of art history, nor history, nor literary history properly speaking. In the interstices that academe carefully preserves between different departmental domains, an ahistorical, monolithic concept of criticism has been allowed to survive…[64]

Nestled in that space between disciplines, it appears as though an established interdisciplinary apparatus with which to examine and interpret such texts is lacking. The lack of critical procedural models has tended to result either in the subordination of these texts to the art object itself, or, alternatively, in the practice of interpreting these texts according to the 'verbal ties' (aesthetic, historical and narrative) described by Wark. Breaking apart this 'monolithic concept of criticism' requires that interpretive models and critical vocabularies be developed that can engage the language-based dimension of art objects as well as the objects themselves.

Wrigley's use of the term 'art criticism' (in contrast to Bal's use of the term 'visual texts') to describe this body of neglected texts points to an ambiguity in terminology that corresponds to the disciplinary ambiguity described above. In the past, as Salim Kemal and Ivan Gaskell argue, the relevance of art criticism to art history has been slighted, especially by some academic art historians for whom it is 'art history's concern with historical retrievals – not with criticism' that 'primarily

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[64] Richard Wrigley, *The Origins of French Art Criticism from the Ancien Régime to the Restoration* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 3.

sanctions it as an academic study'.[65] While this view is for the most part obsolete, distinctions between art history and art criticism continue to be drawn. Rather than dismiss art criticism as 'art appreciation', art historians and cultural critics have instead articulated the difference in terms rather similar to the distinction between literary history and literary criticism. As James Heffernan argues, 'history' characteristically looks outward to a range of works within specified time periods, whereas the reach of 'criticism' is far more modest: art criticism characterizes 'the assessment of individual works', while art history is 'the story of their genesis, reception and relationships'.[66] Likewise, according to Stephen Bann, while art history 'follow[s] the fortunes of an object in time', art criticism 'provides an extratemporal evaluation of that object'.[67] As it is applied to individual works, 'art criticism' rather than 'art history' approaches more closely the literary model of practical criticism.

However, this distinction has been complicated by the introduction of other terms in an attempt to account for the descriptive, or literary qualities within that 'corpus of remarks about painting'. For example, in his study, *Principles of Art Historical Writing*, David Carrier makes a distinction not between art history and art criticism, but between art history and 'artwriting'.[68] He argues the case for using the term 'artwriting' to refer to texts 'by either critics or art historians' while he reserves the term 'art history' for texts by 'present-day professional historians of art'.[69] The verbal distinction between artwriting and art history, he argues, 'underlines an important conceptual point', that 'there is a fundamental difference between the writing aims, styles and methodologies of contemporary art historians and older (pre

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[65] Salim Kemal and Ivan Gaskell, "Art history and language: some issues", *The Language of Art History*, ed. Salim Kemal and Ivan Gaskell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 1.
[66] James A.W. Heffernan, "Speaking for Pictures: The rhetoric of art criticism" *Word & Image* 15 (January/March, 1999), 20.
[67] Stephen Bann, *The True Vine: On Visual Representation and the Western Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 112. Bann is quoted by Kemal and Gaskell, "Art history and language", 1.
[68] David Carrier, *Principles of Art History Writing* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 1991).

twentieth-century) figures'.[70] Carrier seeks to 'describe the literary structure of artwriting' and explain the 'history of the ways in which art historians have emplotted their narratives'. Through focusing on the 'literary structure' and, interestingly, contrasting the more visual 'emplotted' with 'narrative', Carrier seems to self-consciously appeal to the power still present in *ut pictura poesis* as an interpretive model.[71]

Likewise in their anthology, *The Grove Book of Art Writing*, Martin Gayford and Karen Wright take up the term art writing, but define it not in opposition to art history (as does Carrier), but against art criticism.[72] Art writing, they argue, is a broad category in which art criticism itself functions. Whereas art criticism is 'an informed and provocative discussion of an artist or a current exhibition – a type of reporting that flourished in the newspapers...of the nineteenth-century', art writing is a 'far wider field'.[73] Rather than allow art writing to perish with the unfortunate 'art criticism' (which they confine to journalistic forms), it too seems to have been liberated through a timely appeal to the *ut pictura poesis* analogy.

Like David Carrier, Martin Gayford and Karen Wright, Norman Land also emphasizes the literary quality of this kind of writing which, he claims, is oftentimes broadly referred to as 'art literature'.[74] In his study of writing on art in the Renaissance, Land charts the 'literary response to art...the poetic experience of art as it was discussed in art theory and as it is embodied in poetry and art criticism'.[75] For Land, however, the 'literary response to art' appears in forms other than poetry,

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[69] See Carrier, *Principles*, 3-4.
[70] See Carrier, *Principles*, 4.
[71] This is suggested by his comparison of his own work with that of the literary critic and literary historian, positing himself as a 'historian of artwriting'.
[72] Note that Carrrier uses the compound term 'artwriting' while Gayford and Wright use 'art writing', suggesting, perhaps, a desire to bring the two closer together with the omission of a space.
[73] Martin Gayford and Karen Wright, introduction, *The Grove Book of Art Writing*, ed. Martin Gayford and Karen Wright (New York: Grove Press, 1998), xiv.
[74] Norman E. Land, *The Viewer as Poet: The Renaissance Response to Art* (Penn State University Press, 1994), xv.

namely, art theory and art criticism. He argues that exploring the way in which this response is manifest in those forms 'suggest[s] an outline of the tradition out of which modern writing on art grew'.[76] Land's use of the term 'literature' is rooted in texts that might span other disciplines such as aesthetics and philosophy, and which are situated firmly in the history of ideas.

However, in addition to the introduction of new terms (like art writing and art literature) there have also been attempts to make more refined distinctions within the term art criticism itself. Examples of this can be seen in attempts by critics such as Dorio Gamboni and Richard Shiff to create additional dimensions to their notions of 'art criticism'. Gamboni has attempted to provide criticism with a more complex and formalized structure based on his identification of a 'tripartite distinction between scientific, literary and journalistic criticism', which began to take shape in late nineteenth-century France.[77] According to Gamboni, at this time, art criticism 'went through a process of professionalisation' in which journalistic criticism rose to prominence, art history adopted a scientific approach and the 'literary mode' of art criticism folded into 'pure literature'.[78] While Gamboni deals with this deficiency in terminology through suggesting subcategories within 'criticism', Richard Shiff argues for an understanding of 'art criticism' in terms of three attitudes manifest in a variety of discursive practices. The three 'attitudes' that 'writers of the visual arts customarily take', he argues correspond to the 'discursive practices we know as art, criticism, and history'.[79] The first of these attitudes ('belief, commitment and

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[75] See Land, *Viewer as Poet*, xvi.
[76] See Land, *Viewer as Poet*, xv.
[77] See Wrigley, *Origins of French Art Criticism*, 6.
[78] Dorio Gamboni, "Critics on Criticism: a Critical Approach", *Art Criticism Since 1900*, ed. Malcolm Gee (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), 38.
[79] Richard Shiff, "Figuration", *Critical Terms for Art History*, ed. Robert S. Nelson and Richard Shiff (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 325.

expressiveness') is reflected in art; the second, ('doubt and irony') in criticism, and the third, ('observation and dispassionate judgment') in history.[80]

In following Richard Shiff's lead, it might also be possible to think about art criticism not so much as the manifestation of certain 'attitudes' to art, but as a *gesture to* the work of art. This reflects the fact that art criticism is not only a linguistic composite (exhibiting at any given moment disciplinary vocabularies, aesthetic terms, descriptive passages, prose, poetry and quotation), but is essentially bound to its visual predicate. Thinking about art criticism in this way (as a gesture to the work of art itself), also provides an opportunity to rethink the nature and direction of interdisciplinary study generally. As William P. Germano argues, interdisciplinary study has emerged as something of an alternative to comparative methodologies and cultural history. According to Germano, it 'takes shape somewhere outside the reach of cultural studies, beyond the arena of the popular and what American scholars refer to as "the political", and often in the aura of Great Works. Rightly or wrongly, the cultural-studies map takes a wide detour around the Great Works program'.[81] In this respect, it appears as though the value of interdisciplinarity arises from its ability to engage a variety of textual and visual forms (amongst which are those 'Great Works') through their disciplinary contexts, while at the same time resisting entrapment within disciplinary boundaries. This model of interdisciplinarity allows us to acknowledge the disciplinary vocabularies and methodologies that these visual and textual forms allude to, employ, challenge and question, while at the same time incorporating this knowledge into disciplinary perspectives offered by other subjects.

In this respect, an interdisciplinary approach to that 'corpus of remarks about painting" not only offers a new perspective on 'cultural issues', as Bal suggests, but also, perhaps, in an extension of Germano's emphasis on the 'Great Works', on great

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[80] See Shiff, "Figuration", 325.
[81] See Germano, "Why Interdisciplinarity Isn't Enough", 331.

concepts – concepts like imitation and expression that have taken on a critical and historical significance of their own. These concepts in particular have been invoked on a large scale in Romantic criticism to support canon formulation, underpin notions of periodization and shape disciplinary orientation. They have also been used on the smallest of scales to help us articulate our understanding of the single image, or the single line.

The following chapters have attempted to remain sensitive to the long history of disciplinary differentiation in understanding the gestures made to painting by connoisseurs such as Uvedale Price and Sir George Beaumont, artists like Prince Hoare and Washington Allston, and critics like William Hazlitt and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, not only in their criticism of those paintings, but also in their response to the critical abuses taking place within that body of writing about art. Their attempts to develop a more credible critical language for the fine arts both highlight and draw upon an important tension within imitation, both as a way of making something like something else and as a means of understanding the relationships that underpin that resemblance. Of course, imitation in the conventional sense of representation, of making something like something else, is plainly evident in the descriptive quality of much writing on the arts. Yet in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century, this pictorial impulse gave way to more professional attempts to articulate not so much the specific image itself as the formal relationships that underpinned that image. This reflects the difficult task of developing a methodology and vocabulary that articulate shape – what Catherine Lord and José Benardete refer to as the central problem for art criticism even today.

In exploring whether articulation of the 'ineffable' is even possible, Lord and Benardete argue that the term 'catechresis' (what they refer to as a 'degenerate case of

metaphor') offers the most promise.[82] Catechresis, they argue, allows 'reference without predication', that is, it allows one to call on the mimetic faculty without seriously expecting a resemblance between the two objects (in this case, word and image). For most, they argue, 'genuine predication by way of metaphor that dispenses with the assertion of a resemblance' is regarded as impossible.[83] In the chapters that follow, I would like to consider this question from the standpoint of the contributions to art criticism made by Price, Beaumont, Coleridge and Allston: whether it is possible for writing on art to call upon the mimetic faculty without seriously suggesting a resemblance between that object and the word itself. In this case, it is not only descriptive language, or figurative language that is involved, but other kinds of language from which a schematic of 'reference without predication' is achieved.

The development of this kind of language was a necessary part of the fight against 'false criticism' in that it enabled writing about art a critical viability that shone through descriptive practices rooted in the pictorialist tradition of the early eighteenth-century. This language was gradually constructed as a means to refer not to the subject matter of a picture, or to represent the picture in its pictorial elements, but rather to refer to the relationships that underpin those forms of resemblance often encoded in the geometry of the picture. Through drawing on the mimetic faculty in this other dimension, a critical language could be achieved through which that resemblance is suggested, embedded and expressed without being *described* in pictorial terms.

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[82] Catherine Lord and José A. Benardete, "Baxandall and Goodman", *The Language of Art History*, ed. Salim Kemal and Ivan Gaskell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 79.
[83] See Lord and Benardete, "Baxandall and Goodman", 79.

Chapter Two

Imitation in Art Criticism: Bridging the 'Creative-Critical Divide'

Factors such as the diverse disciplinary approaches to image-text studies, the implicit difficulty in determining the disciplinary domain of this 'corpus of remarks' about painting and the ambiguous distinction between art writing, art criticism and art history no doubt contribute to what Morris Eaves describes as that 'vast, underexplored critical wilderness' of Romantic literature and visual art.[1] However, further complicating this wilderness is an important tension that exists within the term imitation, the concept that underpins the story of *ut pictura poesis* and the foundation of image-text relations. This tension stems from an understanding of the concept of imitation as having both a creative and critical function. On the one hand, to imitate means making something like something else – creating a resemblance which invites comparison. On the other, imitation characterizes a way in which to identify and articulate relationships embedded deep beneath those forms of resemblance.[2]

The rich nature of this tension can be seen to advantage in exploring the relationship between painting and that 'corpus of remarks' about it. Within such remarks the need to describe various elements of the work for the purposes of orienting the reader are evident, yet such descriptions reflect varying degrees of the 'sympathetic identification' of the critic with the work.[3] This desire to describe and, in some instances, to create a verbal record of one's response to a work of art oftentimes conflicts with the critical distance needed to identify and evaluate the more deeply

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[1] See Eaves, "Sister Arts", 238.

[2] See Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Lectures 1808-1819 On Literature*, ed. R.A. Foakes (Bollingen Series; 2 vols., Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), ii: 220. This dimension of imitation was captured in Coleridge's definition: 'Likeness in Difference & a union of the two'; part of what Frederick Burwick refers to as his 'own peculiar account of artistic imitation as a mediation, *idem et alter*'. See Frederick Burwick, "The Romantic Concept of Mimesis: Idem et Alter", *Questioning Romanticism*, ed. John Beer (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 201.

[3] Lucy Newlyn, *Reading, Writing, and Romanticism: The Anxiety of Reception* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 178.

embedded schemes of relation within the work and the context of its execution. These might consist of references or allusions to other artists, to the artist's historical or cultural context, or to the forced execution of a patron's, rather than an artist's own intended conception. Through exploring this tension it may be possible to better understand the difficulties encountered by art critics in attempting to develop a system of practical criticism for art like that which was developing for literature in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century.

The descriptive and critical tension within the term imitation and the implications for the development of art criticism has largely been neglected within interdisciplinary studies of image-text relationships in the Romantic period. This is partly due to the dominance of the literary phrasing of the movement from Neo-classical to Romantic criticism in terms of the breaking of the mimetic analogy between painting and poetry. Perhaps the best known account of this movement is given in M.H. Abrams's landmark study, *The Mirror and the Lamp*. According to Abrams, the shift from imitative to expressive modes of criticism follows from a like shift in the way in which the creation of a painting or poem is achieved. Unlike critical questions posed in the eighteenth-century that followed from a view of the art work as an imitation of external objects, ideals or human actions, critical questions in the Romantic period took advantage of expressive theories which postulated that the 'source and subject matter of a poem', derive from the mind of the poet.[4] Thus, Abrams argues, questions relating to the external attributes of nature or the general qualities of mankind gave way to questions about a work's sincerity, its ability to reflect the 'intention, the feeling, the actual state of mind of the poet while

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[4] M.H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1953), 22. Abrams writes, " The primary source and subject matter of a poem...are the attributes and actions of the poet's own mind; or if aspects of the external world, then these only as they are converted from fact to poetry by the feelings and operations of the poet's mind".

composing...'.[5] In this respect, Abrams argues, the work is no longer 'regarded as primarily a reflection of nature, actual or improved; the mirror held up to nature becomes transparent and yields the reader insights into the mind and heart of the poet himself'.[6] The metaphor of the mirror and the lamp suggests that the further away from 'imitation' in the sense of resemblance or representation one gets, the greater the interpretive and creative possibilities become.

The comparatively narrow definition of imitation as the concept *against* which expression is defined has prompted a reaction from critics like John Mahoney and Frederick Burwick, who have argued for a broader application of the term within the Romantic period. In his book, *The Whole Internal Universe*, Mahoney traces the definition and application of the term in the writing of Anglo-Scottish critics such as Alexander Gerard, Lord Kames and the third earl of Shaftsbury. Mahoney argues that far from abandoning the term 'imitation' in favor of terms such as 'expression', these critics gave a 'new shape and fullness to the old Aristotelian term' through expanding the 'objects of imitation' still further, and through allowing for a symbolic, rather than factually representative definition of imitation to take hold.[7] Through emphasizing an 'aesthetic of imitation as it relates to the inner life', and dissociating imitation from the sense of representation and resemblance, Mahoney discovers within these writers an expressive power within imitation. This does not undermine the historical or conceptual progression from imitation to expression, but merely enhances it through allowing a more symbolic and expressive strain of imitation to be distinguished from its more naïve antecedent.

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[5] See Abrams, *Mirror*, 23.
[6] See Abrams, *Mirror*, 23.
[7] John Mahoney, *The Whole Internal Universe: Imitation and the New Defense of Poetry in British Criticism* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1985), 55, 57. Mahoney also points out that Gerard 'will often use the term "description" to suggest more precisely the imitation of the inner life'.

Like Mahoney, Frederick Burwick argues that while it was not Abrams's 'intent to ignore the subtle interplay of imitation and expression by positing only an either/or possibility', there is a distinct sense that his 'insistence on the primacy of mind and emotion' has cast imitation in the shadow of expression.[8] Burwick suggests that this subordination implies that 'once the lamp began to glow the mirror was shattered'.[9] Arguing in defense of the mirror as a trope of 'self-reflexivity' within the Romantic period, Burwick claims that 'the mimetic process not only informs, but becomes the very subject matter of the work of art'.[10] The mimetic process informs the work of art through providing the language in which the artist's perception of the world appears. This language consists not only of the shapes and forms in which the 'subject' is represented on the canvas or in the poem, but also the stylistic inheritance of the artist, which includes the history of the representation of those figures.

For Burwick, the mimetic process not only informs the work, but also becomes the *subject matter* of the work in that the picture in which the artist's perception of his world (i.e. the art work) is reflected, becomes a pretext for the artist's exploration of the disjuncture between that mental perception and its reflection on the canvas. Thus, Burwick argues, the Romantic redefinition of mimesis did not condemn the more representational qualities of mimesis (abundant in descriptive poetry, for example) but rather emphasized the mimetic process as revealing the 'artist's transforming power of imagination' and perhaps to a lesser degree, the subordination of these representational qualities as external evidence of the 'mind's own interior reflections'. [11] Redefined as a reflection (either of the self, one's perception of the world, or the 'inner life' of the poet), the sense of imitation as a

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[8] Frederick Burwick, "The Romantic Concept of Mimesis: Idem et Alter", *Questioning Romanticism*, ed. John Beer (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 179.
[9] See Burwick, "Romantic Concept of Mimesis", 179.
[10] Frederick Burwick, *Mimesis and its Romantic Reflections* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 2001), 12.
[11] See Burwick, *Mimesis*, 11-13.

simple representation of physical objects is at the very least subordinated, if not wholly displaced and reacted against as a dimension of the definition that approaches a mechanical imitation or copy.

Within interdisciplinary studies, the tendency has been to remain within this more dominant literary framework. For example, one finds an echo of Abrams's historical progression from imitation to expression in Stephen Melville's account of 'two narratives of the differentiation between word and image: representation and aesthetic'. The former, he argues, is the foundation of the *ut pictura poesis* tradition of comparing visual and textual imitations of the world, while the latter 'understands art primarily in terms of the problems posed by its reception rather than its production'.[12] While he claims that the narratives are based on the same set of 'facts' (their emphasis only is different), there is a sense in which representation itself has become the 'set of facts' against which aesthetic has come to be defined. Mirroring the movement from production to reception, the shift from representation to aesthetic is phrased in terms of the denial, or 'refusal of representation' which directly echoes Abrams's own notion of a historical progression.[13]

Imitation (as a mode of response rather than a mode of making) in its literary reinvention does not stand in opposition to the 'narrative of aesthetic' as do more representation-based notions of the term, but rather takes on currency as an aesthetic term. Thus while the aesthetic account 'takes it that the term "art" picks out an experience and an order of value that is irreducible to the terms of representation in general', it relies upon the reinvention of imitation, dissociated from representation, to provide an alternative means of understanding and articulating that 'experience

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[12] See Melville, *Vision & Textuality*, 8-11.
[13] See Melville, *Vision & Textuality*, 11.

and...order of value'.[14] In this respect, Stephen Melville argues, it is 'evaluation, rather than cognition [which] is the activity proper to the reception of the work of art'.[15] However, the lines between cognition and evaluation are blurred at best, as one's cognitive experience of the work oftentimes finds its way into evaluative structures. One's cognition of the work (simply stated), consists of the identification of relationships within the work, one's perception of the color, compositional aspects and subject matter – a process that is often 'imitated' in its verbal expression through the use of descriptive and rhetorical devices.

Unlike one's cognition of the work, an evaluation of the work is a different kind of communication, one that must be argued and supported by evidence, and one ultimately subject to scrutiny. Hence the need for a lexicon either independent of, or supplementary to the descriptive and rhetorical devices which reflect one's 'cognition' of the work; a lexicon which some may argue lends greater critical validity to this mixed response. The search for such a lexicon, one capable of righting what Romantic literary critics saw as neo-classical critical abuses, underpinned their turn to philosophy as a means of negotiating the concept of mimesis within developing critical structures. As Burwick argues, 'in order to give serious deliberation to the problems of mimesis as imitation of the mind's apprehension of reality, Romantic critics frequently turned on the phenomenological and transcendental philosophers of the age'.[16] Romantic critics, he argues, turned to philosophy as a means of mediating the 'disjuncture' between representation and that which 'defies imitation and representation'.[17] One such strategy was to construct a conceptual idea of imitation able to function as a critical term without reference to detailed physical/visual resemblance; one that enabled an explanation of the

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[14] See Melville, *Vision & Textuality*, 11.
[15] See Melville, *Vision & Textuality*, 11.
[16] See Burwick, *Mimesis*, 9.
[17] See Burwick, *Mimesis*, 10.

perception of the external world (and thus the perception of the painting) without being confined to express itself in the shapes and forms of that world or indeed, that work.

Yet this reinvention of the term mimesis does not take place entirely within the narrative of aesthetic. Within the terms of its own narrative, that of representation – of making, imitation has survived the breaking of the mimetic analogy between painting and poetry, Melville argues, only to be freed 'from its dependence on the representation of the world or its meanings'. As a result, imitation is able to negotiate the growing abstraction that underpins the autonomy of the art work:

> Each particular art now seems called upon to realize its self above all, and this task may lead it to transform the notion of representation or to break with it altogether. The subject that a painting imitates becomes no more than a pretext for its exploration of its own nature, just as poetry comes to take the world of which it speaks as merely the pretext for focusing on the particular problems inherent in speaking of that world, on the problems of poetry...imitation remains, but has become reflexive: rather than imitating a world the modern artwork represents itself, imitates its own making.[18]

This contemporary redefinition of the mimetic process appears to be an extension of Burwick's observation that imitation had, in the Romantic period, become 'self-reflexive'.[19] For Burwick, the language in which the Romantic artist's perception of the world was reflected became a means of exploring the disjuncture between that reflection and the objects themselves, just as for Melville the subject of a poem or painting becomes a pretext for 'focusing on the particular problems inherent in speaking of that world'. Interestingly, the mimetic parallel between painting and poetry is reasserted here, albeit according to the redefinition of mimesis and its dissociation from representation.

Whereas before the breaking of the mimetic analogy, poetry looked outside itself, seeking to understand itself through looking to painting and vice versa, this

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[18] See Melville, *Vision & Textuality*, 10.
[19] See Burwick, *Mimesis*, 12.

separation means that each art has turned inward, searching for this understanding within its *own* terms. Painting explores its own nature in its depiction of the world, and in a separate but parallel way, poetry explores its own nature in the speaking of that world. Imitation still unites them, but it has become a process that seeks to understand itself from within itself, from within its own mechanisms. The mimetic process no longer invites comparisons in the handling of depicted objects, but rather indulges in self-reflection; it supplies the objects (and therefore the language) in which the artist's perception is recorded and seeks to understand itself through the tensions revealed in the very application of that language to the canvas.

This tension is revealed as the artist begins to render his perception of the world or of an object onto the canvas. Whether a recognizable object or a block of color, each stroke is a material statement that in turn influences the shape of strokes to come (and which are capable of overpowering some elements of that mental perception). Thus the material reflection of the artist's perception is also worked out upon the canvas itself – within its own statements and retractions as much as through the will of the artist to render his perception. This demonstrates the tension, the gap identified by Romantic critics between a 'representation' or imitation of the mental perception of something, and the material representation of that perception upon the canvas.

For the art critic this tension is a crucial one, and our understanding of it has perhaps been limited by this complex and multi-layered redefinition of imitation and its increased distance from representation. This redefinition is problematic in that it fails to address an important issue with respect to art criticism, that is, the necessity of negotiating the visual space on the canvas in language. The reliance upon imitation both as a practical critical tool (description) as well as an aesthetic term means that the central critical question in art criticism does not have so much to do with the problems posed by the nature of the unrecorded response (the act of looking through

Abrams's 'transparent' mirror as it were), but rather with the far more concrete and practical problems embedded in the *articulation* of that response.[20] The particular problem for art criticism as opposed to literary criticism is that it must engage not only with abstract meanings, intentions or experiences conveyed or thought to be conveyed by the art work (i.e. the meanings for which the work itself is a vehicle, or pretext, like in seeing the work as a mimetic process), but also with the materiality, physicality of the work itself; with depicted objects, paint strokes, colors, and compositional aspects that are oftentimes fundamentally opposed to linguistic structures. In other words, the problems faced by art criticism do not lie in understanding how the work of art counts for us, but rather in the *articulation* of how that work counts for us.

This articulation requires a lexicon that must be able to function not only as part of philosophical or aesthetic terminology, but must also be able to conduct the critic's description or representation of what the work looks like (this in addition to what the work itself might mean or represent) so as to orient the reader to the surface of the work. Thus, unlike Melville who argues that in shaping one's response, evaluation rather than cognition is the appropriate function, there is certainly a sense in which the critic's cognitive experience of the work finds its way into evaluative structures. The question is whether this cognitive aspect (the description, or representation of the different elements in the work within criticism) *compromises* the critical integrity of the work, or whether it serves as a critical advantage to painting.

Malcolm Gee offers an interesting but perhaps unintended opening to this question, especially as it regards the articulation of one's response to the work of art and the descriptive-critical tension that shapes it. Like Melville, Gee argues that the

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[20] See Abrams, *Mirror*, 23. In characterizing the movement from imitation to expression, Abrams writes, 'The work ceases then to be regarded as primarily a reflection of nature, actual or improved; the mirror held up to nature becomes transparent and yields the reader insights into the mind and heart of the poet himself'.

'denial of illustration' has, either through its lack of physical referents or its dissociation of an image from any recognizable textual basis, made interpretation more of a necessity.[21] Whereas previously narrative and philosophy had given painting a 'real presence', after the 'denial of illustration', this task falls to critical interpretation, which approximates, supplements, or even supplies the 'meaning' of the work (but importantly, does not compete with, embody or vie with it as more autonomous literary responses might). This increased need for interpretation to "make real" the art work prompts the following theoretical question:

> ...are critical interpretations of art mere gestures towards a semiotic system which they are incapable of explaining? Or, on the contrary, are they the means by which objects which have no intrinsic sense are drawn into meaning, but in such a way as to render their interpretation permanently negotiable?[22]

According to the latter proposition, interpretation is given the power and validity to draw painting into meaning. Whereas before the 'denial of illustration', the work of art reflected either a natural or physical object or illustrated a narrative, afterwards more abstract images denied a correlative in the 'real' world with which to effect comparisons. No longer dependent upon the representation of external nature, or of language-based stories and narratives, the meaning of the picture could be drawn out and partly determined by alternative language-based contexts found in biography, history, politics and culture. Thus meaning, if it can be said to exist in the first place, is discovered not in the entity of the art work itself, but in the art work necessarily in conjunction with something else. The 'denial of illustration' has not only reaffirmed the necessity of critical interpretation for modern art, but has effectively repositioned the mirror of representational art away from its object and directly before its context.

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[21] Malcolm Gee, "The Nature of Twentieth-Century Art Criticism", *Art Criticism Since 1900*, ed. Malcolm Gee (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), 18-19.
[22] See Gee, "Nature of Twentieth-Century Art Criticism", 18-19.

Yet it is in the former proposition that Gee's opening begins to take on a more suggestive tone, especially in the context of the discussion of imitation. According to this proposition, unlike 'drawing a painting' into meaning through appealing to its underlying narrative or its surrounding context, Gee asks whether criticism is a 'mere gesture to a semiotic system it can't explain', whether, in other words, the task of criticism is to make a gesture toward another semiotic system that is fundamentally different. Gee uses the term 'gesture' to suggest a certain distance between painting and criticism based on the fundamental difference in medium, but at the same time, it is a word that invites an awareness of the other, and a motion toward the other. Critical interpretation makes a 'gesture' toward painting precisely because it cannot 'explain' the work in its own terms; it must therefore engage with the work through creating parallels between the structural systems (whether verbal or visual) of language itself. The distance imposed by differences in medium has forced critical engagement to take place within the structural systems (rather than practice) of language itself.

However, there is a sense in which critical interpretation is not only a gesture toward the presence of an alternative semiotic system but it is also a gesture toward the materiality of the individual work itself. In this respect, interpretation becomes a 'gesture' not to the semiotic systems beneath the work, but with the phrasing of those systems in terms of the shapes, colors, lines and compositional structures on the surface of the art work. The implications of the word 'gesture' within this context may be more far-reaching than Gee himself had intended. The word 'gesture' itself derives from the Latin *gestura* meaning 'behaviour' which, in turn, derives from the Latin *gestus* which refers to the 'bearing, i.e. motion of the body, or of a part of the body, especially of the hand or arm'. This most familiar sense of the word gesture retains a sense of physicality, as it is the 'movement of the body or limbs as an

expression of feeling'.[23] Gestures of this kind are capable of communicating something through the motion of the body without the need for speech.

The silence of physical gestures reflects that silence which gives the art work its autonomy from language, and therefore suggests alternative ways of thinking about critical interpretation. In thinking about a critical gesture in this way, we are reminded that critical interpretations are not only verbal, but visual. Indeed there is something to be learned about the descriptive-critical tension within writing about art through looking at visual interpretations of visual art. For example, in *Art and Illusion* Ernst Gombrich focuses on two paintings, one by Jean-François Millet entitled *The Cornfield* and the other, a painting by Vincent Van Gogh, entitled *Copy after Millet, 'The Cornfield'*. Gombrich selects these paintings as an example of a process he calls 'approximation' (which he opposes to 'imitation proper' or mechanical copying).[24] Within Van Gogh's painting, there is a repetition of the physical motifs found in Millet's painting: in both one finds a field, a plow, two trees to the right of the canvas, and a similar configuration of trees in the background. Gombrich refers to such objects as constituting the "statement" of the work, and argues with respect to Millet and Van Gogh, that for each "the statement is the same, the accent only is different.[25] (Yet if 'statement' is defined in terms of the critical question posed by Abrams with respect to the artist, his sincerity, his intention, etc. one finds that the statements are, in fact, quite different.)

In comparing these works, the similarity of the statements may be contrasted with the accent, the manner of execution that distinguishes Van Gogh from Millet and vice versa. According to Gombrich, 'the artist who copies will always tend to build up

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[23] "Gesture", *Oxford English Dictionary*, Compact Edition, 1979.
[24] Ernst Gombrich, *Art and Illusion: A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation* 5th edn. (Oxford: Phaidon Press, 1959), 306-309.
[25] See Gombrich, *Art and Illusion*, 309. Gombrich writes that Van Gogh "repeats Millet's statements in his own accent".

the image from the schemata he has learned to handle' and points out that in Van Gogh's 'moving copy' of a print after Millet, his particular 'manner – his motor habits' break through.[26] Doubly problematic for representation though, is the way in which artists 'copy' not the statements within other visual works, but the accent of their maker. For example, in Howard Hodgkin's painting *After Degas* there is a greater abstraction and even an isolation and imitation of the accent itself, rather than any statement found within particular works of Degas.[27] Hodgkin does not 'copy' a statement of Degas (i.e. a specific work or objects represented within a work), but rather extrapolates the rhythm and movement both of Degas' figures and his brush, capturing them in the colors and shapes on his canvas. The only direct references Hodgkin makes to Degas are in the title and his use of the green frame; indeed without these indications, the viewer might have little chance of becoming consciously aware of Hodgkin's 'repetition', his reworking of Degas' accent into his *own* statement.[28]

However, while imitations of this type in the visual arts are encouraged and critically acclaimed, it appears as though the practice of imitation in poetry continues to be regarded with some degree of critical skepticism , as such works are denied their original character and portrayed instead as copies, translations and in some instances,

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[26] See Gombrich, *Art and Illusion*, 309. In referring to Van Gogh's 'moving copy of a print after Millet' it is interesting that he uses the term 'copy' to indicate the range of response and innovation in drawing on the work of another. Interesting that he chooses this rather than imitation, where there is more scope for this kind of observation/ function. Yet the statement itself is not the only part of a work that can be copied, as Gombrich argues that the accent too can be copied; yet such copies are closer to 'forgeries' or 'imitations'.

[27] Howard Hodgkin, *After Degas*, 1993, oil on wood, private collection. For a reproduction of this painting, see Michael Auping, John Elderfield, Susan Sontag, eds. *Howard Hodgkin Paintings* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1995), 127. Photographic examples of this concept can be seen in Bill Brandt's *Joan Miro* (1968) and *René Magritte* (1966) reprinted in Bill Jay and Nigel Warburton, *Brandt: The Photography of Bill Brandt*, with a forward by David Hockney (London: Thames and Hudson, 1999). My thanks to Philip Ridgeway for pointing out these examples.

[28] See Auping, Elderfield, and Sontag, eds., *Howard Hodgkin Paintings*, 197. They quote Tom Lubbock's observation that this painting 'is a melange of several Degas elements, the frame alluding to the bright green frames that Degas used for his photographs and for some of his pastels…'. They also quote William Feaver's observation that 'When he paints *After Degas*, he is reminding us of drawings in which the French master transformed the body of a woman into a remote landscape'.

as little more than plagiarism.[29] A fitting example can be found in the critical debate surrounding Robert Lowell's volume of poetry entitled *Imitations* which appeared in 1961.[30] In a response to Irvin Ehrenpreis's[31] review of Lowell's volume which appeared in the *New York Review of Books*, Constance Sullivan argued that Lowell's poem "Will Not Come Back" was 'a good and almost literal translation' of a well known poem by the nineteenth-century Spanish poet Gustavo Adolfo Bécquer, entitled "Rima LIII", and asks 'did he think none of us would recognize the original?'[32] In addition to her suggestion that Lowell was attempting to delude or deceive his readers as to the originality of his work, other critics of Lowell's work have suggested that in referring the poems to their authors, Lowell misrepresented his poems as translations, rather than imitations, of the originals. Ehrenpreis responded to such charges with a defense of Lowell's poetic integrity. He recalled Lowell's own acknowledgement that his poems 'often depend on "borrowings"' and drew attention to Lowell's introduction, in which he admits that he had been 'reckless with literal meaning'. Ehrenpreis's defense was supported by Derwent May, who, in a subsequent issue addressed Sullivan's question directly, arguing that far from thinking no one would recognize Bécquer's poem, 'On the contrary, he [Lowell] thought everyone would'.[33] Indeed, this recognition is essential to the idea of imitation

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[29] This paves the way for important differences in how the practice of imitation is perceived with respect to critical developments in art history and literary criticism. While imitations of this sort appearing in art criticism were considered 'false' in literary criticism, they remained an important aspect of art critical writing.

[30] See Robert Lowell, *Imitations* (London: Faber and Faber, 1962).

[31] Irvin Ehrenpreis, "Lowell's Comedy" *NYRB* 23 (28 Oct. 1976).

[32] Constance Sullivan, "Lowell's Irony", letter, *NYRB* 23 (25 nov 1976). Lowell's poem "Will Not Come Back" is reprinted in Robert Lowell, *Collected Poems*, ed. Frank Bidart and David Gewanter (London: Faber and Faber, 2003), 514. A translation of Bécquer's poem by Howard A. Landman in parallel text can be seen at < http://www.polyamory.org/~howard/Poetry/becquer_052.html>.

[33] Derwent May, "'Will Not Come Back' Returns", letter, *NYRB* 23 (20 Jan 1977). May challenges Professor Sullivan's understanding of imitation as a copy masquerading as originality. It is perhaps worthwhile to note the interpretation of Imitation on the jacket design for Lowell's volume, in which the term is pictured as split while its letters are presented as if the term is looking at its own reflection, as if it is looking in a mirror. See also Lowell, introduction, *Imitations*, xii. Lowell writes, "I believe that poetic translation – I would call it an imitation – must be expert and inspired, and needs at least as much technique, luck and rightness of hand as an original poem".

manifest in Lowell's poetic experiment. In explicitly drawing the reader's attention to the authorship of the poems, and to his 'borrowings', Lowell distinguishes imitation from both translation and allusion.

The idea of imitation (like the *after* construction in art) is distinct from allusion insofar as the author or artist literally provides an interpretive framework in which to consider the work. This framework identifies its subject through language, spelling out the origins of the work. This is evident, for example, in Van Gogh's title, *Copy after Millet,* and in Lowell's explicit reference to the 'original' authors of the poems in his collection. Unlike imitations of this type, allusion purports to have some affinity in the origin, and indeed in the 'originality' and constitution of the text; there is no external marker apart from one's understanding or recognition of a familiar arrangement of words and shapes embedded within the body of the text or painting. These arrangements are seamlessly interwoven into the very fabric and rhythm of the work, while in an imitation, or copy (in Gombrich's use of the term), or a work 'after' another work, those seams are exposed and almost seem to invite inspection, comparison and comment. An allusion to another work is picked up, not pointed out. By contrast, imitations expose their underlying structures and patterns of arrangement; they are a statement *about* another work while at the same time embodying many of the elements of that work.

Another important distinction to emerge, particularly from Sullivan's criticism of Lowell, is that between imitation and translation. While translation may be considered as one manifestation of what Lucy Newlyn describes as a 'sympathetic' engagement with a work of art (literary or visual), there is a sense in which it is subject to limitations of a different kind from those which govern an imitation.[34] A translation, like an imitation, is creative-critical in nature. However, unlike an

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[34] See Newlyn, *Reading, Writing and Romanticism*, 177.

imitation, which conveys the statement of one in the accent of another, a translation must, insofar as it is possible, retain that original accent. Thus while there is space enough within a translation for the translator to call upon his creative powers in rendering the work in different terms, there is a sense in which the translator's own voice is beholden to that of the original author. Moreover, the translator cannot engage with the original work in its *own* terms. He or she must conduct the interplay between form and content according to a different language – a different semiotic structure. The imitator, by contrast, can accomplish this within the very terms of the original work, which remain necessarily recognizable.

Sullivan's confusion of imitation and translation with respect to Lowell's imitation of Bécquer's poem echoes a similar confusion of the two concepts in characterizing the relationship between word and image. This confusion results from the tendency to treat writing about art as if it were poetry within the pre-existing parallel structure of *ut pictura poesis*. In effectively removing the distinction between these two 'written' forms, impediments to thinking about the complex creative-critical nature of writing about art is removed and such writing may easily be considered within the interpretive structure already in place. For example, in their preface to the *Grove Book of Art Writing*, Martin Gayford and Karen Wright claim that 'All verbal statements about art are attempts at translation – in this case translation from an intuitive, non-verbal, visual medium into that of words…'.[35] Curiously, in insisting on using the term 'translation' with respect to painting and writing about it, Gayford and Wright appear to subordinate the critical nature of such writing to its descriptive qualities. Of course not all verbal statements about art are attempts at translation, as translation implies a desire to replicate, reproduce, and make again, rather than evaluate, criticize and judge. (This is not to say these characteristics are not implicit

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[35] Martin Gayford and Karen Wright, introduction, *The Grove Book of Art Writing*, ed. Martin Gayford and Karen Wright (New York: Grove Press, 1998), xvii.

in translation, just that they are not the explicit motivation.) After all, a significant number of texts within that 'corpus of remarks' about painting do not seek or attempt to *translate* painting, but to *evaluate* it.

Recourse to 'translation' as the default position for writing about painting is even more problematic when we consider the limitations of the concept within the discipline of art history.[36] Of course, one could easily invoke the old parallel in making claims for paint's ability to 'translate' a poem into color and line that matches the ability of poetry to translate an image into language. However, if we look beyond *ut pictura poesis* and the cross-medium movement it entails to the discipline-specific model suggested above, it is evident that unlike visual imitations of visual work, painterly 'translations' of painterly works, in the sense Gayford and Write use the term, do not exist. The making of a print after a painting, or a painting after a sculpture, or even an oil painting after an oil painting would hardly be referred to as a translation. One is much more likely to find mention of an imitation, rendition, copy, or work 'after' another work.

As a means of understanding the relationship between writing about painting and painting itself, translation is limited in ways imitation is not.[37] In addition to the advantages mentioned above, imitation also provides a different perspective from which to see the critical implications of the verbal/ visual dynamic. Rather than convert image to text, text to image, as a translation-based model implies, an imitation-based model allows for a conversion of critical power within a single medium. For example, despite the fact that the paintings of Van Gogh and Millet are both 'visual', and therefore 'silent' in a conventional sense, there is a way in which

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[36] The intent is to think about translation with respect to painting and writing about it, not the rendering of a three-dimensional or abstract object onto a two-dimensional surface which is also oftentimes referred to as a translation.

[37] It is at the very least not granted the same scope and powers within art history as it is within literary history, and this disciplinary difference ought to be kept in mind.

we cannot help but see one as being more 'verbal' than the other. Millet's work appears fixed and silent, unable to counter Van Gogh's reply except, of course, in its original terms, while within Van Gogh's work we are constantly aware of his manipulation of the fixity of Millet's statement and the fluidity of his own accent. When viewed in conjunction with Millet, Van Gogh's work appears to be a *living* comment on Millet in that its presence is always asserted against Millet's past.

Likewise, Lowell's imitation of Bécquer is meant to be read *after* Bécquer – as there is a sense in which Lowell's poem exists as an entirely different entity if read *before* Bécquer's, or indeed without ever having read Bécquer's. As with Millet's painting, Bécquer's poem takes on a spatial dimension as it operates both within Lowell and without – it is the silent partner, in a sense, as Lowell gestures to Bécquer, and Bécquer's poem in turn becomes more of a physical presence, a silent foundation for Lowell's voice. So in both visual imitations of visual art, and verbal imitations of verbal art, there is a statement and an accent; a voice and a mark. Silence and speaking, space and time, are not determined by the *form* of the work itself, in terms of a poem being narrative and a painting spatial and silent. Painterly imitations can silence a painting or make it speak, just as verbal imitations can silence a poem or make it speak.

The emphasis on cross-disciplinary models like translation to explain the relationship between painting and writing about it, rather than the disciplinary model proposed above reflects just how pervasive the *ut pictura poesis* analogy continues to be in contemporary critical methodologies. For example, within the framework of the speaking picture, imitation has rarely been characterized as a gesture *toward* an object or another work, but rather as attempting to replicate, reproduce, and arguably vie with that object or other work. As Melville and Readings argue:

> As the explicit guiding model for Classical and neo-Classical art, the notion of the 'speaking picture' bound painting and writing together as rhetorically structured renderings of the world and the objects within it, and likewise linked visual work and writing about it through the practice of description and criticism as the verbal reproduction of pictorial rhetoric. Poetry aims to paint a world upon the mind's eye, just as painting seeks to present the mute objects of the world in a framework that will make them speak. The mimetic analogy between painting and poetry is symmetrical with the mimetic analogy between life and art.[38]

Within this passage, two very distinctive relationships emerge. The first relationship, that between painting and poetry, is based on a fairly straightforward definition of mimesis: these arts are tied because they depict 'the world and the objects within it'. This analogous relationship is based on painting and poetry as modes of production, as modes of *making*. The second relationship, that between 'visual work and writing about it' ought to be based on reception, rather than production. However, this relationship appears to mimic the analogous relationship between painting and poetry in that 'description and criticism' is reduced to the 'verbal reproduction of pictorial rhetoric'. Through collapsing the distinction between 'description and criticism', the significance of the role of imitation within developing critical models is suppressed in favor of its 'descriptive' tendencies.

This conflation of description and criticism is challenged by the imitation-based model above, which enables a movement beyond pictorial representation without denying it completely. This model encourages us to rethink the parameters of representation altogether. Representation is not only defined in terms of its pictorial aspect, 'To bring clearly or distinctly before the mind, esp. (to another) by description or (to one-self) by an act of imagination', but to represent also means to argue, 'To place (a fact) clearly before another; to state a point out explicitly or seriously *to* one, with a view to influencing actions or conduct...by way of expostulation or

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[38] See Melville, *Vision & Textuality*, 8.

remonstrance'.[39] This contrasts with the tendency to want to refashion representation as expression. As David Summers points out: 'actual representation – something's being put under one set of conditions for another in place of something else – is primarily *communication*, not the *expression* of private images or meanings (which we especially associate with art) but rather that which is effected *through the common.*'[40] Understanding representation in this way provides space to think about its role within imitation – as a gesture toward the work of art and as a communication of thoughts about it. That which motivates criticism (including the desire to instruct), warrants a reading of the term in this more expansive way.

This emphasis on communication rather than expression can be found in yet another root definition of the term gestura.[41] In addition to meaning a silent communication, 'gestura' refers both to 'the employment of bodily movements, attitude, expression of countenance, etc. as a means of giving effect to oratory' as well as the performance of that motion, thus 'a gesture or gesticulation of actors or orators according to the rules of art'.[42] Whereas previous definitions of 'gestura' focused on the silent movement alone, in this definition there is a link between the physical gesture and the spoken word. However, this dimension of rhetoric has suffered as a consequence of the emphasis on the descriptive qualities of 'writing art' manifest in 'word-pictures', rather than writing about art. In such 'word-pictures', the separateness of the physical gesture is generally suppressed, as the silence which such a gesture implies is interpreted in terms of the 'silent' qualities of art as a 'mute poem'. Read from the perspective of the *ut pictura poesis* analogy, one would most

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[39] "Representation", *Oxford English Dictionary*, Compact Edition, 1979.
[40] David Summers, "Representation," *Critical Terms for Art History*, ed. Robert S. Nelson and Richard Shiff (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 15.
[41] Yet interestingly, both 'gesture' and 'gesticulate' can indicate the use of expressive motion *instead* of speech in a mimetic capacity. This dimension of the word has an implicitly critical and persuasive dimension, as gesticulate means "to make mimic or pantomime gestures". See 'gesticulate', *Oxford English Dictionary*, Compact Edition, 1979.
[42] "Gesture", *Oxford English Dictionary*. "Gestus", *A Latin Dictionary: Founded on Andrews' Edition of Freund's Latin Dictionary*, 1900.

likely identify that which gives 'effect' to oratory not as the silent motion or gesture (which has no equivalent in language), but rather with 'word-pictures', with the vivid descriptions used in oratory.

According to ancient rhetoric, such word-pictures were meant to inspire action on the part of the auditor. Thus, As Jean Hagstrum argues, in ancient rhetoric, the term imitation 'was used to describe the power that verbal visual imagery possessed in setting before the hearer the very object and scene being described'.[43] This power was possessed by the orator, who, as David Summers argues, is depicted as a 'painter in the soul who uses the "figures", "turns" (tropes), and "colors" of eloquence to shape assent by persuasion...by the artful joining of words in such ways as to unite imagination and feeling, thus to instigate decision and action'.[44] Within the 'speaking picture', Melville argues, mimesis sought not to 'delude an individual into taking an imitation as real but rhetorically to persuade a public to an action, to making a real...'.[45] Thus the extent to which verbal description evokes a visual presence could be measured in terms of the action that it inspires or calls forth. However, it is worth noting that the vivid quality of such descriptions may conspire to negate the presence of the orator himself. In this respect, word-pictures alone are not explicitly communicative in the way that Summers means. Many of the communicative aspects to which he refers are implicit in the physical features, the tone of voice, the tempo and the facial gestures of the orator. It is through this kind of gesture that the orator asserts his presence within the word picture that he creates.

In her book, *The Eloquence of Color*, Jacqueline Lichtenstein provides an alternative way of thinking about the relationship between paint and language which

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[43] Jean Hagstrum, *The Sister Arts: The Tradition of Literary Pictorialism and English Poetry from Dryden to Gray* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 11.
[44] See Summers, "Representation", 6.
[45] See Melville, *Vision & Textuality*, 8.

takes into account the physical presence of the orator. For Lichtenstein, physical gestures are not to be displaced by language, but connected to them. She points out that in ancient philosophy, there was a 'close, though often implicit bond uniting the Platonic condemnation of pictorial activity and the critique of flattery, seduction, and pleasure'.[46] The connection between vision and illusion is commonplace in the *Dialogues*, for example, when Socrates comments to Ion, rather tongue in cheek, that he has 'often envied you reciters that art of yours.... You have to dress in all sorts of finery, and make yourselves as grand as you can, to live up to your art'.[47] This comment is not directed to the artfulness of Ion's words, but rather, to the artful *look* of Ion. In this respect, Ion's dress is capable of giving effect to his recitation (one presumes) without saying a word. The material quality of Ion's dress highlights the most elusive and problematic component of this 'pictorial activity', color. Lichtenstein argues that the analogy of painting and poetry was devised as a means of negotiating this stubborn concept. Philosophy dealt with color through making it more language-like: 'By reducing color to discrete units like the letters that make up names, the comparison imposes on painting a discursive model that makes possible a definition of painting as an image of the primary image of discourse'.[48]

Yet, Lichtenstein argues, the 'confrontation between discourse and image' (image in this respect also encompassing poetry as an imitative art that 'makes pictures') was 'unequal, for it took place on the territory of language; language invented the game, set the rules, and played according to its own stakes'.[49] Lichtenstein argues that if a real or true parallel were to be made, it would not be the parallel of painting with the 'silence' of word-pictures in language, but of painting

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[46] Jacqueline Lichtenstein, *The Eloquence of Color: Rhetoric and Painting in the French Classical Age*, trans. Emily McVarish (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 50.
[47] Plato, *Ion* in *Great Dialogues of Plato*, ed. Eric H. Warmington and Philip G. Rouse, trans. W.H. D. Rouse (New York: Penguin Books, 1984), 14.
[48] See Lichtenstein, *Eloquence of Color*, 51-52.
[49] See Lichtenstein, *Eloquence of Color*, 2.

with silent but communicative physical gestures – with movement rather than stillness. She claims that 'the lot of painting seems quite directly linked to a particular definition of rhetoric, namely, one that favors the role of voice and gesture and insists on all corporeal forms of eloquence, as opposed to the literary rhetoric that busies itself with tropes and figures and implies the preeminence of writing'.[50] Hence, the other reading of the definition of 'gestura'. Unlike the uneven parallel between painting and poetry, this parallel acknowledges the autonomy of painting by not requiring it to be 'translated' into language.

The presence of the orator emphasized in Lichtenstein's account recalls the lost part of the legacy of rhetoric to criticism. As Abrams argues, one of the most important contributions of rhetoric to literary criticism was the emphasis on the education of the orator. This link enabled the subsequent link between rhetoric and genius to be established. The legacy of ancient rhetoric rests not only in the making of pictures, or in the persuasive quality of certain combinations of words and images, but also, and more fundamentally with the education of the orator. It is this sense of education and instruction that provides the foundation for the connection between criticism and genius. Indeed, the genius of criticism depends upon the capacity of rhetoric to be instructive, rather than deceptive:

> Ancient rhetoric had bequeathed to criticism not only its stress on affecting the audience but also (since its main concern was with educating the orator) its detailed attention to the powers and activities of the speaker himself – his 'nature', or innate powers and genius, as distinguished from his culture and art, and also the process of invention, disposition, and expression involved in his discourse...[51]

Abrams's shift of emphasis from the audience to the speaker reinforces the second reading of the term representation as communication. Abrams suggests that just as there is a learned and innate component to art, so also is there a learned and innate

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[50] See Lichtenstein, *Eloquence of Color*, 32.
[51] See Abrams, *Mirror*, 21.

component to criticism. In this respect, it appears as though the genius of criticism follows not only from the deductive, but from the productive capabilities of the critic himself. The genius of the critic lies not just in the apprehension and understanding of the work, but in the very articulation of it: in negotiating the materiality of paint upon the canvas through description and at the same time balancing that description with the distance required by criticism. Imitation is capable of drawing out the 'nature' of the critic, his own 'innate powers and genius' that determine the way in which he sees and how he in turn communicates what he sees. That which he 'sees' is not confined to the material rendering on the canvas, but extends to the underlying structures and compositional aspects of the work.

I have thus far argued for the importance of returning imitation to its roots in a dual sense of representation as both description and criticism, and the usefulness of the visual imitations of visual works as an interpretive model for image-text studies rather than the commonly applied image-text models based on translation, conversion and analogy – components central to the *ut pictura poesis* tradition. In the following chapter, it will be demonstrated how this dual sense of imitation not only encouraged the identification of problems within the critical approach to fine art, but also provided the space in which those writing about art developed a more authoritative disciplinary identity. The implications of this development will be considered firstly with respect to the relationship between Sir Joshua Reynolds and Samuel Johnson, and secondly, with respect to the satirical use of imitation to highlight the problems that beset the criticism of art, problems that proceeded primarily from the over-reach of *ut pictura poesis* within the eighteenth-century.

Chapter Three

Imitation and Periodization

A more comprehensive understanding of the tension within imitation revealed by that 'corpus of remarks about painting' has been obscured by what Mieke Bal refers to as the 'presence of the past within the present', in this instance, the tendency to imagine a 'useful analogy' between art criticism and literary criticism that mirrors that ancient analogy between poetry and painting. As Morris Eaves points out, this presence is largely a legacy of Romanticism itself and its emphasis on the 'essential oneness of the poetic'.[1] Yet, as is illustrated by Merrill's own phrasing of the analogy between the painter and the poet in literary terms (remember his reference to the 'tale' told by paintings, and identification of the painter as 'poet'), the analogy between literary criticism and art criticism quickly loses its balance as the 'corpus of remarks' about painting is quietly absorbed into literary critical structures.[2] At best, this absorption of art criticism into literary criticism sanctions the use of critical methodologies based on the old parallels between painting and poetry; at worst, it subordinates art and art criticism to a role that is largely supportive of and supplementary to discussions of primarily literary critical interest.

This is particularly evident in using that 'corpus of remarks' about painting to endorse a literary critical conception of the transition from neo-classicism to romanticism. This transition is typically phrased in terms of a fundamental shift in the perception of imitation, from a limited notion defined in terms of 'mechanical reproduction' or 'copy' to a more sophisticated redefinition based on its more

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[1] See Eaves, "The Sister Arts", 237. Eaves refers to the "...nineteenth-century dreams not of arts but of Art as the single revelation that singleminded, multitalented creative personalities seek in complementary modes...". See also Roy Park, "Ut Pictura Poesis: The Nineteenth-Century Aftermath", *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 28 (Winter, 1969), 156.

[2] See Merrill, "Notes on Corot", 312.

expressive properties. I say 'literary' because, as John Barrell points out, Romanticism 'has never become a well-established term in the discussion of English painting, and art historians do not seem, on the whole, to have found the term of great explanatory power'.[3] Rather, he argues, it is the literary critic who tends to contrast figures like Reynolds to Blake as 'black to white', a practice 'reinforced by applying to Reynolds's theory the term "neo-classical", to Blake's views the term "romantic", and by developing a distinction between the two men...based on the assumption that the two terms are themselves opposites'.[4] Moreover, Barrell argues, the same caution used by literary critics to 'make subtle distinctions between Romanticisms' with respect to poets like Wordsworth, Byron and Shelley 'has not always characterized literary critical discussion of Blake's view on art and on Reynolds, who is too often seen as the common enemy of Blake'.[5]

The opposition between neo-classicism and romanticism which has shaped the literary critic's handling of 'visual texts' is of limited value, Barrell suggests, within the discipline of art history itself. As Alastair Fowler argues, attempts at periodization must 'balance the tendency to generalize in terms of chronological or conceptual similarity with the realization that period classifications in any study consist mostly of exceptional cases'.[6] Of course, notions of periodization are never fixed, but constantly changing as what was once the exceptional case becomes the generalization and vice versa. Yet as Barrell implicitly cautions, this interplay between 'chronological and conceptual similarities' and 'exceptional cases' is largely enacted *within* disciplinary boundaries rather than between them. While this interplay has lead to a rich discussion of periodization within literary criticism, similar

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[3] John Barrell, *The Political Theory of Painting from Reynolds to Hazlitt* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986) 223. See also Hugh Honour, *Romanticism* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1981) for a broader discussion of the term with respect to its use in art history.
[4] See Barrell *Political Theory*, 223.
[5] See Barrell, *Political Theory*, 223.
[6] Alastair Fowler, "Periodization and Interarts Analogies", *New Literary History* 3 (Spring, 1972), 487.

discussions within the discipline of art history have been conspicuously absent from the literary critic's handling of materials from the other side of the disciplinary fence.

An example can be found in comparisons between Sir Joshua Reynolds and Samuel Johnson, in which differences in disciplinary orientation are generally subordinated, allowing 'romanticism' to be defined against the 'chronological and conceptual' similarities they represent. From the perspective of image-text studies of the Romantic period, both Reynolds and Johnson are generally considered exemplary not only as defenders of neo-classical critical methodologies, but also of the *ut pictura poesis* tradition, as marking the critical junction and overlap of art history and literary criticism. As a reflection of the relationship between painting and poetry in the sister arts tradition, their relationship has been described by Jean Hagstrum as one of 'friendly emulation' – one located firmly within the context of neo-classical critical developments with respect to the two arts.[7] As Hagstrum points out, the eighteenth-century was marked by the 'literary man's increasing sophistication in the visual arts' and the 'habit of applying terms of painting to the criticism of poetry'.[8] This practice was matched by artist's use of literature as a means of articulating differences in style, composition and conception. As is well established, both Reynolds and Johnson made fairly liberal use of this practice, numerous examples of which appear in Johnson's *Lives of the English Poets* and Reynolds's *Discourses*. For example, in his critique of *Paradise Lost* Johnson invokes the sister art to account for the success of poetical description, observing 'the solitary fidelity of Abdiel...very amiably painted'[9]. Likewise in his commentary on *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*, in which he observes that 'the images are properly selected and nicely distinguished, but the

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[7] see Hagstrum, *The Sister Arts*, 130.
[8] see Hagstrum, *The Sister Arts*, 130.
[9] Samuel Johnson, *Prefaces, Biographical and Critical, to the Works of the English Poets*, in *Samuel Johnson*, ed. Donald Greene (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 704.

colours of the diction seem not sufficiently discriminated'.[10] Reynolds too drew upon the sister art, perhaps not so much in referring to the 'poetry' of depiction, but in describing the effects of painting upon the viewer as comparable to the effects produced by poetry upon the reader. For example, Reynolds asks his reader whether, for those looking 'at the personification of the Supreme Being in the center of the Capella Sestina, or the figures of the sybils which surround that chapel...the same sensations are not excited by those works, as what he may remember to have felt from the most sublime passages of Homer?'[11]

Thus, in many respects, the parallels invoked *by* them seem to justify the comparative *between* them. This tendency is perhaps strengthened by the fact that both Reynolds and Johnson drew upon a shared critical language and critical methodology, one rooted in classical literary criticism and one which formed the foundation of neo-classical formulations upon the arts. For example, invoking the distinction between the beautiful and sublime, Reynolds argues that whereas Raphael 'excelled in beauty', Michelangelo excelled 'in energy'. The ideas of Michelangelo are 'vast and sublime' and 'his people are a superior order of beings' with 'nothing in the air of their actions or their attitudes, or the style and cast of their limbs or features, that reminds us of their belonging to our own species'. By contrast, Raphael's 'imagination is not so elevated; his figures are not so much disjoined from our own diminutive race of beings'.[12] This distinction reflects that drawn by Johnson between Shakespeare and Milton. Of Milton, Johnson writes, 'He had accustomed his imagination to unrestrained indulgence', the 'characteristick quality of his poem is sublimity', and 'his element is the great'. He continues that 'He can occasionally invest himself with grace; but his natural port is gigantick loftiness', his 'peculiar

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[10] See Johnson, *Prefaces, Biographical and Critical*, ed. Greene, 701.
[11] See Reynolds, *Discourses*, 275.
[12] See Reynolds, *Discourses*, 83-84.

power to astonish'.[13] However, Johnson observes, Milton 'could not always be in other worlds: he must sometimes revisit earth, and tell of things visible and known. When he cannot raise wonder by the sublimity of his mind he gives delight by its fertility'.[14] It is the sense of this 'fertility', of the dalliance in the real rather than the other worldly which was, for Johnson, the peculiar power of Shakespeare.

It was not only the invocation of *ut pictura poesis* but also participation in and sharing of an established critical language which exposed both Reynolds and Johnson to the scrutiny of Romantic critics like Coleridge and Blake, whose commentary upon them has, to a large extent, continued to influence perceptions of their relationship within image-text studies of the period. In many respects, it appears as though both Johnson and Reynolds fulfill the charges brought against them by Blake and Coleridge, charges that continue to shape the perception of these figures within literary criticism. In assuming a kind of responsibility, or guardianship over criticism, both Blake and Coleridge draw attention to what they see as neo-classical critical faults: among them, the tendency to generalization, an advocacy of the ideal theory of art, and the reliance upon rules in the creation and criticism of poetry and painting. However, both Coleridge and Blake tend to neglect the 'critical provisos and special allowances' that qualify what might otherwise be seen as a 'clearly formulated British neo-classical orthodoxy' in advancing and affirming their own views of criticism and creative practice.[15] This neglect was, as John Barrell reminds us, a consequence of the 'energy and urgency' with which Blake and, perhaps Coleridge as well, responded to critical abuses arising from neo-classical ideals.

For example, while acknowledging that Johnson is a better critic in person than on paper, Coleridge defines his own notion of criticism not so much against

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[13] See Johnson, *Prefaces, Biographical and Critical*, ed. Greene, 707.
[14] See Johnson, *Prefaces, Biographical and Critical*, ed. Greene, 707.
[15] Michael Meehan, "Neo-Classical Criticism", 667.

Johnson as against a carefully constructed caricature of Johnson. In referring to Johnson as the 'Frog-Critic', Coleridge illustrates the implicit contradictions within neo-classical critical models. He observes, 'How nimbly it leaps – how excellently it swims – only the fore-legs (it must be admitted) are too long & the hind ones too short'.[16] His criticism is a parody of the popular 'beauty and blemish' application of neo-classical criticism according to which a work as a whole might be admired, but the parts identified as deficient or wanting: a criticism based on the extent to which the 'imitation' measures up to its object. While Coleridge's parody is certainly grounded in the many abuses of this kind of criticism, it is important to remember that this is something of a reduction – an extraction of neoclassical criticism from the context that shaped it.

Blake's response to Reynolds displays a similar urgency. In his marginalia to Reynolds's *Discourses*, Blake charges Reynolds with undermining or qualifying the connection between genius and inspiration, noting '<Damnd Fool>' next to Reynolds's statement that '...genius is not taken for inspiration, but as the effect of close observation and experience'.[17] In response to Reynolds's view that artists should look to earthly experience rather than to heavenly sources for objects of imitation, Blake answers '<How ridiculous it would be to see the Sheep Endeavouring to walk like the Dog. or the Ox striving to trot like the Horse just as Ridiculous it is to see One Man Striving to Imitate Another...>'.[18] In what appears to be a further jibe at Reynolds, Blake's comment that 'Imitation is Criticism' appears in the margin of the following passage from Reynolds's *Discourses*:

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[16] See Coleridge, *Lectures*, i: 138. In using this image, Coleridge seems to characterize Johnson as an example of the kind of critic Johnson himself deplored. See also Coleridge, *Lectures*, i: 274 in which Coleridge attacks Johnson for the language he uses, rather than the ideas he was attempting to express in his criticism of Shakespeare. Coleridge writes that "In the opinion of such persons, Shakespeare was an ignorant man, a child of nature, a wild genius, a strange medley – at least as the most admired critics, such as Dr. Johnson thought".

[17] See William Blake, "Annotations to *The Works of Sir Joshua Reynolds*", *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, ed. David V. Erdman (New York: Doubleday, 1988), 656.

[18] See Blake, "Annotations", 656.

> I would chiefly recommend that an implicit obedience to the Rules of art, as established by the practice of the great Masters should be exacted from the young Students. That those models, which have passed through the approbation of ages, should be considered by them as perfect and infallible guides; as subject for their imitation, not their criticism.[19]

In Blake's marginalia and correspondence, the term 'critic' and 'criticism' generally has a negative connotation, thus Blake undermines Reynolds's emphasis on the 'imitation' of the Old Masters as a process of selection and learning, equating it with a neo-classical sense of fault-finding which Blake sees as central to some forms of criticism. This passage as well as Blake's comment reveal the very unstable place of this word within critical discourse.

The presence of this 'past' within the 'present' has distracted attention away from what Michael Meehan refers to as the sense of 'contention and debate' within neo-classicism itself. According to Meehan, this is registered in the 'interaction...between an inherited, sometimes alien but powerfully authoritative critical discourse, and equally authoritative indigenous rhetorical forms', forms that are manifest in the '*procedural* models that underlie the critical argument'.[20] Meehan's location of this tension between language and the interpretive models that guide its use reflects Crane's observation that 'so many of what appeared to be doctrines in neo-classicism were in fact merely units in a critical vocabulary, defining central areas for contention rather than prescribing specific and rigid values'.[21] Thinking about terms such as imitation as lexical units subject to developing interpretive models rather than established doctrinal ideas, allows them to be considered in light of the 'two centers' of art history and literary criticism. This, in turn, allows us to consider efforts to reshape a terminology shared with literary criticism into a specialized disciplinary language responsive to the demands of the

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[19] Sir Joshua Reynolds, *Discourses on Art*, ed. Robert R. Wark (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 17.
[20] See Meehan, "Neo-classical Criticism", 670.
[21] See Meehan, "Neo-classical Criticism", 667.

visual subject. This process of specialization was also responsive to the development of new procedural models with respect to the act of looking, models that gradually emerged in conjunction with increased public access to visual works, and to sources which contained the explication and commentary on those works.

An example of this tension can be seen in the apparent disparity between Johnson's essay, *The Rules*, and the definition and examples of 'critic' given in his *Dictionary* and in Reynolds' deliberate conflation of 'rules' and 'principles' within his *Discourses*. In his essay, Johnson states that the 'task of criticism' is 'to establish principles' and 'to improve opinion into knowledge'.[22] Yet, as Frank Donoghue points out, Johnson omits this task from his definition of 'critick' which reads: 'a man skilled in the art of judging literature; a man able to distinguish the faults and beauties of writing'.[23] This is further complicated by Johnson's inclusion of a number of examples, all of which suggest, as Donoghue argues, that what he *means* by 'critick' is 'a man who *pretends* to be skilled in the art of judging literature', so that he may 'usurp a cultural authority that rightly belongs to others'.[24] The scientific cast of criticism is also undermined by Johnson's definition of 'to critick' as both 'to *play* the critic' and 'to criticize'. Rather than indicate confusion or inconsistency, these definitions reflect the sense of 'contention and debate' present within the well-known boundaries of an established authoritative language.[25]

A similar sense of 'contention and debate', but one that recognizes problems unique to the art of painting, is present in Reynolds's view of criticism within the *Discourses*. In taking up this subject, Reynolds argues that the comparison of artists based on shared faults and beauties 'is certainly no mean or inconsiderable part of

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[22] Samuel Johnson, "The Rules", *The Rambler*, No. 92 (2 February 1751), repr. in *Eighteenth-century Critical Essays*, ed. Scott Elledge (2 vols., Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1961), ii: 598.
[23] Frank Donoghue, "Colonizing Readers: Review Criticism and the Formation of a Reading Public" *The Consumption of Culture 1600-1800: Image, Object, Text*, ed. Ann Bermingham and John Brewer (London: Routledge, 1995), 54.
[24] See Donoghue, "Colonizing Readers", 54.
[25] See Meehan, "Neo-classical criticism", 667.

criticism'.[26] Yet, he continues, 'this is still no more than to know the art through the Artist'.[27] Despite being a part of criticism, this 'test of investigation' as he calls it, remains 'narrow' and 'uncertain'.[28] He claims that:

> To enlarge the boundaries of the Art of Painting, as well as to fix its principles, it will be necessary, that, *that* art, and *those* principles, should be considered in their correspondence with the principles of the other arts, which like this, address themselves primarily and principally to the imagination. When those connected and kindred principles are brought together to be compared, another comparison will grow out of this; that is, the comparison of them all with those of human nature, from whence arts derive the materials upon which they are to produce their effects.[29]

Apart from emphasizing the necessity of a disciplinary grasp of the subject of the arts, Reynolds claims something of a special function for criticism. He argues for a critical procedure that looks first within its own art to divine its own principles, and only then ought to look beyond its own boundaries for comparisons with other arts. Such comparisons are comparisons of principles, rather than 'faults' and beauties, and these comparisons are addressed to, and undertaken by, the imagination. Reynolds argues that once the principles of all the arts are brought together, another comparison is conducted by the imagination, and this is the comparison between the collective principles of those art forms and the as yet unarticulated forces of 'human nature'. This is the 'highest style of criticism', out of which the 'arts derive the materials upon which they are to produce their effects'. In this respect, the 'highest style of criticism', or the ability to enact comparisons 'of art with art, and of all arts with the nature of man' is a function of the imagination.[30]

There is also a sense of 'contention and debate' in Reynolds's use of the word 'rules', a term that actually refers to something more along the lines of principles, if not principles outright. In advising the student to observe the 'rules' of painting, the

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[26] see Reynolds, *Discourses*, 229.
[27] see Reynolds, *Discourses*, 229.
[28] see Reynolds, *Discourses*, 229.
[29] see Reynolds, *Discourses*, 229.
[30] See Reynolds, *Discourses*, 229.

rules to which Reynolds refers are not written rules, but rather the rules for art which are revealed and implicit in the art object itself: these may be rules having to do with color, chiaroscuro, or compositional structures. Due to their spatial nature, such rules are impossible to write out and can only be pointed out or gestured towards. Indeed, rather than be compromised by rules, Reynolds argues that 'genius' is compatible with, and even relies upon them. He argues that 'What we now call Genius, begins, not where rules, abstractedly taken, end; but where known vulgar and trite rules have no longer any place'. The important rules to which Reynolds refers,

> ...the rules by which men of extraordinary parts, and such as are called men of Genius work, are either such as they discover by their own peculiar observations, or of such a nice texture as not easily to admit being expressed in words; especially as artists are not very frequently skilful in that mode of communicating ideas. Unsubstantial, however, as these rules may seem, and difficult as it may be to convey them in writing, they are still seen and felt in the mind of the artist; and he works from them with as much certainty, as if they were embodied, as I may say, upon paper.[31]

Reynolds' characterization of the origin of these rules reminds us of the youth in the Republic who, through 'knowing' the letters is able to identify their shapes in unfamiliar 'images'. The concept of 'rules' is opened up to include a feeling of recognition, in a sense, so that these rules are consciously and unconsciously discovered and exhibited, not imposed.

This sense of tension between an inherited critical language and developing procedural models also emerges in their responses to false critics and connoisseurs in which the 'inherited' critical vocabulary itself becomes part of the rhetoric of persuasion against critical abuses. For example, In Number 60 of *The Idler*, Samuel Johnson introduces his reader to Dick Minim, a former brewer's apprentice who resolves to be 'a man of wit and humour' after gaining a substantial inheritance from his uncle.[32] Johnson finds Minim in various coffeehouses absorbing discussions of

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[31] See Reynolds, *Discourses*, 97-98.
[32] Samuel Johnson, "Dick Minim I", *The Idler* No. 60 (9 June1759) repr. in Elledge, ed., *Eighteenth Century Critical Essays*, ii: 637.

'language and sentiments...unities and catastrophies', and later in his library, impressing upon his memory the opinions of a few select and correct writers of books. After having 'earned' his own seat in the coffeehouse, Minim is an acknowledged critic in his own right, a 'fresh pretender to fame' who

> ...is strongly inclined to censure, till his own honor requires that he commend him. Till he knows the success of a composition, he entrenches himself in general terms; there are some new thoughts and beautiful passages, but there is likewise much which he would have advised the author to expunge. He has several favourite epithets, of which he has never settled the meaning, but which are very commodiously applied to books which he has not read or cannot understand. One is *manly*, another is *dry*, another *stiff*, and another *flimsy*; sometimes he discovers delicacy of style and sometimes meets with *strange expressions*.[33]

As Johnson's 'eminent example that all critics can be critics if they will', Minim is characteristic of the self-proclaimed critic who seems not only to speak, but also to embody a number of critical clichés derived from the neo-classical invocation of rules guiding the criticism and production of literature.[34] Minim fails to engage with established rules in a theoretical sense, relying solely on the language which signifies their presence as part of the critical process. Moreover, his stock of 'favourite epithets' signals a growing divide between the procedural models for critical activity and the language used in its expression.

The critic's agility not with thought, but with combinations of words was often remarked upon by Johnson:

> ...it will give comfort to great numbers who are passing through the world in obscurity, when I inform them how easily distinction may be obtained. All the other powers of literature are coy and haughty; they must be long courted, and at last are not always gained; but Criticism is a goddess of easy access and forward of advance, who will meet the slow and encourage the timorous; the want of meaning she supplies with words, and the want of spirit she recompenses with malignity.[35]

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[33] Samuel Johnson, "Dick Minim II", *The Idler* No. 61(16 June 1759), repr. in Elledge, ed., *Eighteenth Century Critical Essays*, ii: 643.
[34] See Johnson, "Dick Minim I", repr. in Elledge, ii: 638..
[35] See Johnson, "Dick Minim I", repr. in Elledge, ii: 638.

Through his use of classical images, Johnson plays on the distance maintained by those 'coy and haughty' muses who readily refuse to aid the pen of the as yet unknown poet. Prohibited from gaining distinction in this way, he seeks 'Criticism', a 'goddess of easy access and forward of advance' who happily supplies the necessary scribbles. Through depicting Criticism as a lapsed goddess, Johnson emphasizes her lack of legitimacy, as criticism has 'not yet attained the certainty and stability of science'.[36] The 'rules' which determine the nature of criticism, he argues, do not derive in this instance from any 'settled principle or self-evident postulate', but are based on precedent, or the formation of a consensus of opinion based on superficial and accidental agreements. Lacking the support of such principles, only the words, the hollowed out shells of the language that formerly held such principles are left behind.

Like Johnson, Reynolds sought to safeguard the arts from the encroachment not only of false practitioners, but also of false critics, who, for Reynolds, took the shape of the connoisseur. Like Johnson's satire of the self-proclaimed critic, Reynolds also focuses on the separation of words and meanings that characterize the commentary of the connoisseur. He too was also aware of the danger (and profitability) of dividing critical language from the procedural models it was meant to support:

> To those who are resolved to be critics in spite of nature, and at the same time have no great disposition to much reading and study, I would recommend to assume the character of connoisseur, which may be purchased at a much cheaper rate than that of a critic in poetry. The remembrance of a few names of painters, with their general characters, and a few rules of the Academy, which they may pick up among the painters, will go a great way towards making a very notable connoisseur.[37]

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[36] Samuel Johnson, "The Rules II", *The Rambler* No. 158 (21 September 1751), repr. in Elledge, ed. *Eighteenth Century Critical Essays*, ii: 634.

[37] Sir Joshua Reynolds, "False Criticisms in Painting", *The Idler*, No. 76 (29 September 1759), repr. in Elledge, ed., *Eighteenth-Century Critical Essays*, ii: 830.

The connoisseur seems to occupy an even lower level than false critics such as Dick Minim, as his fame may be purchased at 'a much cheaper rate than that of a critic in poetry'. Unlike the 'critic of poetry' who might be expected to furnish quotations or dwell on particular instances within the pages of a book, no such effort is expected from the connoisseur. Reynolds also suggests that in matters of criticism, painting draws the weaker critic, as it costs the connoisseur only 'a few names of painters', their 'general characters' and a 'few rules of the Academy' to fulfill his ambition.

In an essay for *The Idler* on 'False Criticisms of Painting', Reynolds provides an illustration of the 'character of the connoisseur', thanking the editor for his 'ridicule of those shallow critics whose judgment...yet reaches only to inferior beauties, and who, unable to comprehend the whole, judge only by parts, and from thence determine the merit of extensive works'.[38] The caricature of Johnson's critic finds its counterpart in Reynolds' description of an Italian gentleman,

> A connoisseur, of course, and of course his mouth full of nothing but the grace of Raphael, the purity of Domenichino, the learning of Poussin, the air of Guido, the greatness and taste of the Caracci, and the sublimity and grand contorno of Michelangelo; with all the rest of the cant of criticism, which he emitted with that volubility which generally those orators have who annex no ideas to their words.[39]

Reynolds is frustrated at the 'cant of criticism', or vague use of language which recalls those 'favourite epithets' of Dick Minim. Not only were aesthetic categories and terms such as 'sublime' and 'taste' exploited by the connoisseur, but descriptive terms like 'grace', 'purity', 'learning' and 'air' were not applied to particular works, but used to describe the entire body of the artist's work. Reynolds seems to implicate rhetoric in shaping the 'cant of criticism' as the connoisseur is likened to an 'orator', his 'mouth full' of words to which no ideas are attached. This is emphasized by the

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[38] Sir Joshua Reynolds, "False Criticisms of Painting", repr. in Elledge, ii: 829.
[39] Sir Joshua Reynolds, "False Criticisms of Painting", repr. in Elledge, ii: 830.

connoisseur's 'volubility', which seems to overwhelm the silence implicit in the act of looking.

For both Reynolds and Johnson, the root of false criticism was the popular but limited notion of imitation. With respect to imitation, the tension between an inherited language and newly developing procedural models seems to take on a different emphasis, as interpretive models previously united by the analogy, or at least giving the illusion of unity through the use of the language of the analogy, began to develop more sharply along disciplinary lines. For literature, this meant an emphasis on the Aristotelian sense of the 'imitation of human action' and a movement away from imitation in the sense of physical representation, whereas in the visual arts, a greater negotiation was needed to safeguard the affiliation of imitation to representation, while at the same time denying that aspect of the relationship between imitation and representation as one of deception.

For example, in his preface to Shakespeare Johnson characterizes Shakespeare as 'the poet of nature, the poet that holds up to his readers a faithful mirror of manners and of life'.[40] While at first Johnson's invocation of 'imitation' echoes the terms of an established and inherited critical discourse, the principle as he envisions it is quite different. For Johnson a 'mirror of manners and of life' did not consist in fidelity to nature's external appearance. Likewise, the measure of the success of such an imitation is not to be found in claims of experiencing an equivalent sensation to that described in language. Judging the 'faults and beauties' of a poem through recourse to this rather literal kind of imitation (a visual one, no less), is ridiculous, as Johnson makes clear through making further acquaintance with Dick Minim, who

> ...declares that he could shiver in a hothouse when he reads that
> the ground
> Burns frore, and cold performs th' effect of Fire;
> [PL, II, 594]

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[40] See Samuel Johnson, "Preface to *The Plays of William Shakespeare*", repr. in *Eighteenth-century Critical Essays*, ed. Scott Elledge (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1961), ii: 648.

> and that when Milton bewails his blindness, the verse
>
> So think a drop serene has quench'd these orbs, [III, 25]
>
> has, he knows not how, something that strikes him with an obscure sensation like that which he fancies would be felt from the sound of darkness.[41]

For Johnson, judgments based on the poet's success in engendering within the reader a like sensation to that expressed in language is simply not credible. Minim's comments suggest that the poet (like the dramatist) is merely the catalyst for engendering such a response. His comments also point to the importance of the unities in persuading the spectator that he, like the characters, experienced effects similar to those seen upon the stage. Thus, spectators such as Minim might shiver with cold at the sight of (false) snow, or feel the heat from a panel painted to resemble a fire.[42]

Johnson argues that the relevant 'imitation' is not found in the situation of the play, but rather in the representation of human action communicated by the play. Thus, a 'play read affects the mind like a play acted' as '...the spectators are always in their senses, and know, from the first act to the last that the stage is only a stage and that the players are only players'.[43] In an echo of Aristotle's submission of the spectacle of the theatre to the language of the theatre, Johnson appears dismissive of the visual aspects of the drama and the power this has to produce effects within the audience. If we think of Johnson's claim in terms of *ut pictura poesis*, is it equally the case for the visual arts that a painting read (i.e. a poem about the painting or a description of a painting) affects the mind like a painting viewed?

As a result of suppressing the visual elements of the play, Johnson appears to subordinate the representational elements within the term imitation in favour of the

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[41] See Johnson, "Dick Minim II", repr. in Elledge, *Eighteenth-century Critical Essays*, ii: 642-3.
[42] See Teun Hocks, *Zonder Titel/ Untitled*, 1989, *Teun Hocks* Exhibition Catalogue, (Venlo: Van Spijk Art Projects bv, 2001), 50. Hocks depicts a seated man warming his hands before a painted fire.
[43] See Johnson, "Preface", repr. in Elledge, ii: 661-659.

more abstract model offered by Aristotle. However, he continues to invoke *ut pictura poesis* in using painting as an illustration for his point about dramatic effects:

> Imitations produce pain or pleasure, not because they are mistaken for realities, but because they bring realities to mind. When the imagination is recreated by a painted landscape, the trees are not supposed capable to give us shade, or the fountains coolness, but we consider how we should be pleased with such fountains playing beside us and such woods waving over us... A dramatic exhibition is a book recited with concomitants that increase or diminish its effect.[44]

The clear separation of the visual from the verbal dimension of the theater permits us to read this in terms of the visual arts. In doing so, there is a sense in which space is created for the need for representation in the imitation of visual things. If we take imitation in the sense of description, of the playing out, that which enables a sympathetic response that calls something creative forth from the responder (sympathy and distance simultaneously), there is a sense in which art (as an imitation) produces pain or pleasure not because of how close it comes to the object it aims to represent, but rather for the associations that it calls forth from the viewer. Thus the emphasis and orientation is not to the mind in rational terms (how closely can we measure the likeness between the two), but rather in emotive terms.

Johnson's statement is intriguing from another perspective as well. In providing an example or illustration of a visual nature, Johnson connects the visual aspect of theatre with painting. He claims that 'A dramatic exhibition is a book recited with concomitants that increase or diminish its effect'. His use of the term 'exhibition' encourages an association between a dramatic exhibition and a painterly exhibition. It follows that paintings may also be seen as books, and the descriptions, or gallery guides that accompany them provide the voice – the 'concomitants' that are able to 'increase or diminish its effect'. The power that language wields over visual art is rooted in its power to increase or diminish effect. Yet this could be problematic,

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[44] See Johnson, "Preface", repr. in Elledge, ii: 660.

as the use of rhetorical language to increase or diminish effect might compromise the communication of one's critical judgment.

In an echo of Johnson, Reynolds also refers to the theatre, which 'comprehends' two notions of representation. The first is representation in the sense of an exact replication of the objects of nature, the second is a representation that relies upon the process of selection and the resultant elevation of style.[45] Reynolds reflects,

> IF we suppose a view of nature represented with all the truth of the *camera obscura*, and the same scene represented by a great Artist, how little and mean will the one appear in comparison of the other, where no superiority is supposed from the choice of the subject.[46]

He argues that the theatre, 'which is said *to hold the mirror up to nature* comprehends both those ideas'.[47] He continues to draw a parallel between the lower forms of drama, like comedy and farce, and the 'inferior style of Painting', as the 'more naturally it is represented, the better'. However, he argues that there is something of a transformation in the concept of imitation as one progresses, and that higher forms appear

> to aim no more at imitation, so far as it belongs to any thing like deception, or to expect that the spectators should think that the events there represented are really passing before them, than Raffaelle in his Cartoons, or Poussin in his Sacraments, expected it to be believed, even for a moment, that what they exhibited were real figures.[48]

Reynolds indirectly compares the fine arts to literature by invoking the *ut pictura poesis* analogy. However, this comparison is meant to illustrate his belief that it is this one-dimensional understanding of imitation that is responsible for false criticism. He observes that 'FOR want of this distinction, the world is filled with false criticism'. The examples of false criticism offered by Reynolds reflect his concern

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[45] See Reynolds, *Discourses*, 237.
[46] See Reynolds, *Discourses*, 237.
[47] See Reynolds, *Discourses*, 238.
[48] See Reynolds, *Discourses*, 238.

that this understanding of imitation has diverted attention away from important considerations such as the intention of the artist. He writes that 'Raffaelle is praised for naturalness and deception', which he argues he 'certainly has not accomplished, and as certainly never intended', and another example of Garrick, praised by Fielding, who included in one of his novels 'an ignorant man, mistaking Garrick's representation of a scene in Hamlet, for reality'.[49] Reynolds's comments to some extent anticipate the later misreading of artistic conventions by literary critics or those without some background in the field.

With respect to imitation, Reynolds seems caught between two positions. On the one hand, he is fully aware of the connection between imitation and external nature, and on the other, he is aware of how this is subject to being understood in simplistic terms, as something closer to deception than genius. For Reynolds, this more simplistic sense of the term derives from ancient philosophy, as in *Discourse VIII* he argues that 'WHEN such a man as Plato speaks of Painting as only an imitative art, and that our pleasure proceeds from observing and acknowledging the truth of the imitation, I think he misleads us by a partial theory'.[50] Reynolds argues that this view is lacking, and had lead to what he sees as ill-informed criticism. He claims that 'It is in this poor, partial, and so far, false, view of the art, that Cardinal Bembo has chosen to distinguish even Raffaelle himself' and that the 'same sentiment is adopted by Pope in his Epitaph on Sir Godfrey Kneller; and he turns the panegyrick solely on imitation , as it is a sort of deception'.[51] He argues that this 'strange idea' has been 'exploded' by the best critics, yet he knows 'that there is a disposition towards a perpetual recurrence to it, on account of its simplicity and superficial plausibility'.[52] In response to this, Reynolds argues that not only ought painting not

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[49] See Reynolds, *Discourses*, 238-239.
[50] See Reynolds, *Discourses*, 232.
[51] See Reynolds, *Discourses*, 232.
[52] See Reynolds, *Discourses*, 232.

be 'considered as an imitation, operating by deception', but that 'it is, and ought to be, in many points of view, and strictly speaking, no imitation at all of external nature'.[53] For Reynolds, imitation does not merely shine a mirror in which the superficial shapes of external nature appear, but rather enables one to penetrate that mirror and move beyond the surface image. This seems to bolster his support for an ideal theory of art based on a more comprehensive understanding of imitation rather than on the more limited view of imitation as a superficial representation or resemblance. Of the critic's dependence upon this sense of the term Reynolds asks, 'Is not art, he may say, an imitation of nature? Must he not therefore who imitates her with the greatest fidelity, be the best artist?'.[54] This is not a credible foundation for criticism of the arts in Reynolds's view.

Reynolds addresses the issue of two strains of imitation more thoroughly in his discussion of imitation in an essay which appeared in the *Idler*:

> Amongst the painters, and the writers on painting, there is one maxim universally admitted and continually inculcated. 'Imitate nature' is the invariable rule; but I know none who have explained in what manner this rule is to be understood; the consequence of which is, that every one takes it in the most obvious sense, that objects are represented naturally when they have such relief that they seem real. It may appear strange, perhaps, to hear this sense of the rule disputed; but it must be considered, that if the excellency of a painter consisted only in this kind of imitation, painting must lose its rank and be no longer considered as a liberal art, and sister to poetry...[55]

Interestingly, Reynolds refers not only to the painter, but also to those 'writers on painting' who continually repeat and attempt to put into practice this maxim, 'Imitate nature'. Reynolds fears that if this definition of imitation were to persist, the credibility of the art would be compromised, and painting would be unable to assert her place as the sister of poetry. Reynolds believes that the artist should not only be an 'imitator' of nature, but that he should also 'be as necessarily an imitator of the

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[53] See Reynolds, *Discourses*, 232.
[54] See Reynolds, *Discourses*, 124.
[55] Sir Joshua Reynolds, "The Grand Style of Painting", *The Idler*, No. 79 (20 October 1759), repr. in Elledge, ii: 831-832.

works of other painters...'.[56] His defense of imitation is largely a response to those who believe that their art comes 'all from native power' and 'owe nothing to another'. That this 'imaginary dignity is naturally heightened by a supercilious censure of the low, the barren, the groveling, the servile imitator'.[57]

In an effort to bring the practice of art back 'down to earth', Reynolds claims that it is the prerogative of the artist to take recourse to imitation not only in the early stages of his study, but he is 'of opinion, that the study of other masters, which I here call imitation, may be extended throughout our whole lives, without any danger of the inconveniencies with which it is charged, of enfeebling the mind, or preventing us from giving that original air which every work ought to have'.[58] Thus, for Reynolds, imitation is essentially critical in the broad sense in which we understand the term today. He continues that 'even genius, at least what generally is so called, is the child of imitation. But as this appears to be contrary to the general opinion, I must explain my position before I enforce it'. For Reynolds, genius is a flexible concept which changes as the arts progress, and becomes ever more refined as a result. He argues that genius is indeed grounded, that is, manifestations of genius are so because they follow particular rules. For Reynolds, genius is 'the child of imitation'.[59] Aware of the dominant view of imitation as deception, or copy, he claims that many students might find it 'humiliating to think that they may not be true students of the art unless they are great imitators'.[60] At the end of Discourse VI, Reynolds acknowledges the 'judgment and discretion' of the students. He acknowledges that they have 'arrived to that period, when you have a right to think for yourselves, and to presume that every man is fallible; to study the masters with a suspicion, that great men are not always

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[56] See Reynolds, *Discourses*, 95.
[57] See Reynolds, *Discourses*, 95.
[58] See Reynolds, *Discourses*, 96.
[59] See Reynolds, *Discourses*, 96.
[60] See Reynolds, *Discourses*, 96.

exempt from great faults; to criticise, compare, and rank their works in your own estimation, as they approach to, or recede from, that standard of perfection which you have formed in your own minds, but which those masters themselves, it must be remembered, have taught you to make...'.[61] Reynolds's emphasis on imitation as a means of instruction recalls the operation of the term in classical rhetoric and Platonic philosophy. Yet it also points to his concern about the professionalization of the art, both with respect to the painter, and those entrusted with the critical explication and judgment of his work. Reynolds's identification of connoisseurs as part of that apparatus of false taste and false criticism demonstrates that his was one of many voices engaged in a larger dialogue.

As the examination of Reynolds's approach to imitation indicates, reading visual texts within the context of the 'denial of representation' as the pivotal moment in the transition from neo-classicism to romanticism, neglects important differences in the perception and practice of imitation within either discipline. This is not to say that no such 'denial' or 'refusal' took place, only that our understanding of the effects and consequences of this denial of imitation in modes of making upon its role in modes of response has been unfairly forced into the terms of the traditional analogy. For example, as Melville and Readings point out, the breaking of the mimetic analogy occurred at different times and in different terms for each art. Whereas for literature, the 'sundering of the rhetorical unity of the visual and textual in favour of the acknowledgement of a radical difference between the two modes' is played out in relation to romanticism, for the visual arts, the 'same break appears to unfold at the limits of the Baroque as a new radicalism in the ongoing competition of colour and design'.[62] According to this new model, 'the terms of rhetoric are harnessed to the work of colour in order to claim a non-textual specificity for painting, as if the task

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[61] See Reynolds, *Discourses*, 112.
[62] See Melville, *Vision & Textuality*, 9.

were to recover a sense of the rhetorical that refused not only Plato's condemnation but also Aristotle's literary recovery and domestication of it'.[63]

This difference in timing that marks the breaking of the mimetic analogy in literature and art history is significant, as it indicates that those writing on art were already grappling with the implications of this break in attempts to shape a more specialized disciplinary language, -- one that might demonstrate a degree of autonomy from literary critical models to reflect that which color had achieved from design. Prior to this 'break', there was a strong correspondence between the 'rules' or principles guiding the practice of painting and those guiding the articulation of one's response to it. This link was formalized by French academicians, who looked to classical literary theory as a means of grounding both the practice of painting and writing about it. As Samuel Holt Monk points out, French academicians drew upon this tradition in creating a body of rules which stressed 'the deification of the ancients, the pursuit of ideal beauty as the true imitation of nature, the search for general truth and the consequent distrust of the particular or accidental (resulting in the preference of form to color)' among others, all of which are 'expressions of ideas that are familiar in the criticism and creation of poetry'.[64] These values underpinned the neo-classical hierarchy of the arts, according to which efforts that reflected the 'intellectual qualities in the artist' such as history painting, were placed above those that did not – those that required only a 'skilled hand and perceptive eye' such as landscape or still-life painting'.[65]

While the practice of writing about art in England was based largely on the texts prepared by French academicians, as Carol Gibson-Wood points out, there was a

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[63] See Melville, *Vision & Textuality*, 9.
[64] Samuel Holt Monk, *The Sublime. A Study of Critical Theories in Eighteenth-Century England* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1960), 166.
[65] Carol Gibson-Wood, *Jonathan Richardson: Art Theorist of the English Enlightenment* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 11.

marked discrepancy between the inflexible approach to rules found within some French academic texts, and the ever increasing popularity of the effects of color. The emphasis on color began to destabilize the hierarchical ordering so fundamental to the neo-classical vision of art, in that it drew attention away from the subject-matter of the picture to the manner of its execution, most notably the effects produced by the mixing of colors and the method of handling areas of light and dark upon the canvas. This instability, in turn, lead to a sense of disjunction with respect to the traditional terms used in art criticism and the new terms of its painterly practice. As Peter David Funnell points out, while classical values encapsulated in notions of the 'grand style' were continually referred to in writing on art, the 'art market suggests that preferences in painting ran in a contrary direction'.[66] This was observed by William Buchanan in 1803 when he wrote to James Irvine that the public taste is for 'lively compositions' and 'fine colouring'.[67] He continues, 'It is the flowing and mellow-toned pictures of Titian, Rubens, Vandyck, Guido, Carracci & the like that pleases all—pictures too of bravura and breadth of light... since English collectors 'must have effect' in the pictures they purchase – or they cannot feel them'.[68]

The popular preference for color in painting marked the beginning of the 'color-design controversy' and signalled the need for a critical language capable of judging the effects of color within the context of the picture as a whole, and, in doing so, reigning in the excesses of popular taste. As Martin Archer Shee observed, this was made all the more difficult by the willingness of artists to abandon their traditional education and pander to the demands of public taste:

> ...the beauties of form, character, and composition are neither so interesting to the public, nor so much cultivated by the painter, as other qualities of art, which must be considered of an inferior description. Colouring and chiaro-

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[66] Peter David Funnell, "Richard Payne Knight 1751-1824: Aspects of Aesthetics and Art Criticism in Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Century England," diss., Oxford University, Michaelmas, 1985, 49.
[67] William Buchanan to James Irvine, 1803. Quoted in Funnell, "Richard Payne Knight", 50.
[68] William Buchanan to James Irvine, 1803. Quoted in Funnell, "Richard Payne Knight", 50.

> scuro, force and execution, are merits more popular with the one, and consequently more studied by the other. The Ideal is subordinate to the Mechanical; Rembrandt is more *felt* than Raphael; and although in painting, and in music, the taste of the Italian school is always spoken of with rapture by the dilettanti of both arts, it nevertheless appears to have made but little real progress amongst us.[69]

Shee, of course, represents the concerns of Royal Academicians who distrusted not only those artists who exploited this popular taste, but also the connoisseurs who acted, to a large extent, as their brokers. His remarks reveal a troubling gap between the qualities which ought to form the basis for the judgment of a finished painting (form, character and composition) with the elevation of qualities not so much understood by the public, but rather *felt* by them. In italicizing this word, he draws attention perhaps to the frequency of its use as a means of justifying either one's appreciation of, or indeed purchase of, a picture. The importance of vision in the making of and judgement of painting is, in turn, overcome by the sheer force of language, as Shee draws attention to the volubility of the 'dilettanti', who speak of the Italian school 'with rapture', but whose words ring hollow.

Shee's comments are also informed by the opposition between Italian and Dutch painting, in terms of which the color-design controversy was argued. As Funnell points out, each style was underpinned by a different perception of imitation. Those favouring the Italian school were regarded as 'idealists', a group who 'reject imitation entirely'. A painter looking to the Italian school was thought to consult only 'the model in his mind and triumphs in the dignified pursuit of the poetical and sublime'.[70] In contrast, those who favoured the Dutch school were considered 'naturalists', a group who 'depend entirely on imitation'. A painter looking to the Dutch school was seen as one who 'copies closely the model in his eye and congratulates himself on the possession of Truth and nature'.[71] These two poles were

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[69] Martin Archer Shee, *Elements of Art* (1809), quoted in Funnell, "Richard Payne Knight", 50.
[70] See Funnell, "Richard Payne Knight", 55.
[71] See Funnell, "Richard Payne Knight", 55.

represented by Michelangelo and Rembrandt respectively, the former of which would be invoked by Benjamin Robert Haydon and the latter by Richard Payne Knight. While Shee himself recommends moderation between the two, these poles represent the difficulty that changing notions of imitation posed not only to those making art, but also those wishing to comment upon it. This controversy reveals a notion of imitation that was not fixed within the prescribed boundaries of 'copy', but one that was evolving in response to the demands of painting in particular.

It was this context that shaped the response of other voices to the problems of false criticism and the lack of a credible language in which to write about art. Just as Reynolds was experimenting with an understanding of imitation that was more flexible, and which included a non-representation based dimension, satirists drew upon imitation in its more conventional function as a practical critical tool, in publishing parodies that pointed out the deficiencies of established languages for speaking about the arts. While Reynolds reflected on the necessity of a conceptual shift in imitation, the concept was used on a far more practical level in drawing attention to the critical abuses which it, ironically, supported taken in its neo-classical guise. In this respect, imitation as a critical tool was turned upon itself.

The satirical verses that follow seem to challenge the idea of imitation as illusion, as a new power is granted the eye – not merely to measure or detach the 'real' from the 'rendered', but rather, to see (and appreciate) that which is rendered in its own terms. These verses also reveal an increased sense of the importance of the eye in its close observation of the subject and structure of the painting, even as viewers continue to speak or write about art in traditional terms that seem to have lost their value. Through drawing on imitation as a critical tool, satirists were able to use imitation as a means of pointing out the gaps between that inherited language and its dissociation from the interpretive models meant to inform it.

Satirists also played on the connection between painting and poetry, but used it to subvert the nobility of that connection, through creating parallels between the ability of color to distract or 'trap' the eyes, and the attracting power of the 'puff'. For example, in Robert Lloyd's 'The Puff. A Dialogue Between the Bookseller and Author', the appeal that the title ought to have is described in terms of the attractive power of color.[72] In this dialogue, the bookseller attempts to *persuade* the author that his work would be well served by several embellishments:

> BOOKSELLER. "Museum, sir! That's not enough.
> New works, we know, require a Puff;
> A title to entrap the eyes,
> And catch the reader by surprize:
> As gaudy signs, which hang before
> The tavern or the alehouse door,
> Hitch every passer's observation,
> Magnetic in their invitation (1-8).

One can imagine the Bookseller gesturing to imaginary signs above the door, as the rhythm of his sales-pitch penetrates the author's ear. In this passage, Lloyd draws attention to the way in which the eye was used as a means of distracting one from the substance of the words. The 'title' is given a visual character, in that it is compared to 'gaudy signs' above the tavern door, which draw customers inside, able to 'Hitch every passer's observation,/ Magnetic in their invitation'. Lloyd implicitly comments upon the strength of this visual dimension as a sales tool in the Bookseller's observation that 'Men, women, houses, horses, books,/ All borrow credit from their looks./ Externals have the gift of striking,/ And lure the fancy into liking' (11-14). This is emphasized further in the bookseller's attempt to persuade the author to 'enrich' his book with a frontispiece, arguing 'there's no harm in some parade' (184, 36). Such measures were intended to persuade the public to make a purchase based on the appeal of the eye, rather than upon their understanding of the words. The power

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[72] Robert Lloyd, "The Puff. A Dialogue Between the Bookseller and Author", *The Poetical Works* vol. i (1774).

of the image in this context (as magnetic to the eye) takes on an added dimension when considered in light of common notions of the power or 'enchantment' of color in painting.

Satire was a crucial weapon not only in commenting upon the power of the image or the eye within the book trade, but also in the art trade, as a means of checking the arrogance and inflated posturing of the connoisseur. The connoisseur was well known for the employment of his 'quizzing glass' with which he carefully examined (often with exacting and exaggerated scrutiny), the details of a painting. Many satirists juxtaposed the narrow scope of the quizzing glass with the connoisseur's tendency to describe works of art in the most general language and terms. Numerous examples may be found not only in the prose, but also the poetry of the period. For example, in a poem by James Robertson called 'The Connoisseur' and published in his *Poems on several occasions* (1773), Robertson begins with a description of the connoisseur and his quizzing glass.[73] The connoisseur examines a painting which has received many compliments from 'the *Crowd*':

> His glass first peeps thro' with an air,
> (True *Connoisseurs* short-sighted are)
> The painting carelessly survey'd,
> And, when inform'd 'twas *English* made,
> Thus to an elbow-friend, with look
> Oracularly cynic, spoke;--- (11-16)

Robertson emphasizes the eye as the token characteristic of the connoisseur, but one which is not functioning properly -- as an eye that does not truly *see*. This is evident in the cursory glance which the connoisseur gives the picture, which has no bearing on his judgment – that having already been determined by the fact that the picture finds favour with the crowd (against which the connoisseur would like to be distinguished) and that it is English-made. It is perhaps worthwhile to note that the

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[73] James Robertson, "The Connoisseur", *Poems on Several Occasions* (1773).

connoisseur's recourse to his quizzing glass and the presence of the 'elbow friend' mentioned above also appear in a number of prints that depict exhibition viewers in the eighteenth-century. According to Matheson, the action of reading the exhibition catalogue was one means of differentiating the qualified viewer from the general spectator, differentiating between 'those who possess a connoisseurial background and others who do not'.[74] The high status of the connoisseur was reflected in both his reliance on his *eye* (as emphasized by the quizzing glass) and on verbal, rather than written modes of communication. Matheson traces the appearance of this figure in prints such as Richard Earlom's mezzotint after Charles Brandoin's *The Exhibition of the Royal Academy of Painting in the Year 1771*. In this print, there is a marked difference between the connoisseur, poised with his quizzing glass and nose against the picture, and the general spectator who clutches an exhibition catalogue'.[75] The quizzing glass, Matheson points out, seems to magnify the 'connoisseur's critical and searching scrutiny'.[76]

We get a better sense of the weakness of the connoisseur's eye (despite his use of the glass) when measured against language again in Robertson's poem:

> "Sure never was performance seen
> "More gothic, tasteless, lifeless, mean:
> "Painting!---'Tis canvass spoil'd---Oh, gad!
> "Tis daubing!---Execrable!---Sad!
> "No colouring! keeping!---And such *Clare-*
> "*Obscure!*---All *Englise!*---All *Barbare!* (17-22)

These remarks are made with conviction – they seem to be exclaimed rather than noted, the increasing number of exclamation points seemingly reflecting an increase in the speaker's volume. In this passage, Robertson ridicules what appear to be stock negative terms, 'gothic', 'tasteless', 'lifeless', 'mean', 'daubing', and refers to the

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[74] C. S. Matheson, "'A Shilling Well Laid Out': The Royal Academy's Early Public", *Art on the Line: The Royal Academy Exhibitions at Somerset House 1780-1836*, ed. David H. Solkin (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 41.
[75] see Matheson, "Royal Academy", 41.
[76] see Matheson, "Royal Academy", 42.

lack of 'colouring' and 'keeping'. These terms remain unsupported by reason, principle or judgment, and tend to emphasize the faults of the work before them. The connoisseur's authority is, in a sense, called into question as the conversational quality of the phrases makes it impossible to determine who the speaker in this instance may be, as the elbow friend might merely be echoing the opinion of the connoisseur. This series of exclamations consists of faults only, as the connoisseur fails to consider or at least identify a single merit of the work before him.

Likewise, the act of viewing is overwhelmed by the act of speaking in the following passage:

> "And how unnaturally shows
> "That ill-made fly on that vile rose!
> "A fly! 'tis no more like"---When quick,
> Pointing toward the fly his stick,
> To prove his criticism true,
> Away the little Insect flew. (23-28)

In these lines Robertson comments on the folly of the connoisseur's concentration on the smallest details of a picture, in this instance, his pointing to the 'ill-made' fly which then proceeded to fly away. In addition to criticizing the connoisseur's inability to *see* the whole of the picture, Robertson also points to the connoisseur as one who knows nothing of nature, and therefore is incapable of judging any attempt at the imitation of nature. The connoisseur remarks on the 'unnatural' appearance of the fly, only to find that the fly was indeed of nature's own making.

Similar criticisms of the connoisseur are mounted by George Alexander Stevens in his poem 'The Connoisseur' which appeared in his *Songs, comic and satyrical* (1788). Stevens criticizes the connoisseur from within the connoisseur's own notion of the parallel between genius and criticism:[77]

> To excel in *Bon Ton* both as genius and critic,
> And be quite the thing, Sir, *immense scientific*;

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[77] George Alexander Stevens, "The Connoisseur", *Songs, Comic and Satyrical* (1788).

> On all exhibitions give sentence by guess,
> With shrugs and stolen phrases that sentence express.(1-4)

For Stevens, the great bridge between genius and criticism, is built of nothing more sturdy than '*Bon Ton'* for the connoisseur. He plays on the word 'sentence', which conveys a judgment, but one pronounced without benefit of a verbal sentence. This sentence is delivered 'by guess', not based on evidence grounded in complete statements but rather backed by 'stolen phrases'. Stevens writes that the connoisseur 'need not know science, repeat but the terms' calling to mind the repetition of the terms of Reynolds's Italian Gentleman and Johnson's caricature, Dick Minim. Stevens's criticism of the connoisseur is underpinned by his broader conviction that the false criticism practiced by the connoisseur had its roots in the selection of faults and beauties. For Stevens, the abuse of this critical model in particular, threatened all disciplines, from literature to music to art to science:

> As to *Shakespeare*, or *Purcell*, why you may allow
> They were *well-enough once ---but they will not do now.*
> Admit *Newton*'s clever, just clever,--- that's all; (10-12)

The stature of such elevated figures is undermined by the close scrutiny of the connoisseur, whose judgments are not confined to painting but extend well beyond it.

However, later satirical treatments of the connoisseur reveal something of a reversal, as the power of language to contain the eye is reduced; language becomes a 'roar' while the eye is given a new power, one derived from the concentrated gaze. For example, in his satires, John Wolcot seems to pick up on the disjuncture between the power of the eye to really *look* at pictures, and the language used to communicate this new way of seeing. As Wolcot points out, while the eye has found a new focus, the language that clothes it is still the tired language of the *ut pictura poesis* tradition. In 'Ode XI' of his *Farewell Odes*, Wolcot's opening description of the poem places Peter Pindar in a position of critical authority which undermines that of the connoisseur: '*Peter talketh sensibly and knowingly ---recommendeth it to Artists to*

prefer Pictures for their Merit---Discovereth musical Knowledge, and showeth that he not only hath kept Company with Fid-lers, but Fiddle-makers---He satirizeth the Pseudo-cognoscenti---Praiseth his ingenious Neighbour Sir Joshua'.[78]

He begins by suggesting that the excessive veneration given to the Old Masters might be challenged by this act of looking:

> Be not impos'd on by a name;
> But bid your eye the picture's merit trace:
> Poussin at times in outline may be lame,
> And Guido's angels destitute of grace (*Farewell*, 1-4).

In these lines, Pindar refuses to indulge in the veneration of a *name*. Poussin's 'outline' may be 'lame' and Guido's 'angels' may not always be graceful. The 'eye' in this instance is asked to trace the merit of individual pictures rather than repeat oft used and generalized expressions. The eye is placed in opposition to the mouth, which is usually aligned with physical acts like 'devouring', but in this instance, utters unsubstantiated general praise. Importantly, this is not a return to 'beauty and blemish' mode, but a way of reining in the excessive veneration of the Old Masters practiced by the connoisseurs. It is, in a sense, inviting a more sophisticated form of response and engagement; calling for an alternative that is grounded in the picture itself, rather than carried by the artist's name alone.

This is also present in 'Ode XI' in the first volume of *Lyric Odes to the Royal Academicians* (1816) in which Wolcot emphasizes the incompatibility between noise and the silence that accompanies the work of the eye.[79] He signals the connection between noise and fashion in the opening lines in which he writes:

> One year the pow'rs of fashion rule
> In favour of the Roman school;
> Then hey, for Drawing! Raphael and Poussin.

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[78] John Wolcot, "Farewell Odes, for MDCCLXXXVI: Ode XI", *The Works of Peter Pindar*, vol. i (1816).
[79] John Wolcot, "Lyric Odes to the Royal Academicians, for MDCCLXXXII: Ode XI", *The Works of Peter Pindar*, vol. i (1816).

The following year, the Flemish schools shall strike;
Then hey for col'ring---Rubens and Vandyke" (*Lyric*, 1-6)

In these lines, Wolcot also alludes to the flippant and changing emphasis on either line or coloring reminiscent of the larger color design controversy which Funnell argues underpinned the connoisseurial manner of addressing the art. Fashion itself is depicted as a crowd – cheering for one side and then the other. This is emphasized in later lines, where Wolcot refers to 'Fashion's roar':

Be not impos'd upon by Fashion's roar---
Fashion too often makes a monstrous noise,
Bids us, a fickle jade, like fools adore
The Poorest trash, the meanest toys" (*Lyric*, 7-10).

The rumble of this 'roar' can't be silenced, and moves the public to action in moving them to 'adore' unworthy works. The roar is more coercive than persuasive. Such noise is again invoked by the 'bustle' of the 'gang of thieves', the connoisseurs or picture dealers who make distracting noises enabling them to pick pockets more easily ('With greater ease your purse to take'). Such thieves are likened to 'Fashion' who 'Sets up a howl enough to stun a stone,/ And fairly picks the pocket of your brain,/ That is, if any brain you chance to own'.(14-16) These images of primitive noise (roaring and howling) contrast with the silence of the eyes, and images of nature as old and quiet:

Carry your eyes with you, where-e'er you go---
For not to trust to them, is t'abuse 'em;
As Nature gave them t'ye, you ought to know
The wise old lady meant that you should *use* 'em;
And yet, what thousands, to our vast surprise,
Of pictures judge by other people's eyes! (*Lyric*, 17-22)

Wolcot criticizes the public for relying on the judgments of others rather than on the power of their own eyes. In truly 'looking' at the interplay of elements within the picture, viewers should not be distracted by the 'verbal' spectacle around them.

He suggests that the veneration for 'pasteboard rocks and iron seas', 'torrents wild of still stone water', 'brooms and broomsticks meant for trees' is rooted in the

profit which accompanies the sale of 'puffed' paintings (*Farewell*, 19-21). He suggests that even the great artists have pencils which 'may have blunder'd', but these might still bring 'the blest possessor many a hundred' (*Farewell*, 23-24). He also implies that the function of the connoisseur as someone who can verify the authorship of such paintings lies in question:

> on each wise *cognoscente* ass,
> Who shall for hours on paint and sculpture din ye,
> A person with facility may pass
> Rigaud for Raphael---Bacon for Bernini:
> Or, little as an oven to Vesuvius,
> Will Tyler for Palladio or Vitruvius! (*Farewell,* 37-42)

The connoisseur plays the paintings and the artists for money like a fiddler. Yet his is a monotonous tune, as the fact that one may pass 'Rigaud for Raphael' shows that the same kinds of words may also be used in responding to two very distinct styles. This demonstrates the gap between this language and the demands upon it made by the material surface of the canvas.

The tendency to neglect this context in image-text studies, especially in treating the denial of imitation as the transitional point in that historical progression from imitation to expression, is to neglect the important transformations imitation underwent as a result of this disciplinary process. The cleaving to a traditional language, and the limitations of that language emphasized by the satirist indicate the extent of the crisis in criticism that was taking shape within the discipline. There was certainly a palpable lack of an authoritative and meaningful language with which to speak about the arts, and with which to confront the 'false' criticism of the would-be connoisseur. While the satirists undermined this inherited discourse, their intent was not to put forward an alternative lexicon sensitive to shifts in the making of art, or capable of shaping the viewer's experience of the pictures in a gallery in a more practical manner. This issue would be taken up by artists and 'real' connoisseurs who made important steps in shaping a practical critical approach to the fine arts – one that

mediates the 'imitative' quality defined through the picture (through the 'specific Image', as it were), and focuses instead on that other aspect of imitation emphasized by Reynolds, one based on non-representational properties. For early nineteenth-century artists and connoisseurs, the necessity of description as a gesture to the work would have to be mediated by a new emphasis on a critical approach to a work of art rooted in its principles, rather than its effects.

Chapter Four

Description, Criticism and the Connoisseur

In the previous chapter I argued that our understanding of the role of imitation in art criticism has been limited by traditional notions of periodization that rely on the 'breaking' of the mimetic foundation of painting and poetry both in modes of making and response. This has encouraged an understanding of the development of art criticism in terms of the 'word-image' opposition generated by the *ut pictura poesis* analogy and the breaking of that analogy, rather than in terms of the possibilities and limitations inherent in the use of imitation itself as an interpretive model. Unlike models based on 'word-image' oppositions, in which the 'language of paint' is narrowly defined in terms of its non-verbal qualities (i.e. color and line), the imitation-based model suggests that the 'language of paint' can be expanded to include a word-based language that is specifically designed and adapted to the unique demands of its object. Thus, as opposed to interpretive models based on analogy, translation and conversion that follow from the word-image opposition, the imitation-based model permits an important shift from that 'too exclusive attention to words and pictures' observed by Eaves to tensions *within the word in the interpretation of the image*.[1]

In the preceding chapter I explored two manifestations of this tension: the first was that tension between an inherited discourse and the instinctive need to develop new vocabularies and interpretive models that reflected the unique demands of the art object. The second was the tension implicit in the use of poetry to challenge a critical method based on likening a picture *to* a poem. In this chapter I would like to explore another manifestation of this tension, one revealed by continuing to rethink the word-

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[1] Eaves, "Sister Arts", 268.

image opposition in terms of a single medium rather than in terms of medium-based differences. Thinking in this way encourages an understanding of the role of representation within the 'corpus of remarks' about painting in terms of two different kinds of lexical and syntactical orientations to the image, orientations identified in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth-centuries as 'descriptive' and 'critical'.

This shift of focus from the word-image opposition to the tensions that appear within language itself is by no means new, but rather redirects attention to that second and no less important distinction made by Lessing in the *Laocoön*, a distinction that Michael Fried refers to as his 'masterstroke'.[2] Spurred by false criticism and the misapplication of the *ut pictura poesis* analogy in the judgement and creation of art, Lessing not only made the familiar distinction between painting and poetry based on differentials of narrative and space, but also the perhaps less familiar distinction between 'language as a medium of communication and language as a medium of poetry'.[3] Lessing argued that though language, like painting, is capable of 'depicting the corporeal whole according to its parts', this can be achieved only when language is used as a medium of communication, not as a medium of poetry, as 'the illusion, which is the principal object of poetry, is wanting in such verbal description of bodies'.[4] Lessing explains,

> ...where illusion is *not* the object and where the writer appeals only to the understanding of the reader and aims only at conveying distinct, and, insofar as this is possible, complete ideas, these descriptions of bodies, excluded from poetry, are quite in place; and not only the prose writer, but also the didactic poet (for where he becomes didactic he ceases to be a poet) can use them to great advantage.[5]

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[2] Michael Fried, forward, *Laocoön: an Essay on the Limits of Painting and Poetry*, by Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, translated, with an introduction and notes by Edward Allen McCormick (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984), vii.
[3] See Fried, forward, *Laocoön*, vii.
[4] See Lessing, *Laocoön*, 88.
[5] See Lessing, *Laocoön*, 88.

For Lessing, a writer motivated by the desire to produce an 'illusion' uses language as a medium of poetry, while those motivated by the desire to impart 'distinct, and...complete ideas' use language as a medium of communication. By reassigning descriptions of this type to language as communication (where they can be used 'to great advantage'), Lessing preserves poetic illusion while at the same time unconsciously drawing attention to another site of potential tension.

This tension emerges not so much from the presence of description within poetry (which was Lessing's principle aim), but rather from the role of description in modes of communication – modes of imparting 'clear and distinct ideas' of which criticism is but one manifestation. Lessing was clear in his argument that meticulous description compromised the 'illusion' at which the poet aims; what is not as clear, however, is the effect of descriptions of this sort on language as a 'medium of communication', where communication is motivated by critical, rather than creative, objectives. The question that emerges is whether description compromises the aim of imparting 'clear and...distinct ideas' in criticism in the same way it compromises the aim of 'illusion' in poetry. Or, posed in other terms, whether (sympathetic) description compromises or at least distracts one from the carefully crafted illusion of distance so essential to maintaining the credibility of critical judgment.

This question has remained unanswered largely because of the tendency to focus on the first of the distinctions in the *Laocoön*. As Michael Fried observes, the 'influence of the first distinction upon subsequent esthetic theorizing has been prodigious, while the terms of the latter distinction (though not its specific content) have haunted poetic theory ever since'.[6] Fried's use of the term 'haunting' is significant, as it reflects a presence that subverts poetic theories based on word-image oppositions. As opposed to most contemporary critical models that tend to consider

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[6] See Fried, forward to *Laocoön*, vii.

description *as* criticism, (for example, studies that focus on the interpretive power of description, or its critical characteristics), this model allows us to consider the role of description not as an independent or semi-independent entity (such as in ekphrasis, or the construction of 'word-pictures'), but rather as functioning within an explicitly critical context (a context comprised of a variety of 'languages' of which description is one), and serving an explicitly critical objective.

The full range of possibilities implicit in thinking about that 'corpus of remarks about painting' in this way has, to some extent, been tempered by the tendency in contemporary criticism to think of 'language as poetry' in terms of ekphrasis and 'language as communication' in terms of aesthetics, thus reflecting the distinction made by Stephen Melville of the two narratives of the story of word and image – representation and the refusal of representation, or aesthetic. This perspective relies on recourse to the 'word-image' opposition, according to which, as Jacqueline Lichtenstein argued, word-pictures are the manifestation of rhetoric most readily explored. This is at the expense of those other, perhaps more elusive aspects of rhetorical performance (those consisting in gesture, tonal quality, the disconnected remark, the use of quotation or poetic devices) that work jointly to reflect not only the way in which the critic has articulated those aspects of the picture that gave rise to his judgment (i.e. that reflect his initial experience of it), but also the way in which, crafting his argument, the critic *uses* the picture in substantiating that judgment.

For example, in his article, 'Speaking for Pictures: the Rhetoric of Art Criticism', James Heffernan explores the language of art criticism in terms of medium-based differences and the word-image opposition. He argues that while the language of art criticism is essentially a rhetorical performance, the images and descriptions contained therein are always interpretive. Heffernan claims that his

> ...aim is not to sketch a history of art criticism or tell the story of its 'progress' but rather to demonstrate that its language is always rhetorical, that its ostensibly descriptive moves are always interpretive, that it seeks to regulate

> what we see, that its pictorial 'facts' as well as its stories are designed by an interpreter who is cast as the verbal representative of visual art. Neither the advent of reproductions nor the rise of abstract art fundamentally alters the language of art criticism.[7]

In this passage Heffernan argues that the interpretive function of rhetoric in art criticism is secure despite the 'refusal of representation' that marks the advent of abstract art, and the widespread availability of pictorial reproductions. However, in making a case for the interpretive value of such 'rhetorical performances', Heffernan fails to consider whether this performance, like the colour of Ion's robe, distracts the spectator from the reasoned critical argument. This is borne out by his conflation of interpretive 'stories' and pictorial 'facts', which together shape that 'verbal representation of visual representation'. There is a like conflation of the artist and the interpreter, as the interpreter is not only a 'representative' but also a 'designer' in a sense, one who partakes in the 'creation' not of the painter, but the verbal picture.

For Heffernan, this conflation of description and interpretation, fact and story, regulation and design constitutes the aim of the critic:

> While reproductions constitute a rival form of representation and a visual test of the interpreter's words, the critic aims precisely to make us see the picture – whether original or reproduced – through a verbal frame. Even when abstract art threatens to silence the critic by detonating the representational ground of visual art, the very absence of recognizable forms excites the critic's rhetorical powers and prompts new ways of telling stories about what pictures represent, new ways of verbally representing what they visually 'say'. From Philostratus to Steinberg, as will be shown, the act of speaking for pictures is above all a rhetorical performance.[8]

Heffernan's notion of 'rhetorical performance' can be interpreted as a 'representation' of the picture in two respects: in terms of pictorial representation and in terms of advocacy, in 'speaking for' the picture. In his use of the phrase 'verbal frame', Heffernan links representation to a metaphor deeply rooted in the *ut pictura poesis* tradition. His recourse to this tradition is further entrenched by his comment that the

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[7] See Heffernan, "Speaking for Pictures", 21.
[8] See Heffernan, "Speaking for Pictures", 21.

'threats' posed by non-representational art can be transformed into opportunities as the 'absence of recognizable forms excites the critic's rhetorical powers' in creating 'new ways of verbally representing what they visually "say"'. For Heffernan, the response to a work of art necessarily consists in its reiteration in a different medium. He goes one step further in conflating the roles of artist and critic through his use of the word 'excites', a term that calls to mind perhaps a less extreme manifestation of that 'spontaneous overflow' of powerful emotion that marks one element of the creative process for Romantic poets like Wordsworth.[9] The image (whether representational or not) excites the rhetorical powers of the critic into telling new stories about that image; like the artist, the critic also delivers a 'performance', but in an entirely different medium.

The notion of representation not in terms of pictorial representation, but advocacy, as 'speaking for' the picture is underpinned by an implicit sense of the primacy of the word within criticism. In arguing that pictures 'cannot interpret themselves', but must be 'spoken for', Heffernan minimizes, if not discounts altogether, the ability of visual art to critique itself. In doing so, he establishes language, rather than paint as the medium of criticism. Indeed, in the first line of the passage the image itself is relegated outside the boundaries of the interpretive text and posited as a *test* of the interpreter's words. In this respect, Heffernan defines the aim of the art critic as wanting to 'make us see the picture', rather than *use* the picture and the words in tandem. This is further entrenched by his suggestion that it is not so much the verbal 'reproduction' that rivals the materiality of the work itself, but rather its physical reproduction that becomes a 'rival' form of representation.

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[9] William Wordsworth, "Preface to the Lyrical Ballads", *Lyrical Ballads and Other Poems, 1797-1800*, ed. James Butler and Karen Green (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 744.

While Heffernan's argument certainly confirms the importance of representation in art criticism despite the 'refusal of representation' in modes of making, it is problematic when it comes to understanding the balance between different modes of representation and specific critical objectives within that 'corpus of remarks' about painting. For example, Heffernan's claim that art criticism must speak *for* pictures (presumably as their advocates and interpreters), conflicts with another function of art criticism which is the evaluation *of* those pictures. Art criticism is not just an *expression* of the critic's view of the picture, but also a *communication* to a specified audience. The critic's function, therefore, while sympathetic, must in some respects at least attempt an attitude of opposition. We must have a sense not only that the critic is speaking for the picture, or even 'speaking' it, but that he is also speaking *about* it.

Critics like Michael Baxandall and Karen Georgi have offered alternative ways of thinking about both the relationship between the word and the image, and the relationship between the 'word' and the 'word' in writing about painting. According to Baxandall, art criticism is perhaps better understood as a gesture towards its object rather than a depiction of it. This notion of gesture necessitates a sense of critical distance which is achieved through emphasizing the *presence* of the picture rather than the verbal recreation of it. He explains:

> ...in an art-critical description one is using the terms not absolutely; one is using them in tandem with the object, the instance. Moreover one is using them not informatively but demonstratively... What is determining for them is that, in art criticism or art history, the object is present or available – really, or in reproduction, or in memory, or (more remotely) as a rough visualization derived from knowledge of other objects of the same class.[10]

For Baxandall, descriptive language does not usurp the place of the image, replace the image, or attempt to create a rival image, but rather gives the image primacy of place.

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[10] Michael Baxandall, *Patterns of Intention* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 8.

The presence of the picture is emphasized by Baxandall's characterization of art criticism as *demonstrative* rather than informative. Importantly, the term 'demonstrative' contains a strong sense of physicality in terms of 'showing forth' or 'exhibiting in the physical sense of pointing out', but this in turn is given a specific context, a specific function. It is not pointing out for the sake of pointing out, but as a necessary part of making 'evident through reasoning, proving by argument, logical deduction or by 'practical proof'.[11] Rather like the relationship between diagrams and postulates in geometry, art criticism gestures toward a non-linguistic form which is an essential part of a language-based argument. This dual sense of 'demonstrative' echoes to some extent Lichtenstein's emphasis on that other part of rhetoric not rooted in 'word-pictures' but in gestures, in the motion of the hands, the expression of the face, or tonal gestures in spoken language that are non-translatable.

In allowing space for the picture, the term 'demonstrative' also reaffirms the distance which art criticism, as a gesture, traverses. Like a visual imitation of a visual work, art criticism depends upon the presence of the other, an image which, according to Baxandall, may be an original, a reproduction, the recollection of that original or even of works 'of the same class'. This indicates the importance of *visual* rather than *verbal* reference points even within a description of the work. For Baxandall, art criticism aims at helping the reader to 'see the picture', to use Heffernan's words, not through a 'verbal frame', but rather through a visual one.[12] Importantly, this visual framework is governed more by disciplinary than medium-based boundaries and is therefore capable of mediating a variety of discipline-specific languages, both painterly and verbal. For example, Baxandall argues that the real work of understanding the picture is not achieved by 'direct descriptive terms', which 'can

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[11] "Demonstration", *Oxford English Dictionary*, Compact Edition, 1979.
[12] See Heffernan, "Speaking for Pictures", 21.

cover very little of the interest one wishes to indicate'.[13] But rather, the onus is on the reader who must

> ...interpret them in a sophisticated and specialized way; he must supply a great deal in the way of mental comparison with other works of art, of experience of the previous use of such words in art criticism, and of general interpretive tact.[14]

Instead of getting the reader to *visualize* the image and rather than attempting to 'evoke the visual character of something never seen by [our] audience', the activity that the 'rhetoric' of art criticism engenders in the reader is far broader.[15] As Baxandall points out, the reader must cultivate an awareness of the distinct vocabulary that has been used to interpret this and other works, understand that lexical tradition and development within the discipline itself, and employ some degree of 'interpretive tact' – a skill learned through interdisciplinary application. He seems to suggest that the visual elements within the canvas can be used as fixed points through which one surveys the shifting landscape of the vocabularies and procedural models that have governed the interpretation of those points over time. Thus, in addition to making descriptive gestures that point out aspects of the individual work, formal gestures that reach deep within and beyond that work to other pictures or responses are also made.

Just as Baxandall offers an alternative means of thinking about the relationship between the word and image, so also does Karen Georgi offer an alternative means of thinking about the relationship between the different kinds of 'words' in the interpretation of the image. In her article, Georgi identifies two strains in the criticism of American art in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century, which she refers to as 'ekphrastic criticism' and 'formal criticism'. Ekphrastic criticism, she argues, is

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[13] Michael Baxandall, "The Language of Art Criticism", *The Language of Art History*, ed. Salim Kemal and Ivan Gaskell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 68.
[14] See Baxandall, "Language of Art Criticism", 68.
[15] See Baxandall, "Language of Art Criticism", 67.

> ...a mode of writing that tries to recreate in words the object of the painted representation for an absent viewer. Formal criticism, though not necessarily uninterested in conjuring the scene, concerns the representation and the ways – technical and stylistic devices, allusions to tradition – the painting attempts to convey its object, and its relative success in doing so.[16]

Like Heffernan, Georgi frames this distinction in terms of the inheritance of the word-image opposition, but there is one important difference. Whereas Heffernan's notion of 'rhetorical performance' was directed at the verbal representation of a *visual* representation, Georgi argues that ekphrastic criticism is an attempt to 'recreate in words the *object* of the painted representation', so that 'The painting vanishes'.[17] It is a means not of engaging with the picture as a picture, but engaging with the object *through* the picture. In this respect, ekphrastic criticism is not criticism at all, but a means of confirming the failure of the image to 'convey the totality of its own meaning', in this instance, nature.[18] This failure extends to ekphrasis itself, in that it 'steps in as if to speak for the picture', as if (in a reference to *ut pictura poesis*) to supplement the picture's failed attempt to convey the meaning of its object, but is unable to, as 'neither words nor the painting itself can convey the full meaning of nature'.[19]

The 'denial' of the image as the primary object of art criticism is echoed in Georgi's notion of formal criticism. Despite an emphasis on the materiality of the work, on technique, style, history and tradition, the image itself 'vanishes' in formal criticism just as it does in ekphrastic criticism. However, whereas in ekphrastic criticism the picture vanished leaving behind its object, in formal criticism the picture vanishes leaving behind the procedures for viewing it. In this respect, vision

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[16] Karen L. Georgi, "Making Nature Culture's Other: Nineteenth-century American Landscape Painting and Critical Discourse", *Word & Image*, vol. 19, no. 3 (July-September, 2003), 205.
[17] See Georgi, "Making Nature", 205.
[18] See Georgi, "Making Nature", 206.
[19] See Georgi, "Making Nature", 206.

displaces image as the emphasis falls on *how* one sees an object as opposed to what one sees within a picture. Georgi argues:

> Ekphrasis operates as a trope for the inability of signs and of representation to match or convey the completeness of nature. Formal criticism, by contrast, asserts the facility, competence, and mimetic ability of representation to recreate its object. Or, perhaps even more fundamentally, formal criticism implies that vision (like nature) itself can be submitted to the procedures of viewing painting.[20]

Again for Georgi the picture vanishes, leaving the procedures for viewing it intact. These 'procedures' are recorded and encoded in specific combinations of words and phrases. Although this language derives from the picture, it is not applied to the picture, but to natural objects as if they were a picture. It is, in some respects, the linguistic equivalent to the eighteenth-century 'Claude-glass'. Whereas the glass enabled the identification of natural scenes that observed the rules of art, the use of this formal language enables the articulation of the natural landscape in terms that confirm a certain distance between the critic and the object, such as in reference to the 'foreground' or 'vanishing point'.[21]

The important point to emerge from Georgi's study, however, is not the shift from image to object, or tension between 'culture and nature' articulated in terms of this shift, but more fundamentally the 'essential opposition yet integral proximity' of two different orientations to the image.[22] In an echo of Heffernan's conflation of the artist and interpreter, 'pictorial facts' and 'interpretive stories', Georgi argues that ekphrastic criticism and formal criticism are 'opposing critical tropes' that 'often occur seamlessly', are 'conflated' or 'remain invisible'.[23] This is reflected in the very designations 'ekphrastic criticism' and 'formal criticism' where the necessity of gesturing to the picture through description (which can range from representation-

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[20] See Georgi, "Making Nature", 207.
[21] See Georgi, "Making Nature", 205.
[22] See Georgi, "Making Nature", 207.
[23] See Georgi, "Making Nature", 204, 206.

based responses that consist of poetic or rhetorical devices to more narrative forms) is off-set by the need to regulate that description through imposing the distance necessary to achieving that critical aim: namely, speaking *about* the picture rather than *for* it.

Thus, 'ekphrastic criticism' and 'formal criticism' are not so much in 'opposition and proximity' to each other, as are the range of descriptive and critical elements *within* each of these types. The same holds true for other 'types' of art criticism, be it 'scientific criticism', 'journalistic criticism' or 'art writing'. Common to each of these is the tension between description and criticism, between the necessity of gesturing toward the painting and the communication of 'clear ideas' in relation to it. Emphasizing the presence of this tension within these 'types' allows a certain flexibility in thinking about that 'corpus of remarks about painting' in that it does not attempt to prescribe boundaries that are oftentimes precarious and difficult to uphold, especially as many 'types' (such as journalistic, scientific, formal, and ekphrastic) may be found within a single passage.

Moreover, there is an added advantage to using this distinction in looking at the 'corpus of remarks' about painting in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries because the tension between description and criticism was oftentimes phrased within those very terms. For example, in *The Annals of the Fine Arts*, a periodical founded by the architect and Royal Academician James Elmes, one finds headings such as 'Occasional, Descriptive and Critical Catalogue of the Collection of Pictures Painted by British Artists' and 'Descriptive and Critical Catalogues of the Most Splendid Collections of Works of Art in Great Britain'.[24] A broader sense of the grounds for this distinction is also provided in the following passage, found under the

[24] *The Annals of the Fine Arts*, vol. i (1817), 242, 370.

heading 'A collection of Pictures of the Italian and Spanish Schools of Painting' in which the contributor writes:

> It would be superfluous and arrogant, to criticize these deified productions of the pencil; to describe them we have not room, and to select, if by preference, would be almost impossible; we must therefore refer our readers to the catalogue.[25]

In this passage, the contributor's remarks center around three verbs: to 'criticize', to 'describe' and to 'select', each of which appears to be defined in accordance with neo-classical criticism. However, the contributor fails to perform any of these tasks, and instead seems to write himself out of his critical function. In a somewhat anticlimactic move, he finds he must 'refer' his reader to the catalogue. In doing so, he not only subordinates his own critical power to those 'deified productions of the pencil', but also subordinates the authority of the publication for which he writes to another printed source.[26]

In exploring the reasons behind this impasse, one could assume that the contributor was lacking in industry, or that there were certain limitations implicit in the critical model employed by him, limitations inherent in the very definitions of 'description' and 'criticism' as they operated within neoclassical criticism. Given the implication that descriptions of the works on view would follow the protocol of *ut pictura poesis*, and the privileging of the art object over criticism, the latter appears more likely. Yet, however strongly the contributor's silence points to the limitations implicit in neo-classical criticism, it also, and perhaps more significantly, points to limitations implicit in what Park refers to as the 'Romantic aesthetic'. Based on principles rather than rules, this mode of response certainly did inspire a rich dialogue concerning the nature and development of a proper disciplinary approach to painting;

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[25] *The Annals of the Fine Arts*, vol. i (1817), 90.

[26] Significantly, as opposed to the notice in a printed periodical which would either have to give a description of the picture, or assume a certain familiarity with the picture on the part of the reader, the catalogue assumes the presence of the picture, as it would be purchased and consulted *within* the gallery or viewing space.

yet it also fundamentally changed the terms in which description would function within criticism. Rather than consider the development of this 'aesthetic' as a response shaped around the 'denial' of mimesis or representation (as traditional notions of periodization suggest), it is perhaps best to consider it as the site of an important transition in the role of representation within and according to these new critical structures.

Yet a transition in thinking about the role of description in criticism requires an understanding of a similar transition that occurred within the *ut pictura poesis* analogy in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century. Park argues that the shift away from neo-classical perceptions of the 'ideal as generality' to a more complex understanding of 'the ideal as particularity' encouraged a rethinking of the analogy between painting and poetry. Arguing against Abrams's claim that the analogy gave way to a more fruitful comparison between poetry and music, Park argues that the analogy continued to be a dominant influence upon the shaping of literary criticism:

> Once the lessons of the anti-pictorialist tradition of Burke, Johnson, Lessing, and Twining had been assimilated, the analogy with painting assumed a new role and potency which steered between the excessive pictorialism of the traditional view and the restrictive limitations imposed by Lessing in his distinction between the spatial and temporal arts. The latter's extreme delimitation of the sister arts, while salutary within the context of an excessive pictorialism, could never destroy the belief of the early nineteenth-century in the essential oneness of the poetic.[27]

The 'new role and potency' of the analogy to which Park refers proceeds from the release of painting from a rather narrow interpretation as an imitative art. An example of this can be seen in Reynolds, where the connection with poetry as a sister art was to be preserved, but the imitative foundation of that connection needed revision. Reynolds argued that, based as it was on a limited notion of imitation as 'copy', painting was in danger of losing her place beside poetry as a sister art. In releasing

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[27] Roy Park, "'Ut Pictura Poesis': The Nineteenth-Century Aftermath", *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, vol. 28, no. 2 (Winter, 1969), 156.

imitation from this limited definition, and allowing it a much broader application so that the particulars within a painting reflected on their maker as well as their object, Reynolds attempted to restore the status of painting as a true sister of poetry. Redeemed as a mode that despite its 'material medium' was 'yet expressive of the divinity within man', painting encouraged a new perspective on the ability of individual details and particulars to open 'windows onto the artist's mind'.[28]

This emphasis on the 'ideal as particularity' underpinned a shift in the way of seeing paintings, one embodied in the close look and intense gaze of the connoisseur. Rather than look at a picture for its instructive potential, the meaning of its subject, or its expression of general truths, the eye of the connoisseur focused with exacting scrutiny on the surface of the picture. The connoisseur, with 'quizzing glass' in hand, typically examined the technical skill displayed upon designated sections of the canvas, judged the compatibility between subject and the manner of execution, and pronounced on the success or failure of capturing a three-dimensional subject within a two-dimensional space. While this attention to detail served as the basis for most satirical portrayals of the connoisseur, it was nevertheless an important part of authenticating works for collectors, examining the handling of the work, and discovering stylistic similarities and traits.

However, as Park argues, this attention to the particulars within a canvas, the details of which were harnessed and expressed not within poetical but formal terms, also influenced the way in which people looked at literature. Literary critics, he argues, were encouraged to 'look' at a poem as a connoisseur might look at a picture, thus the critic read a poem 'with the eye of a connoisseur...and would turn with double eagerness and relish to the force and precision of individual details'.[29] In literary criticism, this was essentially the foundation for a kind of 'close reading', a

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[28] See Park, "Ut Pictura Poesis", 162. See also Melville, introduction, *Vision & Textuality*, 9.
[29] See Park, "Ut Pictura Poesis", 158.

way of engaging not so much with the matter of the picture represented in the image, but rather the matter as it is encoded in the manner of execution. In other words, the substance of the poem or picture was no longer confined to its subject (whether a description of a landscape or a landscape itself), but rather could be reached through its 'surface' – through the arrangement and selection of the words themselves as an alternative source of information about the painting or poem and its maker. This way of seeing language as 'surface', as an entity potentially autonomous from its subject, was not compatible with a notion of art that was rooted in rules, nor could it support a critical methodology based on the selection of faults and beauties derived from those rules. It was, however, compatible with the discovery and articulation of certain principles derived *from* that reading rather than imposed upon it.

The combined emphasis on principles rather than rules, and the close analysis or engagement with an individual work (close reading) together indicate that the 'new role and potency' of the analogy with painting to which Park refers is essentially its role in providing a template for practical criticism. While Park restricts his consideration of the effect of this shift to literary criticism, it is of equal interest to consider the impact that this shift had upon the shaping of a practical criticism for visual art. Most discussions of practical criticism have been confined to literature, partly because the most well-known definitions and applications seem to have emerged from that side of the disciplinary fence. While pre-dating the term itself, it is largely acknowledged that Dryden and Johnson were 'practical critics' in the sense of it being an 'applied criticism in which theoretical principles are assumed or implied'.[30] And it was Coleridge who, in the *Biographia Literaria* defined practical criticism as a means 'by which "The specific symptoms of poetic power" would be

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[30] Heather Murray, "Practical Criticism", *Johns Hopkins Guide to Literary Theory*, ed. Michael Groden and Martin Kreiswirth, internet edition, <http://www.press.jhu.edu/books/hopkins_guide_to_literary_theory/practical_criticism.html>.

"elucidated" from the "critical analysis" of literary works'.[31] Coleridge endeavoured to 'discover what the qualities in a poem are, which may be deemed promises and specific symptoms of poetic power'.[32] This impulse was one strongly shaped by his response to false criticism and as a means of putting forward a more systematic notion of criticism grounded in fixed principles.

While from this perspective, practical criticism has been, and continues to be part of a strong tradition in literary criticism, it makes rather less of an impression upon art historical analysis. As Merlin James has pointed out, there has not really been a critical movement within art history that is comparable to the 'New Criticism' within literature – an essential aspect of the continuing development of practical criticism.[33] Likewise, Svetlana Alpers has pointed out that the issue of practical criticism calls forth questions as to the values and potential embedded in the 'surface' of a picture as opposed to the 'surface' of a poem: is it possible, she asks, to find the same range of meanings in a color or line as there are packed within the history of a single word?[34] Because of this history (and, as Alpers argue, proximity between 'practical criticism' and 'art appreciation'), many contemporary critics have failed to acknowledge that this impulse to 'practical criticism' was one that was also shared by those writing on painting, as its blend of individual detail and general principle seemed to hold the most promise not only for desperately needed critical reform, but also for much needed disciplinary definitions and applications that would reassert the right and credibility of art criticism as a discipline independent of literary criticism.

And yet it was this blend that proved so problematic. While the literary critic could insert lines of the original text within his commentary and use those lines as

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[31] See Murray, "Practical Criticism".
[32] See Murray, "Practical Criticism". Murray quotes Samuel Taylor Coleridge's definition of practical criticism. See Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *BL* ii: 19.
[33] See James, "Engaging Images", 18.
[34] See Alpers, "Ut Pictura Noesis?", 446.

something of a touchstone for that commentary, those writing on painting could not. They could not insert the bottom left hand corner of a picture within a critical text – unlike the poet, the painter could never speak for himself *within* the body of the critical text. In this respect, the 'balance' mentioned by Park between 'excessive pictorialism' based on *ut pictura poesis* and the anti-pictorialist tradition was precarious at best for those writing on art. On the one hand, the anti-pictorialist tradition had become manifest in the necessary differentiation between painting and poetry, one that ensured a sense of autonomy not only for painting, but for the discipline emerging around it. On the other, relying as it did upon description to give a sense of the picture, much writing about art was in danger of being seen as epitomizing precisely the kind of 'excessive pictorialism' it sought to avoid. This reliance on description (in its many and diverse forms) tended to blur the lines between critical commentary and descriptive exercises like ekphrasis, invoking old rivalries implicit in the *ut pictura poesis* formation.

The distinction between description and criticism can serve as a touchstone for understanding the challenges facing artists, connoisseurs and art critics who found themselves, either directly or indirectly, contributing to a dialogue of critical reform – one that both invited and resisted voices engaged in similar dialogues within literary criticism at the time. Through this dialogue, each in his own way, and according to his own interpretation of and response to established critical methodologies and vocabularies, sought to offer a corrective to the proliferation of 'false taste'. In the following section, the difficulty in making the transition from critical models based on *ut pictura poesis* to models based on solid principles will be explored with respect to Prince Hoare's publication *The Artist*. This will be used as a starting point in examining the role of the connoisseur in shaping a system of practical criticism for the visual arts. The language used by connoisseurs such as Uvedale Price and Sir George Beaumont illustrates the difficulty they too encountered in mediating a strong

tradition of *ut pictura poesis*, increasing reservations about the pictorial tradition, and the need to both describe and communicate various elements of the picture plane. Through exploring this tension in particular instances, I would like to indicate the presence of a broader context in which the later explication of Coleridge and Allston's remarks about art, and their participation in this dialogue, might be placed.

In the opening pages of the first number of *The Artist*, the painter and critic Prince Hoare puts forward this publication as an answer to what he sees as a crisis in art criticism, one fed by misinformation, the lack of disciplinary credibility, and the lack of a systematic critical approach to the rich grounds provided by fine art. He observes:

> It appeared to be likely, that in the present interesting state of Painting and Sculpture, every portion of instruction and authentic information which could be offered concerning them to the Public, might be at once acceptable and useful. While those Arts have afforded the most general as well as most ample field for criticism, it has happened that, from the constant application of professional men, very few opinions have, in this country, been published by them. The difficulty, therefore, of obtaining any regular treatises on the subject, from those who necessarily best understood it, gave reason to wish for some more easy channel, through which artists might be induced openly to communicate their sentiments on their respective studies, and the public might be gradually familiarized with the principles of the arts.[35]

The 'present interesting state of Painting and Sculpture' to which Hoare refers is something of a euphemism for what he sees as a catalogue of abuses that painting has suffered both in terms of making and interpretation. Hoare is concerned not only with commonplace abuses, such as the artist's capitulation to the public's hankering after the popular effects of color, but also, and perhaps more importantly, with the reasons that underpin those abuses. Hoare's concerns are given a sense of urgency by his contention that any 'portion of instruction and authentic information' that could be offered to the public, in an attempt to perhaps clarify the confusion, would be

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[35] Prince Hoare, ed., *The Artist: A Collection of Essays, Relative to Painting, Poetry, Sculpture, Architecture, The Drama, Discoveries of Science, and various other subjects*, vol. i (London, 1810), v-vi.

welcomed. It is immediately clear that the foundation of this 'instruction' and the authenticity of this information comes from practicing artists themselves. However, as Hoare indicates, there has been neither the opportunity nor the forum for painters (associated more with labour than letters) to mount a defense of their art or propose a foundation for the criticism of it; it is this forum that he hopes to provide in *The Artist*.

Yet the strong disciplinary appeal made in the initial passage of the volume is somewhat tempered by the necessity of appealing to other arts. Hoare's ideal of setting up what is essentially a disciplinary approach to the problem (one solved through looking to art, art history and language as applied to painting itself rather than looking in the first instance to other disciplines like literature) is slightly tempered by the practical realities of circulation, and of the added credibility lent to the publication by the inclusion of other arts. Because those with an 'active concern for Painting and Sculpture' make a 'limited circle', he argues, that 'it would be expedient to add Essays on any of the other Liberal Arts and also occasional papers on scientific and philosophical Subjects, all on the same general condition, viz. That each writer should take his subject from that Art or Science with which he was best acquainted'.[36] This authority is checked, in a sense, by his further stipulation that, unlike all 'preceding publications of a similar form', either the 'full or initial' signature of the contributor will always be given so that he may accept responsibility 'for the sentiments delivered by him…'.[37] Thus, while the disciplinary boundaries are relaxed with respect to the variety of arts included in the publication, he asserts that those writing on each subject must be proficient in that subject.

And yet this tenet, that those who are knowledgeable about painting ought to have the opportunity and forum in which to write about it, is offset by the anxiety that

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[36] See Hoare, *The Artist*, vol. i (1810), vi.
[37] See Hoare, *The Artist,* vol. i (1810), vii.

comes with the knowledge that the critical vehicle called for in this instance is language rather than paint. This is evident in the anxiety that he clearly articulates on the part of the painter in attempting to express his art in language. In the second issue, he remarks rather strongly on his discomfort and the discomfort generally suffered by the artist in assuming a 'garb' not his own. He invokes images of the drama in setting forth the reasons for his 'prologue' to the volume. He argues,

> Fully equal to the embarrassment felt by the French author when he enters the scene, lighted by a thousand lamps, and watched by a thousand eyes, is that of the English ARTIST, while he approaches the presence of his countrymen in a garb and character to which he is unaccustomed.[38]

Hoare seems to anticipate criticisms that might arise from those arguing that the artist has advanced into a territory not rightfully his. This is reinforced in his use of the prologue as something of a disclaimer, aiming to 'offer a fair, honest account of the views which instigate the Artist to aspire at wielding that most perilous of all weapons, the Pen'.[39] Hoare argues that the artist must take up the pen in defending his art from the proliferation of false taste and false criticism. It is not a voluntary undertaking, but one of necessity. In another reference to the importance of defending and defining a disciplinary domain, he argues that it is the purpose of the artist to fight the 'dangerous tendency' of 'unskilful persons' to 'illustrate the surface of science, where they have never sounded the depths'.[40]

This sense of the artist having to take up the pen as that 'most perilous of all weapons' confirms his entry into a critical dialogue that takes place upon paper, and sets the stage for his war-like engagement with two groups: the Dabblers and the Connoisseurs. Hoare directly addresses the Dabbler, whom he charges with adopting 'for the subject of your work a topic of which you have no previous knowledge'; in

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[38] See Hoare, *The Artist*, vol. i (Saturday, 14 March 1807), 2-3.
[39] See Hoare, *The Artist*, vol. i (Saturday, 14 March 1807), 2-3.
[40] See Hoare, *The Artist*, vol. i (Saturday, 14 March 1807), 4.

this manner echoing Winckelmann's similar address of the Connoisseur.[41] In doing so, he assumes that these Dabblers might constitute some part of his readership; yet the device is also a rhetorical one as he seems to align himself with those artists against such practices, emphasizing their unity and truth against the superficiality of the Dabblers. This sense of opposition is emphasized by his use of military images in characterizing this group, as he refers to their 'warlike disposition', and their 'spirit of invasion' despite their being 'light-armed troops'.[42] The objective of this invading force is, Hoare claims, the 'haunts of those Muses who are without public shelter'; who are without, in other words, the protection of criticism.[43] He continues, 'The Dabblers imagined they had an unquestionable right to the favours' of the muses of painting, music and drama, who 'have particularly been the constant objects of their pretensions'.[44] This right is exercised by the growing number of 'elegant writers in the present day, possessed of every requisite for discoursing on the Arts, except a practical acquaintance with them'.[45] He argues that the 'pleasure of writing', the 'display of an easy style and classic learning' should not, though it appears to be, one of the 'most frequent motives for publication'.[46] Rather, there must also be an imparting of substance, of 'information'.

Hoare then shifts his attention to that other group, one he finds equally culpable in the dissemination of false taste and learning with respect to the visual arts: the Connoisseurs. However, in contrast to the Dabblers who are openly war-like, the connoisseurs are depicted as far more cunning. Hoare depicts the connoisseurs as an opportunistic bunch who 'soon shut the door on their Introductor, turned the key, took

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[41] See Hoare, *The Artist*, vol. I (Saturday, 14 March 1807), 6-7. See also Johann Joachim Winckelmann, *Reflections on the Painting and Sculpture of the Greeks with Instructions for the Connoisseur, and an Essay on Grace in Works of Art*, trans. Henry Fuseli, facsimile of 1765 edition (Menston: Scolar Press, 1972), 4.
[42] See Hoare, *The Artist*, vol. I (Saturday, 14 March 1807), 6-7.
[43] See Hoare, *The Artist*, vol. I (Saturday, 14 March 1807), 8.
[44] See Hoare, *The Artist*, vol. I (Saturday, 14 March 1807), 8.
[45] See Hoare, *The Artist*, vol. I (Saturday, 14 March 1807), 10.
[46] See Hoare, *The Artist*, vol. I (Saturday, 14 March 1807), 10.

possession of the premises, and leisurely began to ransack and expose the treasures of painting.'[47] Unlike those dabblers who outwardly profess their claim and right to the possession of the 'haunts of the muses', connoisseurs resort to far more secretive means. They are, by virtue of their knowledge of the technical aspects of art, possessed of a key which, with a simple turn, allows them access to the 'treasures' of painting. This image reflects first the affinity that the connoisseur has with the artist in terms of technical knowledge, and his use of this knowledge as a means of turning against the artists, in something of a 'bait and switch'. Through emphasizing the 'leisurely' manner in which the connoisseur carries out this action, Hoare also draws attention to the connoisseur not as a man of labour, but of letters (i.e. leisure).

Hoare enforces a sense of the distance between the artist and the connoisseur through likening the former to a labourer and the latter to a philosopher.

> ..howsoever rude his phrase, his opinions, being drawn from primary sources, may not be thought undeserving of attention; as the labourer, who digs in the caverns of the mine, and may furnish remarks, which bear an intimate relation to the object of inquiry, yet escape the research of the erudite philosopher, who sits and spins amusing theories on the edge of the descent.[48]

Rather than disavow the identification of the artist as labourer, Hoare emphasizes this through likening him to a miner. The artist has an intimate knowledge of the mine, drawing his opinions from the primary materials which it offers. There is a physical proximity to this 'cavern', in that the artist digs within the individual work of art, in the 'dark' places, the places perhaps not immediately visible, to unearth the connections and relationships between forms and shapes that may not be consciously visible to the eye though perceived by it. This image is particularly potent in that it calls forth the origins of color, the pigments that are comprised of earthly, mined minerals which are, quite literally, the material part of the painting.

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[47] See Hoare, *The Artist*, vol. I (Saturday, 14 March 1807), 8.
[48] See Hoare, *The Artist*, vol. I (Saturday, 14 March 1807), 11-12.

This translates into the way in which the artist uses language in response to the picture. Hoare argues that the artist may be possessed of 'rude phrases', but his proximity to the picture as an original source gives these a certain credibility. By contrast, the connoisseur is perched atop the edge of the mine; he 'sits and spins amusing theories on the edge of the descent'. The way in which he 'spins' his words reinforces the sense of the disembodied and non-referential nature of the philosopher's words in calling to mind the gossamer threads of the spider's web. This image stands in stark contrast to the artist who sounds the depths of the mine. The positioning of the philosopher and the artist is a curious reversal of the Platonic image, as it is the philosopher who fails to enter the cave and see the truth in the darkness of it.[49] For the artist, words are not disembodied but are possessed of physical referents, thus the forthrightness, practical experience and 'plain language' of the artist contrasts sharply with the philosopher who spins complicated linguistic structures on the edge of the descent. This image serves to strengthen Hoare's claim that, despite the 'rude' or clumsy use of language, the artist is in a better position than the philosopher or connoisseur to determine and identify the principles of painting from his direct experience of them.

Hoare's indictment of Dabblers and Connoisseurs is essentially a refutation of the dominant 'beauty and blemish' mode of criticism that they practice. Hoare refutes this model on two counts: firstly, he argues that the aim of criticism cannot be the alteration of the work of genius, which defies the 'rules'. Hoare undermines the entire notion of rules in the judging of art insofar as those rules, once identified by the spectator, might go on to shape the productions issuing from the artist's pencil. He argues that important as criticism and taste may be, their use must not be guided by an intent nor ability to exert power over the productions of genius. He argues that

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[49] See Plato, *Republic*, 312-341.

'...although the knowledge and art of others be the groundwork of our taste, yet that faculty in us (in however high a degree we may possess it,) cannot, in return, either increase the knowledge, or strengthen the power of performance, in the children of genius'.[50] Basically, the 'interference of the taste of others' may 'impede the flights of genius, but cannot fashion it'.[51] The 'genius' of criticism, if such genius exists, is not one to dictate the genius of the artist. Thus, Hoare retains the neo-classical idea of the connection between labour and art, but extends this to the critic, whose 'knowledge of an art' is gained 'by long and laborious study', the only and best 'mode of attaining skill and judgment in it'. Importantly, criticism should not be used to correct faults in painting, and thus serve as a means of advancing production in the art, but rather ought to be used to establish guidelines for the interpretation, understanding and appreciation of painting.

Secondly, he argues that the movement toward an *ideal* is misguided and has distracted attention away from the importance of actual works in establishing the principles of painting. For Hoare, 'The surest basis on which our critical taste in any art can be founded, is a thorough investigation of what has been actually performed by human endeavors in the subject before us'.[52] The failure to look closely at those 'actual' performances accounts for the inability to make progress in shaping a credible criticism for the visual arts. He claims that

> In Painting, peculiarly, as it is an art whose principles have never yet been explored by us in England, we are very apt to receive imaginary notions of what it *might be*, or enthusiastic fables of what it *may have been*. But it is by instructing ourselves thoroughly in the nature of the real powers which we are certain it *has* executed, and by candidly comparing the pretensions of succeeding candidates with the actual examples of excellence and failure in the art, that we can alone hope to bestow, with justice, the award of praise or blame.[53]

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[50] See Hoare, *The Artist*, vol. i (Saturday, 4 April 1807), 8.
[51] See Hoare, *The Artist*, vol. i (Saturday, 4 April 1807), 9.
[52] See Hoare, *The Artist*, vol. i (Saturday, 4 April 1807), 5.
[53] See Hoare, *The Artist,* vol. i (Saturday, 4 April 1807), 12.

Hoare's combined emphasis on as yet unarticulated 'principles' of art and 'actual' performances rather than ideals indicates his instinct for a kind of practical criticism in the visual arts akin to that which would later be formally articulated in literature. Hoare advocates an approach that is comparative yet grounded in actual examples as only this kind of approach allows one to 'bestow...the award of praise or blame' with *justice*. Thus there must be a justification for judgements in the art that is grounded in actual example, not in fables, however enthusiastically asserted, and not in notions of what it could potentially be. Only through comparing works to other works, to 'actual examples of excellence and failure in the art' rather than to airy notions of what ought to be, can progress be made in challenging false criticism and shaping a viable system of criticism for the visual arts.

For Hoare, such comparisons are only successful if the critic is able to draw on a vast store of knowledge in addition to the work before him. In shifting attention away from the unstable ground of fables, ideals, opinion and excitement toward the more stable ground of reason, knowledge, justice and actual example, Hoare doesn't entirely break with, but rather transforms the core principles of neo-classical criticism through proposing an alternative 'scientific' approach. This transformation requires that the work be considered first within a solid disciplinary context before being subjected to the vagaries of 'taste' or used in interdisciplinary comparisons or as illustrations of general poetic principles. In an illustration of this point, Hoare compares the art critic who relies on mere 'declarations of taste' to a traveller who quickly loses his way on account of his haste. He argues that:

> Unless a proper store of provisionary knowledge be laid up, and accuracy fully established in the mind, the excitements of taste lead us forward without rule or compass, and, like the traveller who, through too much haste, once takes a wrong turning of his road, the farther we proceed, the less our landmarks are discernible, and we involve ourselves, step after step, in a labyrinth, where our error becomes irretrievable....The surest basis on which our critical taste in

> any art can be founded, is a thorough investigation of what has been actually performed by human endeavours in the subject before us.[54]

Unless, he argues, there is a 'proper store of provisionary knowledge' established as a reference point, or touchstone for the art critic, the critic is prone to the 'excitements of taste'. 'Taste' in this sense is depicted as working persuasively through an emotive power, rather than the more reasoned direction implicit in his use of the term 'critical taste'. This disciplinary background, body of scholarship, or store of knowledge acts (as does the individual canvas) not only as partial rule and compass, but serves as a constant reminder of the traveller's direction. Thus Hoare argues that criticism must be grounded in both 'actual performance' and a 'proper store of provisionary knowledge' rather than in notions of taste defined in an abstract or theoretical way. Through using words like 'investigation' and 'store of...knowledge', Hoare proposes that art criticism ought to be scientific, not that it should be rooted in 'rules', but rather in a *practical* engagement with actual works. He argues that the principles of painting originate from within painting itself – within what it is, rather than what it ought to be – and therefore taste (particularly as it functions in criticism) ought not to be employed on making or creating directives for future pictures, but ought to focus on pictures already completed.

For Hoare, therefore, the emphasis on particularity translated itself into a closer look at the individual work. The identification of the principles behind and within that work might contribute to the development of a 'store of knowledge', a disciplinary foundation that would serve as a touchstone for the critical appraisal of that work. Yet, as is evidenced by the lack of actual instances of the application of this method within the pages of *The Artist*, it appears as though there was something of a gap between this evolving methodology and the language needed to implement it. It is in this area that the contribution of the connoisseur becomes more apparent.

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[54] See Hoare, *The Artist*, vol. i (Saturday, 4 April 1807), 3, 5.

Contrary to Hoare's own views on the matter, connoisseurs made important contributions not only to the formation of a discipline, but also to the shaping of a disciplinary language – one that derived from the neo-classical practice of *ut pictura poesis*, but a language that would ultimately be severed from this old version of the analogy and placed in the service of a new methodology – one reflecting the middle road between pictorialism and the anti-pictorialist tradition identified by Park as underpinning the transformation of the analogy. For all the ridicule endured on their part, the connoisseurs made important contributions to the possibility of articulating elements within an individual picture, while at the same time keeping an eye to the place of those elements within an interdisciplinary dialogue.

Connoisseurs possessed an ability to combine concerns raised from their close attention to the canvas (assessments of the artist's technical ability, the recognition of certain stylistic elements, the application of paint) with a broad base of interdisciplinary knowledge. As Ann Bermingham argues, the connoisseur 'unlike the artist was expected to have a complete grasp of art's philosophical character. This demanded a familiarity with all of culture; that is to say, with history, philosophy, rhetoric, religion, and classical literature and languages'.[55] In addition to this interdisciplinary background, the connoisseur was expected to demonstrate the cultivation of these skills in offering unbiased judgments of visual productions. She argues that the 'notion of disinterestedness was basic to eighteenth-century theories of connoisseurship', which she notes 'emerges as early as Jonathan Richardson's essay "The Science of a Connoisseur"' published in 1719.[56] This is evident, she points out, in Richardson's observation that 'to be a connoisseur a man must be as free from all

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[55] Ann Bermingham, "Elegant Females and Gentlemen Connoisseurs: The Commerce in Culture and Self-Image in Eighteenth Century England", *The Consumption of Culture*, ed. Ann Bermingham and John Brewer (London: Routledge, 1995), 584.

[56] See Jonathan Richardson, *Two Discourses: I. An Essay on the Whole Art of Criticism as it Relates to Painting...II.An Argument in behalf of the Science of a Connoisseur...* (London: W. Churchill, 1719).

kinds of prejudice as possible; he must moreover have a clear and exact way of thinking and reasoning; he must know how to take in and manage just ideas; and throughout he must have not only a solid, but unbiased judgment'.[57] Thus a sense of science, of disinterestedness, of clear judgment contrasts with the more poetical effusions commonly found in the writing of connoisseurs.

For example, Sir Uvedale Price's correspondence with Sir George and Lady Beaumont between 1794 and 1814 reveals some of the concerns of the connoisseur in balancing this sense of 'disinterestedness' in viewing the picture and the descriptive tools needed in developing a language capable of communicating various aspects of the picture plane. In his earlier correspondence with Sir George and Lady Beaumont, Price embraces *ut pictura poesis*, relying on descriptive exercises to build connections between the representation on the canvas and the representation on the page. This compliments a critical approach guided by notions of the 'essential oneness of the poetic' and encourages the success of the picture to be measured in terms of the poetic response it is able to elicit from the viewer. However, in later correspondence, Price becomes increasingly wary of the place of poetical language in communicating critical observations on the picture, demonstrating a shift in thinking about how that 'oneness' of the poetic might be expressed in terms of principle rather than poetical imitation.

In Price's early correspondence with Lady Beaumont, one not only gets the sense that for Price, poetry and description are interchangeable within the parameters of the *ut pictura poesis* analogy, but also that description functions as both an interpretive and generative power. In his reply to Lady Beaumont dated 2 February 1795, Price reveals that he would like Sir George to paint from the words of his wife,

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[57] See Bermingham, "Elegant Females", 584.

so 'well painted' were they.[58] He continues, 'I should like to have your descriptions transferred to the canvas by one who saw the same effects, and who can so well represent what he saw, then as I am in possession of the description if there is any law or logic in the world, I shall have a clear right to the pictures'.[59] Price would like Beaumont to paint directly from his wife's description, because, as his second sentence indicates, it would be best for this 'transfer' to be effected 'by one who saw the same effects, and who can so well represent what he saw'. In this instance, the picture would be a composite of the language of Lady Beaumont and her husband's visual experience of the same scene. Of added interest is this notion that the two would somehow belong together, that because Price holds the description, he should 'have a clear right' to the paintings.

This sense of description as a generative power is further entrenched in yet another reply to Lady Beaumont, the subject of which is a painting by Rubens, possibly *The Stone Carters* (c. 1620).[60] This picture was the subject of a poem by William Lisle Bowles, entitled *The Picture: verses...suggested by a magnificent landscape of Rubens in possession of Sir George Beaumont* which was published in 1803, and was also subject to the descriptive powers of both Sir George and his wife. Prior to sending a copy of Bowles's poem to Price, it appears as though Lady Beaumont sent him some descriptions of Rubens's painting. Price responded that her effort was 'enough to make any man's mouth water, but mine absolutely ran down with water at each corner the whole time I was reading it'.[61] A response that strikes one as perhaps a bit excessive, but one that nonetheless highlights a certain physicality as it invokes 'taste' in its most literal form. Curiously, it is the

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[58] Uvedale Price to Lady Beaumont, 2 February 1795. New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, Coleorton Papers, MA 1581 M.f (Price) 3 pt 2.
[59] See Uvedale Price to Lady Beaumont, 2 February 1795.
[60] Peter Paul Rubens, *The Stone Carters*, oil on canvas, transferred from panel, c. 1620, Hermitage, St. Petersburg.
[61] Uvedale Price to Lady Beaumont, 1 May 1803. New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, Coleorton Papers, (Price) 40.

description, rather than the picture itself, that precipitates this response. This indicates the dominance of neo-classical critical norms that measure the worth of the picture by virtue of the poetical response it might elicit.

The possibilities and limitations present in description are also evident in Price's response to his receipt of the poem, *The Picture* sent to him by Lady Beaumont. In a letter dated 28 June 1803, roughly one month after receiving Lady Beaumont's description of the picture, Price responds:

> The Picture is arrived in the shape of a large letter, and from writing in pencil on the back of it, I find that I am indebted to you for the very great pleasure I have had in reading it. Many of the descriptions...are so excellent, that they seem rather original ideas from which a picture might be painted, than images suggested to the Poet by the Painter. The same thing struck me the other day in reading a description in Cowper copied most literally and faithfully from Hogarth's print of morning, with the old maed going to Covent Garden church and the starved footboy behind her; I then thought that if some centuries hence that poem and the print should be preserved, but the dates of them lost, [illegible] posterity would be puzzled to say which was the original. Mr Bowles certainly need not be offended for being put in company with Cowper. The reflexions in the picture are not less beautiful than the descriptions; the team crossing the water, the down's manner of riding and his [illegible] the reflexion [illegible] upon it, are delightful instances of both; and if I was to mention them all, I might as well return you the poem.[62]

In this passage, one finds the usual conflation of 'looking' and 'reading' so common to *ut pictura poesis*: the mere fact that the title of Bowles's poem is *The Picture* immediately contrasts with its arrival 'in the shape of a large letter', and Price's enjoyment in 'reading it'. There is a like conflation between imitation and originality, a distinction that appears, in this instance, at best negligible for Price. He seems to suggest that the descriptions themselves contain some spark of originality, that though derivative, one could not possibly say with certainty that this was the case without reference to the picture. In this respect, the descriptions are autonomous from the picture, they are no longer 'gestures' to the work, but are capable of earning the merit

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[62] Uvedale Price to Lady Beaumont, 28 June 1803. New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, Coleorton Papers, (Price) 44.

of originality on their own. This is reinforced by the conflation again of poetry and description, and the way in which both, as 'copies' of images, are capable of standing on their own. Price conjectures that if the dates of composition were lost, it would be difficult for future generations to distinguish the original from the 'copy' in a sense, suggesting a certain kind of genius at work within the copy.

And yet there is also some confusion as to whether in the final lines Price refers to Bowles's *Picture*, or the picture in Beaumont's collection – whether he gestures to the verbal or the visual image. Either way, Price senses his description to be redundant: he cannot compete with the poetical description already provided by Bowles, and therefore makes rather simple gestures to certain spaces and objects within the canvas, pointing out the 'team crossing the water', and the 'down's manner of riding'. Indeed, Price seems to reach an impasse similar to that encountered by the contributor in *The Annals* in limiting his own descriptions of the elements in the picture, claiming that if he 'were to mention them all, I might as well return you the poem'. This statement suggests that Price's engagement with the picture itself is conducted within the boundaries of the poem – at least his communication of the picture is prescribed by the words that have already been written in reference to the picture.

Despite his implicit recognition of the restrictions that the poem exerts upon the shaping of his own commentary, Price continues to subscribe to this notion of the binding of painting and poetry together, quite literally in fact. In the same letter to Lady Beaumont, Price suggests that Sir George's descriptions of this painting (possibly *The Stone Carters*) and Rubens's other paintings be placed 'upon the same sized paper as the poem' and that they be bound together.[63] This recalls his claim that he, being in possession of Lady Beaumont's description of a natural scene, be entitled

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[63] See Uvedale Price to Lady Beaumont, 28 June, 1803.

to possess Sir George's rendering of that same scene in paint, were he to take up the subject. Curiously, he writes that the description of Sir George ought to be 'displayed' in the book, again asserting the visual characteristics of the description over that of the painting itself. He suggests that the book itself would possess a generative power, as he imagines that 'Rubens spirit will often be hovering over the book, wishing to return the compliment and paint a new picture from the descriptions'.[64] Price's vision of the cooperation between Bowles, Beaumont and Rubens' 'spirit' is underpinned by neo-classical notions of *ut pictura poesis*, one entrenched in limited notions of imitation and not yet responsive to ideals of the expressivity of the artist. This is in keeping with theory on the picturesque in which there is a 'greater (yet distinct) pleasure in the recording of them [scenes in nature] either on canvas or in words than in the actual moment'.[65] Thus, any sense of a more or less emotive response is qualified by Price's framing of the exchange in terms of polite society: as returning the 'compliment'. This places Rubens at an even greater remove from the 'moment' of the execution of his own painting, and suggests that the descriptions are a fit substitute.

Yet Price's pictorial tendencies appear to demonstrate a more sophisticated understanding of the underlying principles of painting and poetry with respect to modes of making and response. In the same letter to Lady Beaumont he continues:

> You may imagine how much I must long to see the one he *has* painted after having used both descriptions. "The sound should seem an echo to the sense", says Pope, but the Poet should not seem as if he had been trying to make the echo whatever he may have done: there is a line or nearly a line in this poem that pleases me very much in that & every respect, it is where the Kingfisher steals through the dripping sedge away: I hardly know why, but when I read it, I thought I saw the bird, & that the motion of the verse was like his motion: yet there is not the least appearance of any intention.[66]

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[64] See Uvedale Price to Lady Beaumont, 28 June, 1803.
[65] Walter John Hipple, *The Beautiful, the Sublime and the Picturesque in Eighteenth-Century British Aesthetic Theory* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1957), 198.
[66] See Uvedale Price to Lady Beaumont, 28 June 1803.

Price begins by revealing how he longs to see Rubens's actual picture now that he has shaped a picture in his mind from the descriptions provided both by Sir George and Bowles. In a meditation on the nature of the relationship between the poem and the painting, Price quotes Pope, that the 'sound should seem an echo to the sense'. This line shapes the way in which Price sees the relationship between the poem and the painting and reveals to some extent his disapproval of laboured description – it is, in many respects, an articulation of imitation and how imitation ought to work – a sense of the reworking of a concept of imitation around the obviousness of intention. He says that the poet should not be 'trying to make the echo whatever he may have done' – that while he may have made the echo, his efforts in doing so ought to remain invisible -- ought to leave no trace of his intention of doing so. This means that the work itself earns its own existence, in a sense, even though it is an echo of another. Unlike 'copy', which he used in speaking about Cowper and Hogarth, Price uses the word 'echo', which is different from copy in that it implies depth. He likes the line about the Kingfisher because, in keeping with the tradition, he actually *sees* an image of the bird imparted by the words, but in addition to this, and perhaps more importantly, there is a structural likeness – a structural echo of the motion of the bird in that the '...motion of the verse was like his motion'. Yet this is not a laboured similarity – there is not a sense in which the poet was heavy handed in imparting this, but it seemed rather something to emerge on its own.

Thus far, the 'descriptions' given and referred to by Price have been either gestures to works (or natural scenes) already completed, or gestures to potential works, where description provides the generative power for the image. However, in the following example, we find Price focused not on description as it functions within *ut pictura poesis* so much as description as it may be called upon to execute the critical task at hand. In his correspondence with Sir George about a picture by the seventeenth-century painter, Sebastien Bourdon, Price writes:

> As an instance of the great judgment with which he has introduced picturesque circumstances where the subject, and the general style of the picture is grand and solemn. In order to explain this I have been obliged to enter into some detail, and as I have described the particulars from memory, I beg you will examine my description.[67]

In this passage, Price puts forward a principle that will serve as the touchstone for the description that he is about to provide. His description will not function independently – as worthy of originality – but rather in support of his argument: his claim for the 'great judgment with which [Bourdon] has introduced picturesque circumstances where the subject, and the general style of the picture is grand and solemn'.

Yet the description that follows indicates that there is a sense of both the problems and advantages in the coming together of what Funnell refers to as a sophisticated language of the connoisseur, and the traditional guidelines of *ut pictura poesis*.[68] For Price, description is an essential part of the criticism of a picture in that it reveals the close attention with which the connoisseur has *looked* at the picture. However, he seems to stay away from overly poetical renderings of the picture in offering a description that is far more narrative than imitative. Of particular interest is his reliance on the description 'in order to explain' how the picturesque functions within the picture. He describes the work as follows:

> The subject is the ark of the Covenant on its progress, when it was recovered form the Philistines. It is represented in its passage over a bridge; on the opposite side of which are several figures when attitudes and countenances express the most profound awe & devotion. The bridge is built over a rapid river; at some distance [page torn] stands a mill, in the management of which [torn] shews the greatest skill and judgment. A mill [torn] which Ruysdal... or Hobbema painted, -- [torn] in their kind, would an account of their broken & strongly marked intricacy & irregularity, have been ill suited to the solemnity of such a subject. Bourdon has therefore made the general form of the building of a more massive & uniform kind, though sufficiently varied and

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[67] Uvedale Price to Sir George Beaumont, 15 January 1798. New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, Coleorton Papers, (Price) 12.

[68] See Funnell, "Richard Payne Knight", 160. Funnell observes that the "technical observations" and vocabulary of the connoisseur reflect a "lingua franca which could, in the hands of such connoisseurs provide a highly sophisticated and precise way of describing painting".

> at the same time that he has with great truth marked the intricacy of the wheels, & the effect of water in motion, he has kept the whole in such a broad mass of shadow, that nothing presses on the eye, or interferes with the style of the picture. Yet, on inspection, all the circumstances of intricacy & motion amuse the eye; & what is the true character, the use of the picturesque in such cases, relieve it from the monotony of mere breadth, massiveness, & uniformity.[69]

In asking Beaumont to examine his *description*, Price offers a description of a rather different kind: one which is narrative in tone and lacks poetical flourish. There is certainly a degree of critical distance demonstrated here that contrasts with his use of poetical description in his correspondence with Lady Beaumont.[70] Price first identifies the subject of the picture: the ark of the Covenant in transit just after its recovery from the Philistines. He describes the placement of the primary elements: the ark passing over a bridge; a group of figures on the opposite side with expressions of 'profound awe and devotion'. He then leaves the subject (notice that there is no meditation on the feeling of the viewers of the ark) and considers the other structural elements of the work: a bridge over a swiftly flowing river, and a mill. He turns from the subject of the picture to his true subject, which is Bourdon's handling of the elements of the picture. It is the mill, rather than the figures or the Ark (the centerpiece of the story), which demonstrates the 'greatest skill and judgment'. This feature of the picture obviously calls forth similar structures painted by Ruysdael and Hobbema which Price draws upon for comparison, and to contrast Bourdon's use of the picturesque in a way that suits the 'solemnity of his subject'. In doing so, Price begins to build that 'provisionary store of knowledge' referred to by Hoare in using actual productions to draw certain aspects out of the picture which contribute to its overall force. Price's eye is focused not so much on the Ark as on the consistency of

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[69] Uvedale Price to Sir George Beaumont, 15 January 1798.

[70] For an examination of the role of gender in writing on art, see Bermingham, "Elegant Females". See also C.S. Matheson, "'A Shilling Well Laid Out': The Royal Academy's Early Public", *Art on the Line: The Royal Academy Exhibitions at Somerset House 1780-1836*, ed. David E. Solkin (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 48-49.

style that Bourdon is able to achieve through his unconventional use of picturesque principles.

This shift from poetical description based on *ut pictura poesis* to more straightforward descriptions of the handling of the elements within the picture becomes more evident in Price's later correspondence. In a letter to George Beaumont dated 24 July 1814, Price demonstrates a greater wariness of the attention to detail and the descriptive excesses in which he, Beaumont and Lady Beaumont had been engaged. The letter requests a sketch of Ashburnham from Sir George and perhaps a comment to accompany it from his wife: 'Lady Beaumont, if she would take the trouble (you certainly will not) could write an excellent comment upon it, but as *you* must not be too picturesque in your drawing, *she must not be too poetical* in her account, but keep her Pegasus bride in main'.[71] In a departure from his previous dedication to pictorial description, Price seems to suggest that poetical description, like the use of picturesque effects, is subject to certain limitations. The implication is that for a comment on art to be good, there are limits to how poetical it can be.

Price's disenchantment with description, one increasingly shared with other correspondents, is more explicit in an earlier letter, dated 4 August 1813, in which Price writes to George Beaumont that he is tired of writing 'as you may well be of *reading* so much description, that I shall not say a word...'.[72] Price's appeal to restraint with respect to poetical description (keeping the 'Pegasus bride in main') signals the displacement of pictorial description by anti-pictorialist tendencies. This is further emphasized by the way in which silence for the first time dominates sound, as vision, for Price is elevated above language. Yet, as could be seen in his own

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[71] Uvedale Price to Sir George Beaumont, 24 July 1812. New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, Coleorton Papers, (Price) 71.
[72] Uvedale Price to Sir George Beaumont? 4 August 1813. New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, Coleorton Papers, (Price) 73.

treatment of Bourdon's painting, this does not necessarily mean the abandonment of description altogether. For Price, *ut pictura poesis* and the pictorialist tradition served an important function in drawing the eye of the viewer into the work, and confirming that journey in language. It allowed experiments in expressing the relationships between and amongst the elements in a given work, the details of which could later be discarded leaving behind the principles upon which it was painted.

Thus Price, like Beaumont, negotiates the 'transfiguration' of *ut pictura poesis* in a particular way. Realizing that what had become an 'excessive pictorialism' was essential in encouraging the close observation of painting, Price and Beaumont shifted the object of the gaze from the subject to the painter's execution of that subject. Yet even in this capacity, description might prove something of a liability: if not kept in balance, it threatened to detract from the source of the true 'oneness of the poetic', manifest not in the extent to which a poetical description might vie with, match, or replace the picture, but rather in the extent to which the painting fulfilled itself *as* a painting, that is, the extent to which it might stand on its own without the supplementary garb of language.

The correspondence between Uvedale Price and Sir George Beaumont provides some insight into the effects that the pictorial tradition had on the development of a connoisseurial method and language, and the way in which they adapted their language to reflect the anti-pictorial tradition through advising restrictions or limitations on descriptions too 'pictorial'. Yet in that correspondence, they also recognize the emergence of a language grounded in an alternative interpretive model put forward by Richard Payne Knight. In a letter to Beaumont dated 4 December 1794, Price entertains the thought of including lines from Knight's

poem, *The Landscape*.[73] If anyone were to demand justification for this inclusion, Price writes that he would acknowledge that both he and Knight

> ...perfectly agree in one notion of the general sense of beauty as painters would conceive it, and if from the theory of vision he proves that there is no difference between rough and smooth to the eye, my system of the picturesque va a tous les diables: but I [?] imagine (for I have not yet seen this note to his second edition) that it will be too refined and metaphysical for common understandings; & perhaps even those who have metaphysical heads will think that however true it may be that a man born without the sense of feeling could not distinguish rough from smooth, yet that in those who can feel, the sight takes so many lessons from the touch, that it soon grown quicker in distinguishing them than its master, & from sympathy receives the same kind of sensations from them. If I get any deeper into the unfathomable gulph of metaphysicks I shall bother your head and my own so with our best Confs to Lady Beaumont good night.[74]

Significantly, Price identifies himself with Knight in assuming a perspective on beauty that does not arise from a theoretical, but a practical understanding, as both he and Knight agree on a notion of beauty 'as painters would conceive it'.[75] Their adoption of this perspective is also revealed in the way in which both relied on that 'lingua franca' of the connoisseur, a vocabulary used to express the way in which the artist handled his subject, and in doing so, to mediate the more pictorial tendencies of their contemporaries.

Yet Unlike Price and Beaumont (who drew largely upon Edmund Burke), Knight's understanding of the making of art and response to it was underpinned by Archibald Alison and the doctrine of association. Rather than appeal to the 'oneness of the poetic' in searching for a fixed standard of taste (a position which Price and

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[73] Richard Payne Knight, *The Landscape: a Didactic Poem*, (London, 1794).
[74] Uvedale Price to Sir George Beaumont, 4 December 1794. New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, Coleorton Papers, MA 1581 (Price 2).
[75] Uvedale Price, *An Essay on the Picturesque, as Compared with the Sublime and the Beautiful; and, on the Use of Studyinng Pictures, for the Purpose of Improving Real Landscape* (London, 1796), 68, 91. In differentiating the beautiful from the picturesque (and yet demonstrating how both may appear in harmony within a picture), Price uses a reflection upon water as an example: "Nay, though the scenery around should be the most wild and picturesque (I might almost say the most savage) every thing is so softened and melted together by the *reflection* of such a mirror, that the prevailing idea, even then, might possibly be that of beauty...". The connection between beauty and form is asserted as well, "A *beautiful* tree, considered in point of form only, must have a certain correspondence of parts, and a *comparative regularity* and proportion, whereas inequality and irregularity alone, will give to a tree a *picturesque* appearance".

Beaumont assumed with Burke), Knight argued that there was no such standard, but that taste was the result of associations built into objects:

> ...principles in art...are no other than trains of ideas, which arise in the mind of the artist out of a just and adequate consideration of all such circumstances; and direct him in adapting his work to the purpose for which it is intended; consequently, if either those circumstances or purposes change, his ideas must change with them, or his principles will be false, and his works incongruous.[76]

For Knight, the principles in art are not principles of unity, but dispersal, emanating from a central point rooted in the subject, and exposed in a true imitation of that subject. He draws a parallel with 'critical judgements' on works of art which 'also arise out of association'.[77] In contrast to Price, who interpreted imitation to mean the imitation of an ideal (this, in keeping with the neo-classical tradition), Knight defined imitation more strictly, as the actual copy or replication of nature. For Knight, imitation functioned explicitly as the most important creative *and* critical principle for the fine arts. For Knight, 'painting was, in essence, the copying of purely visible appearances', not 'what the mind knew to be from the concurrent testimony of another sense', but rather, 'what the eye saw'.[78] He writes that 'Painting is an imitation of nature, as seen by the eye, and not, as known or perceived by the aid of the other senses; and this consideration, if duly attended to, is alone sufficient to guide both the artist and the critic to the true principles of imitation'.[79] For Knight, the critic must judge based on the extent to which the truth of the picture (the truth of the imitation) shines through its performance. This is not to say that imitation did not function in this way for Price, Beaumont and Hume, but whereas for them imitation

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[76] See Funnell, "Richard Payne Knight", 19.
[77] See Funnell, "Richard Payne Knight", 19.
[78] See Funnell, "Richard Payne Knight", 27. See also, Richard Payne Knight, *An Analytic Inquiry into the Principles of Taste*, (1805), 70. Knight writes: "...for painting, as it imitates only the visible qualities of bodies, separates those qualities from all others; which the habitual concurrence and cooperation of the other senses have mixt and blended with them, in our ordinary perceptions, from which our ideas are formed".
[79] See Funnell, "Richard Payne Knight", 27. See also Knight, *An Analytic Inquiry*, 285.

was a principle to unite the arts, for Knight, it was an essential factor in their differentiation.

Unlike Price and Beaumont, Knight is highly suspicious of recommending a painting based on its poetical attributes or qualities, arguing that there are means appropriate to each art. The play of sensation and conflation of sense that comprise the 'poetical' quality of an art work merely distract one away from the connection between the subject and its parts. While in his letter to Beaumont Price makes only superficial mention of the Ark of the Covenant in the picture by Bourdon to meditate on the effects of the picture upon his eye, Knight's comments would be guided by a sense of the inherent connection between the subject and the way in which it is rendered. For example, he argues that the 'tone of imitation...must be brought down nearer to a level with the individual objects, with which it will be compared and by which it will consequently be judged'.[80]

Knight's approach to the picture is also evident in the slight differences in which he employs the language of the connoisseur. Whereas for Price and Beaumont, pictorial description informs the way in which they approach the compositional aspects of the art, and certainly shapes the way in which they describe the principles at work within a painting, Knight's commentary is dominated not by 'sense' words ('tactile words' like 'hard', 'soft', 'smooth' and 'rugged', as Funnell points out), but rather by a more abstract terminology. He argues that Dutch painters in particular are 'remarkable for the fidelity of their imitations, whatever visible qualities existed in the objects must appear in their copies of them: but, in these copies, the mind perceives only the visible qualities; whereas, in the original, it perceived others less agreeable united with them'.[81] As Funnell points out, Knight's admiration for the truth of

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[80] Richard Payne Knight, *An Analytic Inquiry into the Principles of Taste* (1805), 304.
[81] See Knight, *An Analytic Inquiry*, 72.

imitation in Dutch painting encouraged him to apply to Dutch painting words commonly reserved for Italian painting, words like 'beauty', 'simplicity', 'grace' and 'dignity', while avoiding words that reflected a mingling of the senses.

In this chapter I have attempted to give some sense of the difficulties posed by the pictorial tradition to the development of a credible authoritative language for the fine arts. The growing tension between description and criticism evident in the movement away from pictorial description within the writing of connoisseurs such as Beaumont, Price, and Knight, was one that would continue to grow and assume a particular urgency in the early part of the century. Through approaching this tension from the 'center' of painting, as it were, rather than poetry, it is hoped that the contribution of both Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Washington Allston to this disciplinary dialogue might be better understood.

Part II

Introduction

In the first part of this thesis, I have attempted to lay the groundwork for an understanding of word-image relationships, specifically that between painting and the 'corpus of remarks' about it, through proposing an imitation-based model rather than relying on interpretive models based on the word-image opposition. Both visual imitations of visual works and verbal imitations of verbal works allow us to think of their creative-critical nature in terms of a single medium. This, in turn, allows space to think of that 'corpus of remarks about painting' as one of many specialized languages, one not in opposition to painterly language consisting of color and line, but one that possesses a disciplinary history in which words are specifically adapted to the visual subject. This approach takes as axiomatic the *presence* of the picture, and in doing so, encourages the reinterpretation of remarks about painting as a *gesture* toward that visual image. This restoration of the physical presence of the picture challenges the tendency to view art criticism as usurping, replacing, competing with, or 'speaking for' the visual image.

Imitation-based models also encourage a different perspective on what might be referred to as the 'genius' of criticism. Traditionally, this has been measured (at least within image-text studies) in terms of the 'poetics of prose', or the way in which a critic demonstrates a sympathetic engagement with the picture through description, ekphrasis, or the use of other poetical devices. Such 'word-pictures' are imitative in the conventional sense of the term in that they provide a likeness, approximation, and in some instances a 'copy' of the visual image. As was argued in the previous chapter, this form of sympathetic response was regarded more cautiously in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century, as critics and connoisseurs of art sensed the negative effect which such pictorial tendencies exerted upon efforts to develop a more

authoritative critical approach. In the chapters that follow, I would like to look more closely at the way in which imitation mediates our understanding of the 'genius' of criticism in another way -- one not rooted in the 'word-picture', but rather in a language that is capable of communicating the 'truth' of the picture rooted in its principles of execution – thus revealing the 'poetic truth' of the picture, as Washington Allston would say, not in poetical language, but rather in terms of the geometrical and compositional structures that underpin it. Imitation in this respect is not employed in replicating, recasting or describing the effects of the picture, but rather is called upon to reveal its underlying structure. In other words, imitation demarcates not so much the extent to which the words match or 'express' the image, but rather the extent to which the words reflect the compositional relationships and aspects that surface through it.

Unlike some poetical accounts of paintings in which the work of art is used as a pretext for poetic expression, this manifestation of the 'genius' of criticism is based on the communication of clear and distinct ideas registered within the geometry of the picture. Yet developing a language capable of reflecting these relationships in a more systematic way (one at once sympathetic and distant) required the assertion of that other dimension of representation emphasized by Lichtenstein: a notion of representation encoded in the tonal qualities of the voice, facial expression and physical gestures rather than in the subject or effects of the depicted image. This notion of representation is not restricted to the word, but allows for, and even to some extent depends upon, the *presence* of the picture. The genius of criticism is therefore not measured in terms of conventional creative ability (poetical mind as it is revealed/ expressed in poetical language), but rather in terms of creating a language to hold and communicate these relationships within the picture *as* a picture.

It is the growing awareness of and attempt to articulate this other dimension of representation that characterizes the relationship between figures such as Washington

Allston and Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Allston and Coleridge looked to painting as an illustration of both types of representation, not only the more conventional sense of the painting as a representation of its object (whether this be the object in nature, or the artist's mind), but also as a representation of the principles commonly shared by all the arts: structural principles, conditions of relation, proportion and depth that underpin that more conventional representation. Both Allston and Coleridge called upon these principles to challenge criticism that stemmed from the lack of established principles, including criticism that failed to demonstrate a methodical approach and criticism that neglected the methodology employed by the poet or artist.

For example, in literature, the neo-classical tendency to treat Shakespeare as a 'child of nature' provoked Coleridge to respond in his *1808 Lectures on the Principles of Poetry* and his *1811-1812 Lectures on Shakespeare and Milton* with an emphasis on the structural components of his work: Shakespeare's *method* as an essential aspect of his genius. In the fine arts this was manifest in the tendency of painters to neglect the acquirement of skill for the depiction of effect – a practice they justified in terms of originality and inspiration. Like Reynolds and Richardson before him, this provoked Allston to examine more closely the notion of imitation with respect to the visual arts, locating the 'poetic' strength of pictures not so much in their effects but in the compositional structures that underpin them. Through liberating imitation from a superficial kind of resemblance found in copy and likeness, and allowing it to function in spite of the depicted subject and its effects, Allston and Coleridge could restore to imitation its ability to balance, control, and ground the work in more fundamental ways.

In Chapters Five and Six, I will explore the connection between imitation and method through looking firstly at the role of this underlying structure, or 'visual language to the understanding' in descriptions found within Coleridge's notebook entries and Allston's sonnets; and then at these ideas as they are worked out in more

theoretical terms. Chapter Six will explore attempts made by Coleridge and Allston to build a critical language that mediates the tension within imitation as representational in a pictorial sense, and as characterizing the relationships beneath those forms of resemblance.

Chapter Seven will take as its focal point Washington Allston's 1814 Bristol Exhibition, and a variety of responses to his painting *The Dead Man Restored by Touching the Bones of the Prophet Elisha*: the first made by Coleridge in his 'Essays on the Principles of Genial Criticism', the second by Hazlitt in his review of this picture for the *Morning Chronicle* published on the 5th of February 1814, and the third, a review by Robert Hunt published in *The Examiner* on the 13th of February 1814. In addition to these sources, I would also like to consider a lengthy description from the *Bristol Gazette* as well as a description of the painting that Allston himself had penned for the Bristol Exhibition, which had been reprinted in the catalogue for the painting's exhibition at the Philadelphia Academy of Arts exhibition in April, 1816.

Chapter Eight will explore Allston's own description of works of art in light of the principles that he puts forth in his *Lectures on Art*, published posthumously in 1850. In these lectures, Allston draws upon Coleridge's philosophical method in putting forward sound principles by which to create and judge the work of art. He also frequently alludes to Wordsworth's poetry in explaining principles that defy more philosophical language.

Chapter Five

Allston, Coleridge and a 'visual language to the understanding'

In his essay, 'The Sister Arts in British Romanticism', Morris Eaves characterizes the relationship between Washington Allston and Samuel Taylor Coleridge as one of those 'promising but mostly untried roads' capable of penetrating that 'vast underexplored critical wilderness' of word-image relationships in Romantic literature.[1] Yet despite this promise, Eaves argues, their relationship is a subject that has not 'received sustained or sophisticated attention'.[2] Perhaps one reason for this is, as Eaves argues, a flawed methodology. Indeed, studies that continue to rely on inherited notions of *ut pictura poesis* as the foundation of a critical methodology are limited by the fact that Coleridge and Allston simply do not fit the comparative formula. Analogies between Allston's paintings and Coleridge's poems do not exist, nor do subjects that might have been 'poetically' rendered by Allston or 'visualized' by Coleridge.[3] Moreover, many of Allston's landscapes are highly stylized and deeply infused with a classical iconography that is not easily 'read' in relation to Coleridge's poetry. The resistance to a structured comparative coupled with the inability to reconcile an art-historical view of Allston's achievements with a literary perspective of his acquaintance with Coleridge has meant recourse (at least in literary studies) to characterizing their relationship in terms of influence; an implicit contest which Coleridge generally wins, as Allston's works are portrayed as 'illustrations' of

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[1] See Eaves, "Sister Arts", 238.
[2] See Eaves, "Sister Arts", 238.
[3] Note that, as Stephen Gill points out, Wordsworth acknowledged his indebtedness to Allston's painting *Jacob's Dream* in the composition of his "Ode, Composed Upon an Evening of Extraordinary Splendor and Beauty". See *William Wordsworth: A Critical Edition of the Major Works*, ed. Stephen Gill (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 723n. Allston also painted two portraits of Coleridge: *Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, 1806 is located at the Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, and *Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, 1814 is located at the National Portrait Gallery, London,

his friend's aesthetic ideas with little notice of the complex relations of form and style within each work.

This is to some extent understandable, as perhaps the most well-known expression of their intellectual relationship is Allston's confession 'to no other man whom I have known, do I owe so much intellectually, as to Mr. Coleridge...'.[4] However, it seems that Allston 'owes' considerably more to Coleridge than perhaps he himself would admit according to some accounts of their relationship, accounts that cast the poet and the painter in roles which reflect assumptions about the relative strength or weakness of their respective sister art. For example, Carl Woodring argues that Allston's indebtedness to Coleridge not only shaped his aesthetic theory, but also his painterly *practice*. According to Woodring, it was Coleridge who taught Allston what might be regarded as a rather common lesson learned at the Royal Academy: that the 'perfect picture' requires the bringing together of the 'harmony of color' and the 'harmony of subject'.[5] He also argues, somewhat confusingly, that despite Allston having given Coleridge his 'best chance to understand painters' by opening up 'for him the glories of Italian churches, frescoes and galleries', that '...had Coleridge known no painters and seen few paintings, his theories of art might have been scarcely different'.[6] Thus Woodring limits Allston's 'influence' upon the writing of his friend. Coleridge's influence on Allston is also noted (more kindly) by Kathleen Coburn who speculates as to the influence Coleridge might have exerted on

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England. See Allston's description of the latter in his letter to Henry Hope Reed, 13 June 1843 in *Corresp.*, 513.

[4] *WA* to William Dunlap, c. 18 February 1834. See *Corresp.*, 352. Allston writes to Dunlap that it was Coleridge who taught him "*never to judge of any work of art by its defects*; a rule as wise as benevolent; and one that while it has spared me much pain, has widened my sphere of pleasure".

[5] Carl Woodring, "What Coleridge Thought of Pictures", *Images of Romanticism: Verbal and Visual Affinities*, ed. Karl Kroeber and William Walling (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978), 100.

[6] See Woodring, "What Coleridge Thought", 95.

the development of American Romantic painting more generally through his 'influence' on Allston's practice.[7]

Elinor Shaffer also seems to channel Allston's artistic achievements through Coleridge, arguing that Coleridge played a more prominent role in the shaping of Romantic art than is generally acknowledged, 'most especially in forging an essential link between certain aspects of the work of the Primitives and that of particular contemporary artists, especially Washington Allston, and in adapting Romantic aesthetics to the special circumstances of English and American art and art criticism at the beginning of the nineteenth century'.[8] In focusing on the former of these points, Shaffer argues that it was Coleridge who prompted a shift in Allston's style, moving him 'in the direction of the nexus between Italian Primitivism and Romanticism'. The significance of this shift, she argues, is confirmed by the increased critical attention to Allston as 'the first major American Romantic painter'.[9] This dynamic of 'influence' also extends beyond practice and into theory, as she continues that in composing his *Lectures on Art*, Allston had 'remained in Coleridge's thrall' and that these lectures demonstrate 'how deeply Coleridge's teaching had entered into his understanding of his art'.[10] It is Coleridge's influence on Allston, she argues, that is partly responsible for the neglect of Allston's *Lectures* by art historians. And this, despite a resurgence in interest spurred by the republication of a facsimile edition of Allston's *Lectures* by

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[7] While Coleridge may have exerted some direct influence on aesthetic thinking in America, his presence there is much more strongly felt through his political and religious writing than quietly through Allston's art: a rewarding line of inquiry. See Richard Henry Dana, Sr., journal 1844-1845, bound volume 143, Dana Family Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, Massachusetts. Dana quotes extensively from Coleridge's *On the Constitution of Church and State*, for example. See also *The Journals of Bronson Alcott*, ed. Odell Shepard (Boston, 1938) xiv. Shepard refers to the "deep effect of Coleridge's *Aids to Reflection*" upon Alcott, "not only in the topics but in the vocabulary and form of his journal entries". These opportunities may be joined to Kathleen Coburn's observation that "As the quotations and Allston's paintings indicate, a study of the intellectual contribution of Coleridge to American romantic art would perhaps be worth making". See S.T. Coleridge, *Notebooks*, vol. i. 2794.

[8] Elinor Shaffer, "Infernal Dreams' and Romantic Art Criticism: Coleridge on the Campo Santo, Pisa", *The Wordsworth Circle* 20 (1989) 11.

[9] See Shaffer, "Infernal Dreams", 15.

[10] See Shaffer, "Infernal Dreams", 18.

Nathalia Wright in 1967, and a fresh evaluation of Allston's life and work in the 1979 exhibition organized by Frank Goodyear, which placed Allston's art in an international context.

Shaffer seems to both acknowledge and exacerbate possible disciplinary tensions in referring to the 'dismissive attitudes of some art critics towards Coleridge' with respect to the philosophical cast of his 'Essays on the Principles of Genial Criticism'.[11] According to Shaffer, comments like those made by Gerdts and Stebbins that while 'ostensibly in support of Allston's exhibition', Coleridge's essays 'really constitute an exposition of Coleridge's aesthetic philosophy and offer only passing references to the artist, the show, or the individual paintings' are indicative of this dismissive attitude.[12] However, despite the desire for the contrary to be true, Gerdts and Stebbins's comment is technically correct. The essays are primarily an exposition of Coleridge's thought, one that of course was informed by Allston, and one that turns briefly to Allston's painting *The Dead Man Restored* as an illustration of those principles. What Shaffer refers to as a 'dismissive attitude' is merely the result of a difference of disciplinary orientation. This does not make the connection between Allston and Coleridge any less interesting, it only points to the limitations implicit in more established lines of argument and indicates that other interpretive tools must be used in understanding the connection between Allston's painting and Coleridge's *Essays*.

As is evidenced by these arguments, the relationship between Allston and Coleridge is badly in need of revision. Allston's creative awareness of his friend's aesthetic ideas does not necessarily mean that he adapted the *practice* of his own art to them (more practical criticism was more potent in this respect); and while Coleridge did, undoubtedly inform the expression of Allston's own attempt at an

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[11] See Shaffer, "Infernal Dreams", 18.

aesthetic theory in his *Lectures on Art*, it would be unrealistic not to acknowledge the countless other 'influences' which filtered through him. Among these must be counted his education at the Royal Academy, his acquaintance with British painters, his travels abroad, and perhaps most importantly, the fact that Allston functioned within two cultural and political contexts: that of America and England. The relationship between the two nations was oftentimes less than cordial, a situation that weighed heavily on Allston's conscience and his reception in both countries: at times, subject to neglect or outright hostility from the British gallery going public (as Coleridge pointed out in referring to the anti-Americanism that he felt was responsible for the poor showing at Allston's exhibition) and at times subject to an American public looking for an art that reflected American values, not for paintings imitative of European landscapes or British aesthetic attitudes. This political tension and confusion is clearly evident in Allston's desire to become the first 'American painter' and his later wish to be remembered and considered as part of the 'British School'.[13]

Most accounts seem to engage one or the other in discussing Allston's work. Art historical studies of Allston, like those of David Bjelajac or Bryan Jay Wolf, tend to focus on Allston as an American painter, situating his work in relation to New England politics, Unitarianism, and his place within the development of transcendentalism and the rise of the Hudson River School. The sheer scope of these studies limits the presence of another informing context: that of English art and literary culture.[14] Likewise, studies of Allston undertaken from a literary perspective,

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[12] William H. Gerdts and Theodore Stebbins, *'A Man of Genius': The Art of Washington Allston 1779-1843* (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1979), 17; See also, Shaffer, "Infernal Dreams", 18.

[13] See WA to Rachel (Moore) Allston Flagg, 12 August 1800. *Corresp.*, 15. In this letter to his mother, Allston writes, "It is so long since I have mentioned anything about my painting that I suppose you have concluded I had given it up. But my thoughts are far enough from that, I assure you. I am more attached to it than ever; and am determined , if resolution and perseverance will effect it, to become the first painter, at least, from America".

[14] See David Bjelajac, "The Boston Elite's Resistance to Washington Allston's *Elijah in the Desert*", *American Iconology: New Approaches to Nineteenth Century Art and Literature*, ed. David C. Miller (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993). For an examination of Allston's art in connection with Freemasonry, see David Bjelajac, *Washington Allston, Secret Societies and the Alchemy of Anglo-*

like those of Elinor Shaffer and Carl Woodring, tend to focus on the rich connection between Allston and Coleridge rather than the developments that occurred upon Allston's first return to America in 1808 and his second return in 1818.

Rather than understand the relationship between Allston and Coleridge in terms of the 'influence' they may or may not have exerted upon one another, it is perhaps more productive to consider them within a larger context, that of their joint participation in the larger questions of the fight against false criticism and false taste and how this shaped their respective responses to disciplinary developments on either side of the Atlantic. In doing so, we might revise the opening provided by Elinor Shaffer so as to consider Coleridge's adaptation of Romantic aesthetics not so much to English and American art in general, but to the criticism of painting in particular, and following from this, its role in the formation of a more comprehensive interdisciplinary criticism. Coleridge's achievement of this was enabled by his friendship with Allston, from whom he gained exposure to a store of disciplinary knowledge that would ultimately help him articulate and illustrate the principles he saw as common to all the fine arts.

The resistance to a structured comparative as well as the sheer number of contexts in which Allston and Coleridge might be considered, makes structuring their relationship rather difficult. The most straightforward approach would be to consider their relationship in terms of the two periods Allston spent abroad: the first, from 1800 to 1808 and the second from 1811 to 1818. In both periods, Allston and Coleridge had spent extended periods of time together, and yet each visit is marked by distinctly different applications of ideas and principles held in common. Most studies tend to conflate these periods, or consider them as a continuum uninterrupted by

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American Painting (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997). For an exploration of a shift in Allston's style from 'classic' to 'classicistic' in the context of Unitarian thought, see Bryan Jay Wolff, *Romantic Re-Vision: Culture and Consciousness in Nineteenth Century American Painting and Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982).

Allston's journey home and the resumption of his contacts in New England literary and artistic circles. Yet this is to neglect important developments both within Allston's art and in his theoretical thinking, the latter set down in Allston's fragmented *Lectures on Art* published posthumously in 1850. These developments help to distinguish Allston from Coleridge and provide a richer understanding of the way in which they turned to painting to explore aesthetic concepts and attempted to resolve more practical critical problems.[15]

The time that Allston and Coleridge spent in Rome is fairly well documented. Having completed his studies at the Royal Academy and his subsequent tour through Paris, Switzerland and Italy, Allston arrived in Rome in January, 1803.[16] While it is generally assumed that Allston and Coleridge met in Rome, an account of Allston's first acquaintance with Coleridge (recounted by Allston to a friend shortly before his death) contained in the Dana Family Papers suggests that they met on the way to Rome:

> I remember well my first acquaintance with C. was in travelling in his company tour to Italy – his streams of discourse were always flowing. One day in crossing some mountain – pass we got out of our carriage as usual and walked – our companion was a worthy retired tradesman, and rather heavy at that – as we jogged along C. was [illegible] with me on some high philosophical matter I forget what – talking finely indeed as he always did but as I had only to listen and was bodily weary and gradually fell behind – I found it made no difference to Coleridge – [illegible] I c'd just hear him carrying on the discourse in full tide to our fat friend – who kept saying "Oh yes Sir", "Certainly Sir" – in fear that he'd be expected to make some deep answer – but there was no danger of that.[17]

Allston and Coleridge became fast friends, and explored Rome together, visiting the Forum, the Castello San Angelo and Borghese Gardens.[18] Of the works they saw together, Coleridge remembered particularly Michelangelo's *Last Judgment*,

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[15] Given the limitations of space in this thesis, these two time periods serve as a rough guide only.
[16] See Wright, *Corresp.*, xviii.
[17] See 'Washington Allston notes and letters concerning his art and his relation to the Dana Family', Dana Family Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, Massachusetts, Dana Family I, Box 55; not dated – 1843-1879.

Raphael's frescoes in the Farnese Palace, and presumably paintings in the Church of Trinita dei Monti.[19] Also among his favourites, Zuccatto records, were the church of S. Paolo Fuori le Mura, Michelangelo's *Moses* and the frescoes in the Sistine Chapel, Raphael's Vatican *Stanze* and *Logge*, and the frescoes in the Camposanto at Pisa.[20] Coleridge also made daily visits to Allston's studio, where the young painter was working on his 'Swiss Landskip' as Coleridge referred to it.[21] It was in Rome, where he 'only planned to stay three days', Coleridge admitted, that he had 'acquired more insight into the fine arts…than he could have in England in twenty years'.[22]

Allston's manner of viewing pictures surely would have appealed to Coleridge. In looking at a picture, Allston availed himself of the power of the 'eye' to reveal the studied structure of individual pictures rather than to take in the whole of the exhibition.[23] For Allston, *looking* was a concentrated action which revealed the harmony of body and mind, sense and thought – one which brought together both the 'mind' and 'palate'. As Washington Irving recollected of Allston's manner of visiting a gallery:[24]

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[18] Richard Holmes, *Coleridge: Darker Reflections* (London: Flamingo, 1999), 54-55.
[19] See Wright, *Corresp.*, 538.
[20] Eduardo Zuccatto, *Coleridge in Italy* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1996), 64-65.
[21] Shaffer, "Infernal Dreams", 15. It was at this time that Allston was working on his painting, *Diana and her Nymphs in the Chase*, or the "Swiss Landskip" as Coleridge referred to it. According to Wright, they "associated nearly exclusively with artists", but both were also part of a prominent German literary circle which included Wilhelm Von Humboldt, Tieck, and Mme de Stael, among others. See Wright, *Corresp.*, 41-43. Holmes too points out these literary connections, but observes that Coleridge's 'real intimacies' were formed with the circle of painters, which included George Wallis and Thomas Russell. See Holmes, *Darker Reflections*, 53.
[22] S.T. Coleridge to Daniel Stuart, 22 August 1806. Quoted in Zuccatto, *Coleridge in Italy*, 64.
[23] According to Moses Sweetser, Irving had become acquainted with Allston just as he had arrived in Rome from France. See Moses Sweetser, *Allston* (1879), 44.
[24] See Sweetser, *Allston*, 40. Sweetser writes that in late 1805 Allston and Vanderlyn were the only two American students there at the time. 'They cast in their lots with an association of youths from Germany, Sweden, and Denmark, who assembled frequently to draw from the living model". He notes that the two "lacked the government patronage and pensions which so greatly aided their European rivals", but had "marked success" nevertheless. See also Sweetser, *Allston*, 44-45 in which Irving provides a touching description of Allston at that time: "There was something to me inexpressibly fascinating in the appearance and manners of Allston. I do not think I have ever been more completely captivated on a first acquaintance. He was of a light and graceful form, with large blue eyes, and black silken hair, waving and curling round a pale, expressive countenance. Everything about him spoke the man of intellect and refinement. His conversation was copious, animated, and highly graphic; warmed by a chaste and gentle humor."

> Never attempt to enjoy every picture in a great collection unless you have a year to bestow upon it. You may as well try to enjoy every dish at a Lord Mayor's feast. Both mind and palate get confounded by a great variety and rapid succession, even of delicacies. The mind can only take in a certain number of images and impressions distinctly; by multiplying the members you weaken each, and render the whole confused and vague. Study the choice pieces in each collection; look upon none else, and you will afterwards find them hanging up in your memory.[25]

Allston's likening of the perusal of 'every picture in a great collection' to the enjoyment of 'every dish at a Lord Mayor's feast' plays upon the literal meaning of taste often referred to within current debates over the concept. His bringing together of mind and palate anticipates his later criticism of the color-design controversy in which the qualities of sense and intellect were artificially separated. Allston would later satirize this debate in his poem 'The Two Painters' (*LA*, 218-239). Coleridge surely would have picked up from Allston some of the vocabulary that characterized this debate, referring to design, Chiaroscuro, etc. in his notebook entries at the time.

Coleridge listened to the remarks that Allston made on the works which they viewed together, recording at one point the following observation of Allston (whose name he spells with only one *l*): 'He works too much with the Pipe in his mouth – looks too much at the particular Thing, instead of overlooking – ubersehen [ubersehen]' (*Notebooks*, ii. 2794).[26] While Coleridge's own practice of 'ubersehen' would become evident in his notebook descriptions and his description of Allston's painting, *Diana and her Nymphs in the Chase*, Allston's remark distinguishes the attention to detail characteristic of the connoisseur from a more comprehensive vision in which the relationship of the parts to the whole is revealed. For Allston, too much attention to detail compromises the general compositional effect: a painter ought not

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[25] See Sweetser, *Allston*, 44.

[26] It is perhaps worthwhile noting here that Holmes cites this comment as evidence of Allston's valuation of "the ideal above all else". However, he fails to define the 'ideal' in Allston's own terms. The 'ideal' for Allston is different from conventional neo-classical assumptions of the ideal as encompassing certain standards against which a work may be measured. Allston's 'ideal' is very much one of the individual painter, as in his Lectures he writes that there may be a *thousand* ideals. For

be concerned primarily with a singular imitative truth (with making a fly that looks *exactly* like a fly), but with the incorporation of this detail into a viable whole.

Contrary to Woodring's argument that had Coleridge known no painters his theory might scarcely have been different, learning to see pictures would prove an important factor in Coleridge's own attempts to articulate his interdisciplinary vision of criticism and underpin his fight against false criticism. This is evident in the attention which Coleridge paid to the structural relationships that underpin the visual image, especially to qualities like depth and proportion. For example, as Zuccatto points out, Coleridge was particularly struck by the 'set of proportional representations' in [Giotto's] half-faded fresco, the *Triumph of Death.*[27] He was also captivated by the 'sense of depth' which, even more-so than color, he felt, 'attracts the beholder'.[28] Proportion and depth form the axis upon which Coleridge's geometric understanding of art would be expressed, especially when combined with his well known attention to picturesque detail.

In this respect, Coleridge's knowledge of painting allowed him to draw broad comparisons and also allowed him to explore, as Zuccatto argues, aesthetic concepts like imitation, which were shared with poetry.[29] Evidence of this can be seen in a well-known notebook entry from 1805 in which Coleridge compares painters with the elder Italian poets:

> In the present age the Poet proposes to himself as his main Object & most characteristic of his art, new and striking Images, incidents that interest the Affections or excite the curiosity of the Reader; and both his characters and his descriptions he individualizes and specifies as much as possible, even to a degree of Portraiture/ Meanwhile in his diction and metre he is either careless (W. Scott) or adopts some mechanical measure, of which one couplet or stanza

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Allston, the ideal is individual – it seems to be the original conception in the mind which may or may not be realized on the canvas in a material way.

[27] See Zuccatto, *Coleridge in Italy*, 66.

[28] See Zuccatto, *Coleridge in Italy*, 66.

[29] See Zuccatto, *Coleridge in Italy*, 66. Zuccatto writes that painting helped Coleridge "reflect" on the "problem of imitation".

> is an adequate specimen, with a language which ~~lae~~ claims to be poetical for no better reason, than that it would be intolerable in conversation or prose/ -- Just so, our Landscape Painters – their foreground and near distances are flat – but the great interest of the Landscape lies in the background, Mountains, Torrents, &c, forbidding the eye to proceed, while nothing exists to repay it for going back again/ Now in the polished elder poets, especially of Italy, all is reversed – Even as in their Landscapes, the front and middle are the most interesting, and the interesting dies gradually away in the background, & the charm of the Picture consists not so much in the specific Images which it conveys as a visual Language to the understanding, as to the exquisite beauty, and proportion of colors, lines, and expression, with which the images are represented – and novelty of subject was not so much sought for, as superior excellence in the manner of treating the same subjects…(*Notebooks*, ii. 2599).

In this passage, the poet's search for novelty and neglect of the structural elements of his art is likened to the painter's neglect of the structural potential of the canvas in drawing his viewer's eye immediately to the 'Mountains, Torrents, &c' in the back of the piece. In doing so, in neglecting the foreground of the picture, the artist forbids 'the eye to proceed, while nothing exists to repay it for going back again'. As Coleridge would later explain in more systematic terms, this straightforward arrangement (rather than one that invites the eye back again), fails to display that 'unity of principle' or that 'progressive transition' that is revealed in method (TM, 630). Coleridge then proceeds to make an important distinction, upon which much of his later aesthetic theorizing relies: that between the 'specific Image' that is conveyed within the picture and the 'visual Language to the understanding'. The former refers to the subject depicted in the image, the latter to the relationships that underpin that image. Thus this 'visual language to the understanding' ought not be considered as medium-based (for example, in terms of the language of paint as opposed to the language of words), but rather as a language revealing method – one that reveals the geometrical structures and 'proportion of colors, lines and expression'. Central to this language is a circular movement, one that reflects the movement of the eye as the 'proportion of colors, lines and expression' encourages it to move from the foreground to the background and 'back again'. Coleridge attempted to articulate this

silent movement in his descriptions of the landscape in Olevano, and in his description of Allston's painting, *Diana and her Nymphs in the Chase*.[30]

In February, 1806 Allston persuaded Coleridge to join him in Olevano, where Coleridge stayed for two months. During this time, Coleridge experimented with the distinction between the 'specific Image' and the structural relationships that underpin it in his descriptions of the surrounding country-side entered into his notebooks. In these passages, Coleridge experiments with using language to draw out the *method* of the picture as opposed to its *effects*. As Shaffer points out, Coleridge's 'interest in picturesque description' was 'well represented in the exercises in landscape description in his notebooks from the Harz Mountains in 1798'.[31] She rightly points out that there is a difference when compared with the passages in this notebook, that Coleridge had now 'absorbed into a new engagement with the internal dynamics of the whole picture as experienced by the beholder'.[32] This is true not only for Coleridge's description of Allston's landscape, but also of Coleridge's vision of the natural landscape surrounding Olevano.

In Coleridge's descriptions of the landscape, it is evident that he views it in terms of a painting common to picturesque description at the time. Yet his attention to the 'surface' detail of a three-dimensional scene viewed in two-dimensional terms reflects a certain tension between poetical language and Coleridge's attempt to communicate the compositional and geometrical aspects of the view before him in a more formal language. This is evident in a Notebook entry from 1806, in which Coleridge provides a detailed description of their surroundings at Olevano

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[30] Washington Allston, *Diana and her Nymphs in the Chase* (1805), Fogg Art Gallery, Harvard. A digital reproduction of this painting can be viewed at: < http://www.artmuseums.harvard.edu>.
[31] Elinor Shaffer, "Coleridge's Ekphrasis: Visionary Word-Painting", *Coleridge's Visionary Languages*, ed. Tim Fulford and Morton D. Paley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 117.
[32] See Shaffer, "Coleridge's Ekphrasis", 117.

(*Notebooks*, ii. 2796). He addresses an imaginary auditor or interlocutor and intends to proceed sequentially, but ends up recording, as it were, his attempt at 'ubersehen':

> ...you must first imagine a round bason* formed by a circle of mountains, the diameter of the Valley about 15 or 16 miles/ These mountains all connected and one; but of very various heights, and the lines in which they sink and rise of various Sweep and Form, sometimes so high as to have no visible superior behind, sometimes letting in upon the Plain one Step above them from behind, sometimes two, and three; and in one place behind the third a bald bright Skull of a mountain...(*Notebooks*, ii. 2796).

Coleridge's description is, in many respects, an instance similar to that described by Karen Georgi in which visual terms of looking were applied to natural landscapes. Coleridge records the height and width of the natural 'landscape', almost framing it through providing an estimation of its measurements and an identification of strong natural markers. This is emphasized by his strong sense of the geometrical shape of the arrangement, as he refers to the 'circle of mountains', 'round bason', and 'diameter' of the elements that comprise the scene. The direction of his gaze is accentuated by the activity implied by the word 'sweep', as his eye travels up the verticals and back down again in quickened motion. In addition to his awareness of the verticals and horizontals, the mountains that 'sink and rise', Coleridge conveys a sense of the depth of the composition. At times he sees 'no visible superior behind', and emphasizes this absence with his use of the word 'step' to signify the multiple planes or depth of the landscape. Coleridge also imparts a sense of forward movement or advancement, as these strong verticals are sometimes repeated: other mountains are 'let' in 'upon the Plain one Step above them from behind'. Significantly, this geometric orientation is punctuated by a strong figurative image through which Coleridge draws attention to a dominant feature, the 'bald bright Skull of a mountain'.

Coleridge continues to work in and around the space of the composition, but makes more frequent use of figurative language in communicating its effects. He writes:

> The other higher mountains that looked in from behind on the bason with more or less command were lit up with snow-relicts, scarcely distinguishable from Sunshine on bare and moist rock opposed to deep Shade, save when (as often happened) both the one and the other were seen at the same time, when 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 this in his Swiss Landskip, of which it is not too much to say – quam qui non amat, illum omnes et musae et venerus odere (*Notebooks*, ii. 2796).

Here, Coleridge describes the picturesque effect produced by the contrast between the bright white-light of the 'snow-relics' and the body of mountains in the foreground, which are darker, their parts more discernable. The higher mountains have assumed human characteristics, as they have 'looked in from behind'. This image not only animates the scene, but also indicates the depth of the picture. It seems as though there is a momentary confrontation as the mountains look in from behind, even as Coleridge stands before them. The other peaks are thus drawn into the picture, their gaze perhaps directed at Coleridge himself or even the composition from an opposing perspective. In describing the view almost as if it were a picture, Coleridge gestures to the landscape in a manner that precipitates the act of looking and writing in his later account of Allston's landscape, *Diana and her Nymphs in the Chase*. In this description, Coleridge demonstrates an understanding of perspective and of the distances represented in a landscape. Yet in describing the mountains as 'lit up', he draws attention away from the geometrical arrangement of the forms and moves his eye to the balance of light and dark within the scene. In doing so, he resorts to a more figurative mode of expression.

Coleridge uses the landscape to explore what appears to be one manifestation of imitation as he would later come to define it as 'Likeness in Difference & a union

of the two' (*Lectures*, ii., 220). He refers to a scene in which the 'snow-relics' are *scarcely* distinguishable from sunshine on bare rock, except when both the snow relics and the sunshine are seen at the same time. When seen at the same time they form one of the 'gentlest diversities possible'. Thus there is a conflation of the two: the snow relics and sunshine. Looked upon singly, it is impossible for the eye to determine which is which; however, as the eye retreats and sees both at the same time, a 'gentle diversity' is detected. This passage demonstrates Coleridge's ability to experience and articulate this relationship of likeness and difference in visual terms.

Coleridge then directs his eye to the particulars of the landscape, describing the hills, mountain boundaries, and a number of steps to the town, his gaze narrowing further to rest on the 'last House', and the 'Copse of young Oaks', a view quite specific and presumably difficult to see at such a distance. Perhaps Coleridge 'observes' what he knows to be there rather than what he actually sees. Yet his eye soon retreats, as he chooses another compositional aspect from which to look at the scene. Once again the underlying geometrical structure is highlighted as Coleridge's eye is caught by the beauty of the roads. He asks, 'but how shall I describe the beauty of the [rounds] roads, winding up the different Hills, now lost & now re-appearing in different arcs & segments of Circles – how call up before you those different masses of Smoke over the vale – I count 10 from this one point of view... in different distances...'(*Notebooks*, ii. 2796). While these roads were surely not laid according to the design, or as part of a grand composition, Coleridge sees in the arcs and circles an underlying geometrical structure. Importantly, it is not constantly present before the eye, as the 'different arcs & segments' are 'now lost & now reappearing', reflecting the way in which compositional aspects of the picture – the underlying geometry appears and fades as alternative aspects of the picture come into view.

Yet Coleridge appears to reach an impasse in communicating these geometrical relationships in language, as he asks 'How shall I describe' the beauty of

them – a question twice repeated. This also demonstrates the importance of close reading as an exercise in close seeing, as Coleridge searches for a means to articulate the underlying compositional components as much as the effect of the whole. In asking this question rather than embarking on a poetical description of the landscape, Coleridge quite deliberately distances himself from it. As a result, he does not use the same kind of poetical language or metaphor to describe the roads as he does the other effects of the picture, as he referred to mountains like 'Skulls', hills like 'Eagle-nests' or the illusion that 'rock had chrystallized into…forms…'.

Coleridge's attempt to express in language the beauty manifest in the relationships before him, is intimately connected to circles, and geometry more generally. While he would later rely on geometry as a means of illustrating 'intuition' in the *Biographia Literaria*, in this instance, he is confronted by a physical manifestation of the concept. There are two important points here that relate to my argument as a whole: the first is that Coleridge asks 'how' am I to describe the beauty – in other words, how to find a language that 'imitates' the geometrical beauty of that compositional aspect – not the details of it, not the single road, but the way in which the road functions geometrically within the picture. How, he seems to ask, is it possible to find a language to express the relationships that underpin the forms of resemblance within this natural picture. Coleridge locates the beauty of the scene in its geometrical arrangement, and yet this arrangement challenges language. The second point is the tension between his desire to communicate the composition and indeed the satisfaction such a composition gives, not in terms of the beauty of its effects, but in terms of the method it reveals, with the impulse to describe the 'specific Image' itself in more figurative language. This point of tension is reflected in a mixture of descriptive styles as Coleridge attempts to answer his own question as to how to 'call up before you those different masses of Smoke over the vale'. He begins his description with counting the masses of smoke before him, 'I count 10 from this

one point of view <for they are burning weeds> in different distances, now faint now vivid, now in shade & now their exquisite blue glittering in Sunshine' (*Notebooks*, ii. 2796). His more documentary approach is soon off-set by his desire to describe the effect of the interplay of these masses with the sunlight, as he traces the way the light plays with them, modulates them, 'exquisite blue glittering in sunshine'. Yet the gentle movement of thought and vision carried by his repetition of 'now' stops, almost as if to restrain himself from going off on a descriptive tangent by returning to 'Our House' for which he gives the location and coordinates.

Coleridge refers to this exercise as a 'description', which denotes some distance, and yet that distance collapses as Coleridge locates himself within the picture. He says, 'This description I have written, standing or sitting on the breast of the fourth Step, or that height which <immediately commands> Olevano' (*Notebooks*, ii. 2796). He seems to give a sense of the whole scene and the perspective from which he saw the scene – and yet he implies that the viewer is at a further remove; that his reader take a step back in a sense, so as to see that he is on the Fourth Step. And yet while this would seem to signal the end of the passage, it is as though the concentration with which he has looked at the scene might bear fruit – a hope realized in the following segment where more concentrated figurative images appear. He contrasts this view with the view from the house, one which he writes from memory, and which he describes in more poetical terms, 'whole Vale heaves and swells like a Plate of cut and knobby Glass of a Spread of wood knotty and at the same time blistered', 'even as a stormy Sea might appear from a Balloon' to describe the elevations, swells and ridges, and again getting closer and closer, narrowing his view, for in the 'Vale you are in a Labyrinth of sweet Walks, glens, green Lanes with Hillsides for Hedges…'(*Notebooks*, ii. 2796).

In a later entry, Coleridge begins his description in language specific to the discipline, and commonplace for both the artist and the connoisseur. He writes,

'What Tone to colors, chiaro –Oscuro to Light & Shade; viz. Such a management of them that they form a[s] beautiful whole, independent of the particular Images colored, lit up, or shaded' (*Notebooks*, ii. 2797). While it is unclear whether he is speaking about a picture or a natural scene, there is certainly a sense of an absorption or understanding of the relationships between line and color. These proportions are the result not of chance, but method, as he refers to the 'management of them' – a management which (if referring to a picture) reveals the method that guided their application to the canvas. Whether directed to a natural scene or a painting, these comments reveal Coleridge's awareness of the *surface* of the canvas, quite apart from its subject. This is evident in his emphasis on the way in which the proportions at work within the scene form a 'beautiful whole, independent of the particular Images…'. Thus the eye is rewarded for returning back again, its route determined not by the 'specific Image', but rather by the way in which the interaction of light, color and tone reveal the compositional structures and proportion that underpins that image.

Geometry figures prominently within his notebooks in a more literal way, as well, as Coleridge inserts pictures, figures, arcs, circles, ellipses and lines throughout the entries in this period (*Notebooks*, ii. 2821). One such drawing, of an ellipse, interrupts his writing as he describes '…a very impressive View of the deep deep Vale, with noise of unseen Waters (it has been 3 days Rain) and its concave back sloping huge high wall, forming half an Ellipse [picture] with what bulges, inequalities, Ridges, cultivation and varieties of cultivation, bareness & variety of Bareness'(*Notebooks*, ii. 2822). Here we get a sense of Coleridge's ability to see the abstracted form that underpins and supports the detail – the simple ellipse he sketches out on the page contrasted with the 'bulges, inequalities, cultivation' etc, the picturesque details that fill it.

In Coleridge's ekphrastic rendering of Allston's landscape, *Diana and her Nymphs in the Chase*, there is still this undercurrent of a tension between giving details with respect to the geometrical relationships within the work, the direction, coordinates, and placement of objects which reveal this, and engaging in a much more fluid and poetical description of the work and the effects upon the canvas. In some respects, this is a tension between two different cognitive responses to the picture: the first is looking at the picture so as to discern the principles that underpin and shape the relationships between depicted forms, and the second is looking at the picture repeatedly in describing those forms in a fluid manner, so as to confirm the response made in writing. Of the picture, Coleridge writes:

> Mr(*) Allston's Landscape
>
> Lefthand of the Foreground/ Side of a Rock, steep as a wall, of purplish hue, naked all but one patch of *Bushage*, breaking the Line of the Edge about a yard from the ground, and another much smaller and thinner a little above it/ & here and there a moss-stain. Up the rock, a regular-shaped Pine, like its own Shadow, as I have observed in Nature/ at the foot of the Pine & next the <Side> frame a bush with trodden Ferns at its feet, which almost hide a small Cleft or Fissure in the rock, beautiful purple-crimson mosses on the other side of the fissure and slopes down to the bottom, fissure with ferns & mosses & naked purple rock last/ the small Cleft touches the junction of the side & bottom frame/ & three spans from thence commences the great chasm, & dark, bridged over by the weedy tree, but slimy, the bark half-scathed & jagged/ oer a perilous bridge/ take care, for heaven's sake/ it begins smooth scathed and sattiny, mouldring, barkless, knotty/ red Flowers growing up beside it/ well, here rises the forked old Trunk, its left Fork scathed and sattiny and seeming almost to correspond with the bridge-tree (*Notebooks*, ii. 2831).

He describes the painting as it opens before his eyes, writing from vision and from memory in turns. The points at which he breaks his eyes from either the picture or the freshly written words are signaled by the forward slashes which he uses throughout the text. These slashes seem to correspond to the movement of his eyes, whether they are carried by the compositional aspects of the painting or deliberately directed by Coleridge to revisit a place so as not to miss a detail. Coleridge begins with recording his coordinates, 'Lefthand of the Foreground/ Side of a Rock', but almost

immediately registers his presence through giving the work a figurative dimension through his use of a simile, 'steep as a wall'. The passage begins slowly, with Coleridge observing the scene, and at one point comparing Allston's pine tree 'with its own Shadow', an image that Coleridge has 'observed in Nature'.

Yet Coleridge's description gains momentum, as this movement is quickened by his use of figurative language and poetic devices. Coleridge seems to use repetition not only of sounds and words, but he repeats his gaze until he becomes more and more immersed in the details of the picture. He repeats the 'f' sound in 'frame', 'Ferns', 'feet', 'Fissure', but importantly, he actually repeats these words as he revisits their images: 'Fissure' is repeated three times, while 'rock', 'ferns', 'frame' 'purple', 'side', 'scathed', 'sattiny', 'bark', 'bottom', 'bridge/ bridged' 'Cleft' and 'mosses' twice each. The ampersand acts as something of a refrain, connecting these words together: 'ferns & mosses & naked purple rock'; 'side & bottom'; 'frame/& three spans'; 'great chasm & dark'; 'half-scathed & jagged'; 'scathed & sattiny'. It works rather like the 'keystone' to which he later refers which binds all the colors together. These words circle around each other, and the space affords them a structural function which reflects the direction of Coleridge's gaze around the elements within the picture. This echoes to some extent the circular motion of his eye, as his description begins from the left, rests at the 'small Cleft' that 'touches the junction of the side & bottom frame' and then writes that 'three spans from thence commences the great chasm'. Thus rather than continue looking from the left, Coleridge switches to the right as the point of commencement, turning back toward the ground he has just covered, viewing it from an alternative perspective.

It is at this point that Coleridge begins to document his own physical presence and movement within the painting. He is aware of distance, of the side and bottom of the frame, of the depth of the chasm, and assigns qualities to things known only through touch, 'jagged' bark and 'slimy' tree, what Elinor Shaffer refers to as 'the

very textures of the landscape'.[33] He fully enters the picture at the 'perilous bridge', at which point he has taken us within the picture and emphatically warns us to 'take care'.[34] Elinor Shaffer argues that this passage 'seems to give a direct experience of walking in the scene depicted', and that 'both "I" and "you" are present; here is a contemplative I, an active I, and an I who acts as guide to the "you".'[35] Coleridge's warning, she argues, conveys the sense that '"You" the companion, "you" the spectators, "you" the readers are activated, are put at risk.'[36] And yet Coleridge pulls back, as if it is too dangerous, signaling the distance and safety that comes with *looking* at a picture or prospect rather than moving within it:

> Perilous ground between this Trunk and that noble Tree which with its graceful Lines of motion exhales up into the sky/ for when I look at it, it *rises* indeed, even as smoke in calm weather, always the same height & shape, & yet you see it move/ who has cut down its twin bough, its brother? – Well, do not blame it/ for it has made such a sweet Stool at the bottom of the Tree, and the high top with its umbrella cloud of Foliage is over your head – behind this and the Trunk is that red spot, scarlet moss-cups or a lichen stain (*Notebooks*, ii. 2830).

The passing of the danger corresponds to Coleridge's emphasis on vision, and a reassertion of his control over the interpretation of what he sees. This is evident in his preceding the verbal image with the phrase '...when I look at it'. Coleridge's series of word repetitions and adjectives are separated out into more formal figurative comparisons, thus contributing to the safe distance from the 'perilous ground' through using words such as 'graceful' and 'exhales'. The comparison with smoke provides comfort, silence, stillness, and constancy 'always the same height & shape' – a constancy which perhaps refers back to the permanence of the picture. Our eyes are raised to the higher planes of the picture and brought down to find some rest or repose on the 'sweet Stool at the bottom of the Tree'. The tone changes from one of

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[33] See Shaffer, "Coleridge's Ekphrasis" , 119.
[34] See Shaffer, "Coleridge's Ekphrasis", 119.
[35] See Shaffer, "Coleridge's Ekphrasis", 119.
[36] See Shaffer, "Coleridge's Ekphrasis", 119.

immediacy and peril to one of exploration: Coleridge sees 'the great Bowder Stone on its left which at its bottom half touches the edge of the purple cloak and I must climb over it to get the prospect of the far valley, hidden by the Stone & the Rock'. He seeks within the painting a prospect like that which a viewer has of a painting, a prospect which has been obscured because of his proximity to the elements within the painting.

And yet he still references the boundaries of the foreground as he refers to the pine tree as '<one of> the boundaries of the left foreground'. At this point he draws two figures, the first an arch, presumably an abstraction of the form of the Bowder stone, and a line that echoes the more distant mountain range with a diagonal extending to the base of the taller of the two mountains. With this drawing he records in pictorial form as well as verbal form the 'triangular Interspace of the Rock/ and in this vale, dim seen, field & wood & sunshine shaft [picture] is distanced by the snowy Mountain/'. The line which he draws has no obvious compositional correspondent, but rather needs to be considered as marking the depth of the picture and the direction of his gaze were he to move – so that one point of the three-dimensional triangle would be rooted to his space beyond the boulder and would mark his view of the valley, enclosed on either side by the mountains. The triangular space is the space in between the distant mountains that frame the valley, and the opening between them which allows a view of that valley from a position beyond the Bowder stone. His sense of moving around the picture to achieve these perspectives is really remarkable, and demonstrates that he is really working not only to see the picture from one position, but to explore it from a number of positions (as a painter would have to study a scene to be aware of how things look from a variety of perspectives). The valley is distanced by the mountains – and in this respect it seems to be almost an echo or a replication of the foreground to which Coleridge pays most attention – as

the proportion of the large mountain to the foreground is similar to the proportion of the distant mountain and its relationship to the 'dim valley'.

Coleridge's eyes then move from the figure of the single tree growing from the steep incline, to the dog, but then jump to the strong vertical on the right-hand side: the 'tree with its cavern-making roots stretching out to some faintly purplish Stones that connect the right extremity with the purple rock on the left extremity'. Coleridge is responsive to the use of color as a compositional tool, as it brings together and connects the various parts of the picture. And yet he interrupts himself to note that the paint used is 'really grey-paint, but in appearance & and so call it, it is grey-blue faintly purplish)'. Thus he comments not on what he *knows* the colors to be, but rather on their appearance; the way in which certain colors are transformed by virtue of their proximity to other colors. Nevertheless, he retains a strong sense of the compositional frames embedded within the picture. He notices the importance that the smallest of details have in pulling together the picture as a whole, as he observes:

> ...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 Y hold even all the tints of the whole picture, the keystone of its colors – so aided by the bare earth breaking in & making an irregular road to the Lake on which that faery figure shoots along as one does in certain Dreams, only that it touches the earth which yet it seems to have no occasion to touch/ but the delicate black & 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 grey> 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...(*Notebooks*, ii. 2830).

This passage reveals his recognition of the method at work within the picture, his intellectual appreciation of it, and his sensitivity to the dream-like quality of the picture, one that invites a more poetic response. Yet Coleridge seems to resist the invitation, as something either holds him back, or acts as a barrier to his averting his eyes from the picture and abandoning his position as a viewer, and instead turning to the memory of it within his mind. For example, those elements that reveal the

'method' of the picture include for Coleridge the way in which color functions within the picture, his awareness of how certain elements 'aid' the introduction of other elements, and his tendency to count objects within the frame of the picture (here, he counts '12 small stones' and in his view of Olevano, he counted ten 'masses of smoke'). He refers to the 'bisection' of the foreground and the way in which the colors function in pulling the picture together. This is an example of the properties of the crystal, or prism that Coleridge finds so captivating, as if the 'grey-white' colors in the Greyhound, and the 'grey-blue' of the stones refract the light of the picture, spreading its manifold gradations throughout the canvas, even as it is collected and condensed within these forms. This image seems to be confirmed by Coleridge's reference to the stones themselves as the 'keystone' of the painting's colors. The dominance of this grey-blue purplish tint is an illustration of the power of color to achieve 'harmony' within the picture.

And yet it works in concert with geometry, as Coleridge refers to the 'crescent' which has an important structural function in making the 'transition' to the trunk of the larger tree. Again, circles appear, but this time tapered into crescents. The strength of circular forms is repeated as Coleridge refers twice to the presence of the crescents, a shape that is further emphasized by the 'halo' and the round shape of the stones. Yet this structural feature is also reinforced by Coleridge's use of language, in particular his repetitive use of the ampersand to connect the images before him on the page, his use of alliteration in describing the 'small stones', the 's' sound that echoes the soft 's' in 'crescent', and the repetition of 'bright', an echo of the 'b' sound in his description of the 'body-branch' reaching from the tree.

These devices form something of a bridge between his intellectual appreciation of the compositional elements of the picture and the dream-like quality of its effect on Coleridge. The quality of the handling of the elements within the picture is described by Coleridge as 'delicate', an adjective again repeated twice

within the passage. The impulse to write more fluidly is also evident in the way in which he animates certain aspects of the picture, the 'bare earth breaking in'. This image signals a moment of introspection, as Coleridge conflates himself with the 'faery figure' that 'shoots along as one does in certain Dreams, only that it touches the earth which yet it seems to have no occasion to touch/'. The end of this thought is demarcated by the forward slash, as Coleridge diverts his eye again outward to the picture plane. This idea of the figure in dreams 'touching' the earth, is rather like using the presence of the picture as a reference point – that Coleridge is firmly rooted to it and its physicality and this is reflected in the brokenness of his language and description generally. This is also evident as he refers to the three Goddesses, 'For them I must trust to the moment of inspiration', leaving them behind to comment once again on the 'Sky & Perspective of the Clouds' which contrasts strongly with the 'many many newly picturesque weeds'. This demonstrates that he seems to be resisting 'inspiration', in a sense, or at least postponing it until after his initial and detailed experience of the picture.

Also noteworthy, is the way in which Coleridge's nouns are almost laden with adjectives, as if to suggest the difficulty sequencing words poses to communicating spatial dimensions, particularly the compositional structure provided by light. It is as though the words must reflect the immediate impression of the glance, as Coleridge describes the 'divine semitransparent and grey-green Light', 'cavern-making roots', 'delicate grey-white Greyhound', 'bright left-hand thick body-branch & trunk', 'faintly purplish Stones', 'old thin snaggy tree', 'many many newly picturesque weeds', and 'beautiful purple-crimson mosses'. From these adjectives, and from his repetition of certain words, Coleridge builds a matrix of references, a spatial configuration that allows the immediacy of the glance to shine through the language. Adding to the fullness of this description is the way in which he almost seems to name

the elements in the picture, like 'bridge-tree', 'smoke tree', 'sunshiny mountain', and 'noble Tree'.

Coleridge's attention to the structures beneath the image in his descriptions both of the landscape surrounding Olevano and within Allston's picture found an echo in a series of sonnets written by Allston upon his return to America in 1808: the 'Sonnet on Rembrandt; occasioned by his picture of Jacob's Dream'; 'Sonnet on the group of the three angels before the tent of Abraham, by Raffaelle, in the Vatican' and his 'Sonnet on a Falling group in the Last Judgment of Michael Angelo, in the Cappella Sistina'. The sonnets were published along with several other poems in *The Sylphs of the Seasons*, a small volume published first in London, 1813 followed by publication in America that same year.

The three sonnets selected represent three different painting styles embodied in the work of Raphael, Michelangelo and Rembrandt. As was briefly discussed in Chapter Three, the division between the Italian and Dutch styles was one that played into the color-design controversy, and one that, as Funnell points out, represented two different attitudes toward imitation. While it was commonly held that Dutch painting exemplified imitation as a direct copy of nature, Italian art was associated with a vision of imitation that was more in keeping with the poetical ideal. This controversy shaped Allston's response to critical faults within his own discipline, which he communicated both in his *Lectures* and in his poetry. While his poem 'The Two Painters' is more directly concerned with the spuriousness of the color-design argument, Allston's sonnets reveal his own attempts to redirect the terminology that had become so jaded (*LA*, 218-239). Within them, he turned both eye and pen to the structural integrity of painting. Yet curiously, the language that Allston uses is something of a departure from the vocabulary generally associated with these artists. In this respect, his lines also reveal a transition, or perhaps refinement of Allston's thinking that reflects his time in Coleridge's company.

Shortly after his arrival in London, Allston wrote a letter to his friend Charles Fraser in which he ranks, in academic fashion, the living artists with whom he has come into contact. He ranks Fuseli after West, claiming that though he has seen only a few of Fuseli's pictures, they are 'sufficient to entitle him to immortality'.[37] He singles out two pictures, one of a scene in *Hamlet*, and another, *Sin separating Death and Satan*. Of the latter, he writes, 'The attitude of Satan is beyond improvement sublime', a picture, he continues, 'worthy of being joined with the name of Milton'. His judgment of the picture is borne out in the following lines:

> Artist sublime, I own thy powerful spell
> I feel thy fire, and hear the blasts of Hell;
> I see thy monster from the canvas stride,
> While chilly tremors o'er my senses glide;
> Thro' heaving throttle vainly gasp for breath
> And feel the tortures of approaching death.
> I hear thy Satan's rebel thunders roll
> While awful tempests gather round my soul.
> Convulsive now I lift the admiring eye,
> And now with horror from his presence fly;
> Still in suspense, as laboring fancy burns,
> I hate, admire, admire, and hate by turns.[38]

As if to support his judgment of the 'sublime' attitude of Satan within the picture, Allston's description brims with the vocabulary of the sublime. This is not uncommon especially in reference to Fuseli's subject. He refers to the 'powerful spell' of Fuseli, the 'blasts of Hell', 'monster', 'chilly tremors', 'heaving throttle' and his vain 'gasp for breath', which all indicate not only a sense of imminent danger, but also the degree to which the work has affected him physically. Also common is Allston's invocation or address of Fuseli in the opening lines, directing his comments

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[37] See Wright, *Corresp.*, 26. Allston admired Fuseli, and recounts in his correspondence his brief meeting with him. See WA to William Dunlap, 15 October 1833. *Corresp.*, 339. At the time of his first trip abroad, he visited Fuseli at his studio, and saw three or four of his paintings from the Milton Gallery. Allston records that "he seemed gratified that we were pleased. But he would not suffer us to like every thing; for when I stopped before one, and expressed the pleasure I felt, (and it was sincere), he said abruptly, "No, sir, you don't like that – you can't like it – 'tis bad". At that time, Allston records, he "thought Fuseli the greatest painter living".

[38] *WA* to Charles Fraser, 25 August [1801]. *Corresp.*, 25.

to the author of the painting before him. Yet curiously, Allston locates the power of the work in the artist himself, and not so much in the subject. He refers to 'thy powerful spell', 'thy fire', 'thy monster', and 'thy Satan', asserting Fuseli's possession of the subject. In keeping the artist in view, Allston seems to maintain a certain distance which asserts the presence of the picture over the presence of the subject.

There are two turns, or shifts, within the poem. Allston turns from Fuseli to the picture itself (though asserting Fuseli's presence within its elements), and Allston's language is that of sensation and immediacy, as images of fire and cold, sounds, sight and breath seem to penetrate the boundaries of his senses and advance into the very sanctuary of his soul. Yet Allston stirs from this experience of the picture, he regains possession of his eye, marked by an act of will, 'convulsive now I lift the admiring eye' – a reassertion of his distance from the picture and his role as spectator of it. This perhaps signals an end to the physical experience of the picture, and a turn to thoughts of the picture in a more critical way. Just as the point of entry into the painting is when he 'sees' the monster, the exit point from his experience of the painting is when he 'lifts the admiring eye'. The effects of the painting remain with Allston, as he moves away from Satan with horror, a movement that contrasts with his admiration as Allston is suspended between these two emotions. In later poems written on paintings, Allston seems to retain this awareness of looking, even as he is absorbed within the 'action' of the picture. He uses this distance to meditate on the structure of the piece, and the effects produced by that deeply embedded structure as well as the effects produced by the subject.

This is particularly apparent in Allston's sonnets, which differ considerably from the early lines on Fuseli. Composed some five years after his education at the Royal Academy and his tour on the continent, the sonnets demonstrate a refinement of the way in which he expresses the structures that open to the eye upon viewing the

painting. It is perhaps noteworthy that Allston's poems are distinctly *not* pictorial in manner – there is no sense in which they vye with, or compete with the work, nor do they attempt to recreate the work in language. Rather, Allston continues to meditate on the structures that hold his eye. In this respect, the sonnets reveal an attempt to communicate the beauty of the structural elements within paintings in much the same way that Coleridge attempted in writing his descriptions.

Allston's 'Sonnet on the Group of the Three Angels before the Tent of Abraham, by Raffaelle, in the Vatican', begins with a description not of the work itself (this has been placed within the title – the focal point to which he gestures), but rather with a description of the feeling it impresses upon him:

> O, NOW I feel as though another sense,
> From heaven descending, had informed my soul;
> I feel the pleasurable, full control
> Of Grace, harmonious, boundless, and intense.
> In thee, celestial Group, embodied lives
> The subtile mystery, that speaking gives
> Itself resolved; the essences combined
> Of Motion ceaseless, Unity complete.
> Borne like a leaf by some soft eddying wind,
> Mine eyes, impelled as by enchantment sweet,
> From part to 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 (*LA*, 274).[39]

In beginning his sonnet with the word 'NOW', Allston seems to conflate his writing of the poem with his viewing of the picture: it is impossible to know whether the descent of this 'sense/ From heaven' is the result of his poetic meditation on the picture written in recollection, or whether he was struck by this upon his initial view of the picture, or whether his intent is to give the illusion of immediacy. Nevertheless, what Allston feels corresponds in some degree to that which, in his mind, guides the artist in his execution of the work.

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[39] *Abraham and the Three Angels*, Loggia di Raffaello, Vatican.

Allston's description of the picture is unique in that it is not pictorial – rather, it is a description that centers on the motion called forth by the geometry of the composition. Allston explores the relationship between the effects of the picture and the geometric structures that underpin it through the academic principles of grace, harmony and unity. He does not merely apply these terms to the picture, but rather uses poetry to discover them within the picture. For example, as Monk points out, Grace was a term that 'had special significance for the painter' and was current in the criticism of painting throughout the eighteenth-century. Richardson spoke 'a great deal of "grace and greatness"' a term that featured prominently in writing by Winckelmann and de Piles. For de Piles, as for Winckelmann, grace is that which '...pleases, and gains the Heart, without concerning itself with the Understanding'. According to Monk, grace 'conveys...the qualities that are to be associated with sublimity in all the arts – the *je-ne-sais-quois*, the wonderful, the surprising, the marvellous, and, more important, those indefinable beauties that lie beyond the rules and that form the nucleus of the rebellion against the rules themselves'.[40]

However, Allston adapts the term so that its sublimity ('boundless and intense') is balanced by the feeling of 'pleasurable, full control' which it produces in the spectator. This control is embodied in the compositional qualities of the group represented in the picture. The structure of the group is based on principles that Allston himself would employ in his own picture of *The Dead Man Restored by Touching the Bones of the Prophet Elisha*, and in his later painting titled *The Sisters* by Coleridge. The group illustrates that 'subtile mystery' Allston writes, that 'speaking gives/ Itself resolved'. This phrase holds within it a juxtaposition, or conflation of the narrative, temporal quality of 'speaking' and the more spatial sense of the term 'resolved' which indicates a 'dissolution or separation into elements' or

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[40] See Monk, *The Sublime*, 171.

which anticipates the nineteenth-century use of the term resolution to characterize the effect of an 'optical instrument in making the separate parts of an object... distinguishable by the eye'[41] or, again this sense of resolving or reducing a non-material thing into simpler forms, or of converting it into some other thing or form'.[42] This juxtaposition is embodied in the arrangement of the picture which produces a sense of simultaneous movement and fixity which is almost trance-like. This is emphasized in the 'enchantment sweet' which counters the more negative connotations of the misdirected gaze depicted in earlier satirical treatments of the subject. Allston's eyes in this picture appear to surrender to the artist as he likens them to a leaf bourne upon a 'soft eddying wind'. His eye moves 'from part to part with circling motion' and yet it seems 'unconscious of the power to move'; it is able to dictate the direction of the gaze, but at the same time there is something in the picture that suppresses that power. This sense of fixity and movement is emphasized further in the contrast between the fixity of the intuited relationships and the way in which his eye 'runs' through the 'countless changes' that are represented in the details of the work – the changes that belong to the image itself, rather than to the structural elements that underpin it. The eye runs over these details, these 'countless changes', and yet it seems to gaze on one as these details are absorbed as a part of the underlying structure. Thus they are fixed on the structural and compositional patterns in the work, and yet they are drawn over its surface. This 'circling motion' also reflects the reward one receives for following the parts of the picture, recalling Coleridge's observation on those elements that 'repay' the 'eye for going back again' in early landscape painting (*Notebooks*, ii. 2599). In this way, Allston attempts to give a sense in language not of the particular elements in the picture itself, but its possession of 'Motion ceaseless, Unity complete'.

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[41] "Resolve", *Oxford English Dictionary*, Compact Edition, 1979.
[42] "Resolution", *Oxford English Dictionary*, Compact Edition, 1979.

Allston's sonnet on Raphael can be contrasted with his 'Sonnet on a Falling Group in the Last Judgment of Michel Angelo, in the Cappella Sistina':

> How vast, how dread, o'erwhelming, is the thought
> Of space interminable! To the soul
> A circling weight that crushes into naught
> Her mighty faculties! A wondrous whole,
> Without or parts, beginning, or an end!
> How fearful, then, on desperate wings to send
> The fancy e'en amid the waste profound!
> Yet, born as if all daring to astound,
> Thy giant hand, O Angelo, hath hurled
> E'en human forms, with all their mortal weight,
> Down the dread void, -- fall endless as their fate!
> Already now they seem from world to world
> For ages thrown; yet doomed, another past,
> Another still to reach, nor e'er to reach the last (*LA*, 273).

In contrast to the softer tones which he uses to characterize Raphael, Michelangelo is certainly cast more in terms of the sublime. Yet it is a sublime which, incidentally, differs in nature from the sense of sublime that infuses his earlier lines on Fuseli. Whereas in his earlier lines on Fuseli, Allston emphasized those aspects of the sublime manifest in sensation (hot, cold, sight, sound, etc.), in these lines, one is struck by the solidity – the weight of the terminology in words like 'vast', 'dread', 'space interminable', 'circling weight', 'crushes', 'profound' (the declaration of which is emphasized through Allston's liberal use of exclamation points). This shift of emphasis indicates that Allston has located the power of the picture not so much in the physical response that it calls forth, but rather in the 'thought' that is impressed upon him through the structure of the work. The 'thought' takes precedence over the soul, and in a sense, overwhelms the soul, as opposed to Raphael's picture, which gently descended into the soul.

The sense of the suspension within this sonnet contrasts with the gentle movement and transitions within his sonnet on Raphael. The eye does not follow the circles as in the previous sonnet – there is no 'circular motion', but rather a 'circular weight' which crushes as it penetrates the soul. There is a sense of physical

suspension and temporal suspension as they are eternally falling, thrown to a kind of temporal purgatory which prohibits them from ever reaching their fate. This suspension is communicated in terms of the *lack* of parts and wholes – this sense of a 'wondrous whole,/ Without or parts, beginning, or an end!' There is no sense of the eye travelling like a leaf on a 'soft eddying wind', but rather the eye is confronted by a single moment, it seems, not with respect to the subject and the movement of the subject, but a sense that is enforced by the composition of the piece. This suspended state denies one the pleasure of tracing the forms within the group. The sense of parts to wholes within the structure of Raphael's painting is displaced by a structure which seems to absorb the parts to such an extent that they cannot stand on their own – they are not a 'self-unravelling clue', but are fully unravelled. In this respect, it is almost as though the painting is a *symbol* of this thought, the thought of 'space interminable'.

Allston's 'Sonnet on Rembrandt; Occasioned by his Picture of Jacob's Dream' reveals another important influence in adopting other means, figures and images to express and articulate this aspect of his art. In this poem, as in Allston's *Lectures on Art*, he often reverts to poetry in communicating those aspects of the art that seem to evade more systematic or philosophical means of expression. In keeping with his emphasis on 'feeling' as being that internal rule, or marker, of the artist that allows him to measure the extent to which he has realized that conception, Allston appeals to the philosophical understanding of the artist in terms of the 'philosophical poet', Wordsworth. The sonnet reads:

> As in that twilight, superstitious age
> When all beyond the narrow grasp of mind
> Seemed fraught with meanings of supernal kind,
> When e'en the learned, philosophic sage,
> Wont with the stars through boundless space to range,
> Listened with reverence to the changeling's tale;--
> E'en so, thou strangest of all beings strange!
> E'en so thy visionary scenes I hail;
> That, like the rambling of an idiot's speech,
> No image giving of a thing on earth,

> Or thought significant in Reason's reach,
> Yet in their random shadowings give birth
> To thoughts and things from other worlds that come,
> And fill the soul, and strike the reason dumb (*LA*, 276).

In these lines, Allston seems to extol the kind of visionary or natural language that is derived not from the dry language of philosophical inquiry, but from a kind of philosophical feeling. He seems to meditate on a lost or long-gone quality in recalling a past in which 'meanings of a supernal kind' were privileged. Where feeling, perhaps, rather than reason prevailed even for the philosophic sage, ranging through space with stars and listening with reverence to simple things – so height and loftiness are associated with philosophy is brought to earth. This is possibly an allusion to Wordsworth as a philosophical poet.

This connection is perhaps made stronger by Allston's phrasing of the distinction between the specified subject of the picture, and its underlying structure in terms of this natural language, in particular, the language of the idiot's speech, a language whose structure and origin is closer to that of nature than man. Allston's reference to the idiot's speech might possibly be an allusion to Wordsworth's poem, 'The Idiot Boy', in which the boy remains silent when confronted with the language of man, but responsive to that of nature.[43] Allston praises Rembrandt's visionary scenes in this context through emphasizing their divine simplicity. Like the ramblings of the idiot's speech, they possess a communicative power beyond normal comprehension.

Feeling was an essential part of the judgment of a work of art for Allston, who criticized 'pseudo-connoisseurs' for their emphasis on knowledge rather than feeling: 'But why talk of feeling, says the pseudo-connoisseur, where we should only, or at least first, bring knowledge?' This, Allston continues, is the 'common cant of those

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[43] See William Wordsworth, "The Idiot Boy", *Poems in Two Volumes and Other Poems, 1800-1807*, ed. Jared Curtis (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992).

who become critics for the sake of distinction. Let the Artist avoid them, if he would not disfranchise himself in the suppression of that uncompromising *test* within him, which is the only sure guide to the truth without'(*LA*, 79). For Allston, feeling, rather than knowledge, is the measure against which the artist can determine the extent to which he has 'hit the mark', a position he argues within his *Lectures on Art*, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

In this chapter I have attempted to demonstrate the ways in which both Coleridge and Allston attempted to describe structural and geometrical relationships either within the natural landscape, or within art. Each continued to draw upon imitation in gesturing to the resemblance between the picture and their description of both the image, and the structural relationships that underpin that image. The following chapter will examine the extent to which both Allston and Coleridge drew upon the mimetic power to build a matrix of language that might allow those relationships to shine through critical language, without intending that language to necessarily 'reflect' or 'depict' those relationships in pictorial terms.

Chapter Six

Imitation, Intuition and the 'self-unravelling clue'

In the previous chapter, I argued that there were two manifestations of the 'genius of criticism': one that reflects imitation in the sense of pictorial representation (more commonly understood in terms of the 'poetics of prose'), and another, which draws upon imitation as a means of revealing and communicating clear and distinct ideas registered within the geometry of the picture. For Allston and Coleridge, the latter was manifest in their respective attempts to articulate the fixity of structural or geometrical components and the running movement of the eye in language. In this chapter I would like to explore the ways in which their initial articulation of this presence (the 'visual language to the understanding' for Coleridge, and the 'Motion ceaseless, Unity complete' described by Allston) was given a new expression in a more formal critical language – one that reflected the critical distance necessary to communicate the truth of the picture, rather than register its effects. Through using new interpretive models that appealed to the understanding, both Coleridge and Allston had hoped to infuse new life into what had become a staid and ineffective language of criticism.

The procedural model that guided both Allston and Coleridge was based on their joint assertion of the connection between the artist and the critic -- that the critic must 'judge in the same spirit in which the Artist produced, or ought to have produced' as Coleridge argued in his 'Essays on the Principles of Genial Criticism' (PGC, 360). Allston phrased this connection in similar terms, writing to his friend John Knapp in 1803 (before his first acquaintance with Coleridge), that 'to judge with propriety the critic should be enabled to incorporate his mind with his author'.[1] The duty of the critic, in their eyes, was no longer to impose upon a picture a set of

externally developed criteria (as neo-classical criticism seemed to dictate), but rather, to intuit that which the artist *ought* to have produced, and using the rules divined in this way, apply them to that which the artist *had* produced. Thus the 'ideal', one could say, that guided the judgment of the actual picture would be intuited from the terms of the picture itself rather than from an arbitrary collection of established, but dissociated rules.

Yet despite adopting a similar procedural model, both went about exploring the potential within this model (and the terms in which it could be expressed) in ways that reflected different disciplinary sensibilities. Upon his return to England in 1806, Coleridge drew upon the disciplinary knowledge he had gained in Rome in advancing a distinctly interdisciplinary approach to criticism. His advancement of philosophical method as the foundation of this approach is evident in publications such as *The Friend*, his 1808 *Lectures on the Principles of Poetry* and his 1811-1812 series of *Lectures on Shakespeare and Milton in Illustration of the Principles of Poetry*. While Coleridge had again become immersed in literary circles, Allston remained in primarily painterly circles, having remained in Rome for two years after Coleridge's departure.[2] As a result, Allston took a more inward look at the critical abuses plaguing his own discipline. Upon his return to the states in 1808, Allston turned first to satirical poetry as a means of commenting upon the role of the color-design controversy in fuelling the 'false taste' that plagued the fine arts. As his later correspondence and *Lectures on Art* suggest, he, like Coleridge (and indeed looking to Coleridge), attempted to challenge this 'false taste' through questioning conventional terms and methodologies used in the judgment of art.

When Coleridge, short of money, and possibly fearful of reprisals resulting from his criticism of Napoleon, departed Rome in May of 1806, he turned his

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[1] *WA* to John Knapp, 28 July 1803. See *Corresp.*, 32.
[2] Allston left Rome around 9 March 1808 and sailed to Leghorn. See Wright, *Corresp.*, 55n.

attention to 'false criticism', criticism, that is, not rooted in principles, but based on opinion, fashion and partial definitions.[3] For Coleridge, the problems plaguing literary criticism were not only of the same kind as those faced in the burgeoning discipline of art criticism, but could be traced to the same source, namely, the absence of a critical *method* to underpin and infuse new life and relevance into an inherited critical vocabulary. According to Coleridge, 'Those who tread the enchanted ground of poetry often do not suspect there is such a thing as method to guide their steps' (TM, 649). The contrast between the effects experienced in the reading of a poem and the structures that lie beneath it could apply equally to those who tread the 'enchanted ground' of painting. This absence of consideration for the method that lies deep within both the painting and the poem was remarked upon by Coleridge in his *Contributions to Omniana* and *Biographia Literaria*, in which he draws a parallel between the abuses that plagued both disciplines. In his Contributions to Southey's *Omniana* (1812) he makes an explicit connection between the false critics and connoisseurs:

> Many of our modern criticism on the works of our elder writers, remind me of the connoisseur, who taking up a small cabinet picture, railed most eloquently at the absurd caprice of the artist in painting a horse sprawling. Excuse me, Sir (replied the owner of the piece) you hold it the wrong way: it is a horse galloping.[4]

Coleridge uses this anecdote to emphasize the connoisseur's evident failure to employ critical method in his judgement of the picture. The detachment of critical language from a foundation in method is emphasized by Coleridge's reference to the connoisseur's most 'eloquent' railing, and his subsequent juxtaposition of the insubstantial matter of his speech with a most substantial detail about the picture. Coleridge also invokes the comparison to point out the spuriousness of criticism in

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[3] In the prospectus to his *Lectures on Shakespeare and Milton*, Coleridge writes that he will begin with "an introductory Lecture on False Criticism (especially in poetry) and on its Causes" (*Lectures*, i. 179).
[4] S.T. Coleridge, "Contributions to Southey's *Omniana*" (SWF, i: 300).

which the artist is judged for failing to achieve that which he had never aimed – judged, as Coleridge would later point out, as one might judge bees for failing to 'build a nest' despite their ability to 'construct their Cells & manufacture their Honey, to admirable perfection'(*BL*, i. 62).

This criticism finds an echo in the *Biographia Literaria* where Coleridge's attention is directed to the absence of a critical method once again:

> Omit or pass slightly over the expression, grace, and grouping of Raphael's *figures*; but ridicule in *detail* the knitting-needles and broom-twigs, that are to represent trees in his back grounds; and never let him hear the last of his *galli-pots*! Admit, that the Allegro and Penseroso of Milton are not *without merit*; but repay yourself for his concession by reprinting at length the *two poems on the University Carrier*! As a fair specimen of his sonnets, quote "*A Book was writ of late called Tetrachordon*;" and as characteristic of his rhythm and metre cite his literal translation of the first and second psalm! (*BL*, i. 61)

In this passage, Coleridge points out the disjunction between the artist's method, which is clearly at work within the picture, and the failure of the critic to employ method in his response. The gaze of the connoisseur does not register the formal qualities of the work (the 'expression, grace and grouping' of the figures), nor the way in which these underpin the whole, but sacrifices consideration of the whole to the faults within the parts. The connoisseur is more concerned with the extent to which details within the picture are true 'imitations' of actual objects, ridiculing the trees that don't *look like* trees, but like 'knitting-needles and broom twigs'. The connoisseur's failure to employ method in his judgement of Raphael is matched by a similar failure on the part of Milton's critics, who leave their illustrations of 'rhythm and metre' to obscure poems, and quote blocks of text with no attempt to engage them. The judgements of both the critic and the connoisseur are not rooted in the *method* of the picture or the poem – they are not corroborated by the picture or the poem, and in this respect, are exemplary of the worst kind of 'criticism'.

This absence of method in criticism followed from what Coleridge determined as the inability of its practitioners to comprehend, articulate or discover the method

within works of art. He illustrates the importance of this correspondence in his 1808 and 1811-1812 series of lectures. In both sets of lectures, Coleridge challenged prevailing neo-classical assumptions about Shakespeare as a 'child of nature' and a 'great Dramatist by a sort of Instinct' through appealing to the principles that informed his method. In doing so, Coleridge is quick to show that attributing such epithets to Shakespeare's work undermines the very principle upon which his work, and all art, is based:

> In nine places out of ten in which I find his awful name mentioned, it is with some epithet of wild, irregular, pure child of nature, &c &c &c --. –If all this be true, we must submit to it: tho' to a thinking mind it cannot but be painful to find any excellence merely human thrown out of all human Analogy, and thereby leaving us neither rules <for imitation> nor motives to imitate...(*Lectures*, i. 79)

Coleridge argues that in characterizing Shakespeare as 'wild' and 'irregular', Shakespeare's critics deny him his artfulness, or method, and therefore exclude his work from all 'human Analogy'. Such a denial imposes severe restrictions not only on the critical estimation of his work, but also on its viability as a source for future imitations. To deny Shakespeare's 'taste and Judgment' is, for Coleridge, to deny the essential principle that binds his work to past, present and future; it is to deny those who would draw upon or 'imitate' him, both the 'rules' and 'motives' to do so. To remedy this situation, criticism must restore to the more general terms of 'human Analogy' Shakespeare's 'human excellence' rather than continually try to disengage it.

For Coleridge, even those works that strike us as 'natural' (a landscape garden or Shakespearian drama), require a simultaneous recognition of the art within them – a balance encapsulated in Imitation. Imitation, he writes,

> ...is the universal Principle of the Fine Arts – in every well-layed out Grounds what delight we feel from that balance and antithesis of feelings and thoughts – how natural we say! – but the very wonder that furnished the *how* implies that we perceived art at the same moment – we catch the Hint from nature itself – Whenever in Mountains, or Cataracts, we discover a likeness to

> anything artificial which we yet know was not artificial, what pleasure! – so in appearances known to be artificial that appear natural – this applies in due degrees, regulated by steady good sense, from a clump of Trees to the Paradise Lost or the Othello (*Lectures*, i. 84).

While it would appear that works characterized as wild, irregular or natural must in some sense deny the 'rules' imposed by imitation, Coleridge argues that the structure arising from these unarticulated 'rules' is a necessary condition for imitation, and for the pleasure we derive from the successful execution of this principle in art. In other words, the pleasure is derived not from the extent to which art approximates the natural object, but rather, the extent to which that 'hint from Nature' shines through the art.

For Coleridge, understanding imitation as a condition of relation allows us to develop a methodical approach in our critical response to the work of art – one necessarily guided by the method at work *within* the work of art. Thus Coleridge writes that 'the relations of things form the prime objects, or, so to speak, the materials of Method – and that the contemplation of these things is the indispensable condition of thinking methodically'(TM, 631). This is an important step in attempting to judge 'in the spirit in which the artist produced, or *ought* to have produced'(PGC, 360). If imitation, as the principle common to all the fine arts, guides the artist in modes of production, it follows that it must also guide the critic in his appraisal of that work. Through thinking of imitation in terms of the relationships that underpin the 'specific image' rather than restricting it to the nature of that image itself, imitation enables one to intuit that which the artist 'ought' to have produced – and in turn, enables one to judge that which has, in fact, been produced.

The correspondence between method in making and response underpinned Coleridge's belief that criticism based on philosophic method could challenge false criticism. For Coleridge, the only way to stop the spread of misconceptions based on the improper use of language and the absence of fixed principles was to advance

precise definitions and principles based on philosophic method. Based not on an arbitrary number of passages selected on grounds of interest, but on the 'technical process of philosophy', his method commences with the separation of 'distinguishable parts' and results in the 'restoration' of those parts '...to the unity in which they actually co-exist' (*BL*, 14:11). This separation and restoration is evident in the following passage from his *Treatise on Method*:

> ...it becomes us at the commencement, clearly to explain...what we mean by ['Method']; to exhibit the Principles on which alone a correct Philosophical Method can be founded; to illustrate those principles by their application to distinct studies and to the History of the Human Mind; and lastly to apply them to the general concatenation of the several Arts and Sciences, and to the most perspicuous, elegant, and useful manner of developing each particular study (TM, 629).

It seems as though not only definitions, but disciplines are subject to this separation and restoration as they, too, move in and out of focus. This can be seen in the application of principles to 'distinct' studies, the 'History of the human Mind', the 'general concatenation of the several Arts and Sciences', and finally back again to the development of 'each particular study'. As if in illustration of this, Coleridge drew on his own disciplinary knowledge of the fine arts in carrying out his vision of broader critical reform. Painting allowed him a greater variety of expression and illustration in communicating this to his reader. This 'specific' knowledge was slowly drawn outward into aesthetics, and, as will be demonstrated in the following chapter, was gradually drawn inward again, in shaping a critical response to Allston's *The Dead Man Revived by Touching the Bones of the Prophet Elisha*, and the *Galatea* of Raphael.[5]

Coleridge's use of words with a visual connotation ('exhibit' and 'illustrate') suggests that criticism was to him a demonstrative exercise. To 'exhibit' and

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[5] Raphael Sanzio, *The Nymph Galatea*, fresco, Villa Farnesina, Rome. A digital reproduction can be found at <http://www.artchive.com/artchive/R/raphael/galatea.jpg.html>.

'illustrate' such principles indicates his desire to openly expose articulated principles to public scrutiny (to be corroborated by his readers through recourse to their own minds), but with the object firmly in view. A literal example of this can be found in his intention to illustrate a proposed series of lectures on the principles of the fine arts with 'references and illustrations' and 'books of Italian prints'.[6] This plan indicates that Coleridge was aware of the importance of the *presence* of the work of art in discussing it: either in terms of its physical presence, or as Allston put it, its presence 'hanging up' in the memory. In addition to drawing on paintings (like Allston's), Coleridge also turned to painting in a more figurative sense, as a means of illustrating points made with respect to literature. In his 1808 *Lectures on the Principles of Poetry*, for example, Coleridge draws upon a phrase used to characterize the balance between line and color in the visual arts when he insists that the poet's mind must '*always be in keeping*'(*Lectures*, i. 86). Likewise, in his 1811-1812 *Lectures on Shakespeare and Milton*, Coleridge used commonly held assumptions about Dutch painters to illustrate the difference between an imitation and copy, and portraiture to illustrate what he describes as the ideal nature of art.[7]

The visual examples used by Coleridge are significant, of course, in reflecting his acquaintance with painting as one of the 'Fine Arts'. However, painting was also significant for Coleridge in that it provided him with a visual example of the tension

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[6] S.T. Coleridge to Humphrey Davy. See Griggs, *Collected Letters*, ii. 29-30. These lectures never materialized, Coleridge having abandoned the plan as he would have required "references and illustration" and "books of Italian prints", which would not have been suitable for a lecture hall. In the same letter to Davy, he reveals that "the former plan suggested by me is invidious in itself, unless I disguised my real opinions, as far as I should deliver my sentiments respecting the *Arts*...".

[7] S.T. Coleridge, *Lectures*, i. 224-225. Coleridge argues that those who refer to Shakespeare as a "close copier of nature", or "child of nature" treat him as a "Dutch painter copying exactly the object before him". Foakes points out that Coleridge "generalised Dutch painters as mere copyists" thus repeating something of a critical commonplace. Likewise, in illustrating his point that music and painting are to be included "under the great Genus of Poetry", Coleridge writes that we could not understand these "unless we first impressed upon the mind that they are ideal & not the mere copy of things, but the contemplation of mind upon things. When you look upon a portrait, you must not compare it with the face when present, but with the recollection of the face. It refers not so much to the senses, as to the ideal sense of the friend not present".

within imitation: that tension between the 'specific image' and the structural relationships that underpin it – relationships that comprise that 'visual language to the understanding'. Coleridge reflects upon this tension in a manner that echoes, to some extent, the passage in Book III of *The Republic* discussed in Chapter Two. In exploring imitation, Plato gives an example of learning to read, drawing a distinction between the representation of individual letters (the way in which they 'look') and the meaning they impart as a consequence of their arrangement. In the latter, there is a transparency of meaning that is not obstructed by the individual presence of the letters. Likewise, the arrangement of geometrical shapes upon a canvas, and the arrangement of other colors and forms (the 'letters' of the language of paint as it were), do not obstruct but contribute to the transparency of meaning encoded in the canvas.

Coleridge implicitly draws on the spatial quality of this tension in emphasizing the importance of arrangement over the independent qualities of elements in his *Essays on Method*, first, as it pertains to language. In the following example, he cites arrangement, or method, as the quality that differentiates the educated from the uneducated man. He finds that the difference consists not in the matter of their speech (the words themselves or the subject), but rather in its arrangement. While the ignorant man's speech is characterized by a sequential arrangement (rather like an alphabet), the speech of the educated man reflects the

> ...unpremeditated and evidently habitual *arrangement* of his words, grounded on the habit of foreseeing, in each integral part, or (more plainly) in every sentence, the whole that he then intends to communicate. However irregular and desultory his talk, there is *method* in the fragments (*Friend*, i. 449).

Coleridge defines method in terms of the awareness of the whole that permeates and is in evidence within, each part, a practice he describes as a 'habit of foreseeing'. It is not so much in the meaning of the words (the 'specific image', as it were), but in the arrangement that method is in evidence: thus 'the difference will be impressed and

felt, though the conversation should be confined to the state of the weather or the pavement. Still less will it arise from any peculiarity in his words and phrases' (*Friend* i. 448). This is, in some respects, evident in Coleridge's own description of Allston's landscape: in remarks that appear to be spontaneous, his 'habit of foreseeing' is revealed through the repetition of words and sounds – an auditory structure that reflects the visual one before him. The satisfaction in such an arrangement seems to echo that 'reward' for turning the eye back again, which Coleridge noted in the landscapes and poetry of the Italian school – a movement perfectly encapsulated in his description of method as a 'self-unravelling clue' (*Friend*, i. 511).

In his book, *Method and Imagination in Coleridge's Criticism*, Jackson explains this 'clue' in terms of a broken mosaic. Faced with the task of reassembling a broken mosaic, it would be useful, he argues, to sort the pieces according to their colors – a basic arrangement. Yet the 'purpose of the exercise', he adds, 'would be to put the pieces together again so as to reconstitute the original picture, building it, as it were, step by step or piece by piece. This process would be a progression, or progressive transition'.[8] If one had no pre-conception of that whole, however, this arrangement would prove useless.[9] If, on the other hand, one were to conjecture about the picture, one could 'order the progression accordingly, and one could test the validity of the conjecture by its result'.[10] This idea of testing the conjecture by the result is perhaps another way phrasing the notion that the critic must judge in the same spirit in which the artist produced, or *ought* to have produced.' To 'conjecture' as to what the artist ought to have produced requires one to build a pre-conception

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[8] J.R. de J. Jackson, *Method and Imagination in Coleridge's Criticism* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul: 1969) 39.
[9] Coleridge refers to this 'pre-conception' as a "Master thought" while Allston frequently refers to this same power as essential to the "master principle" of Harmony in his *Lectures on Art.*
[10] See Jackson, *Method and Imagination* 39.

from the clues provided within the actual canvas. The critic must then judge that work by the extent to which he is able to see that conception *through* the original in all its parts.

Coleridge provides an illustration of this 'transparency' in his *Treatise on Method*, in which he relates an anecdote concerning a native 'poring over an illumined manuscript of the inspired volume' who, not knowing what to make of it, begins to sort the words as if sorting mosaic tiles according to their color or size (TM, 672). Soon after, the missionary arrives and teaches the native the tools of method: he explains words, translates passages for him, etc., until the native begins to understand. As Coleridge writes,

> Henceforward the book is unsealed for him; the depth is opened....The words become transparent: he sees them, as though he saw them not; whilst he mentally devours the meaning they contain (TM, 673).

The book is 'unsealed' as the clue is unravelled. The way in which the words become 'transparent' echoes the lack of obstruction posed by the letters and shapes through which is conveyed that 'visual language to the understanding'. There is also a sense in which this understanding, this 'depth' is enabled through knowledge, but is not necessarily an object of knowledge. The depth is also nicely signalled by the juxtaposition of that which the eye *sees*, and the mind consumes, almost in a physical sense – to take in and make part of one.

The image of transparency recurs in Coleridge's critical writing. In Lecture IV of the 1808 series, Coleridge describes the power of the poet again in visual terms. He refers to that power

> ...which belongs only to a great poet, the power of so carrying on the Eye of the Reader as to make him almost lose the consciousness of words – to make him *see* everything & this without exciting any painful or laborious attention, without any *anatomy* of description (a fault not uncommon in descriptive poetry) but with the sweetness & easy movement of nature (*Lectures*, i. 82).

Coleridge's reference to the '*anatomy* of description' echoes the well known criticisms directed at the pictorial tradition, one that places obstacles in the way of that transparency.[11] It is against this tradition and its emphasis on the 'specific Image' rather than the relationships beneath it, that Coleridge defines his notion of the 'eye' or 'vision' which reflects the spatial quality of intuition. Thus, an 'image' for Coleridge functions not as an actual picture in the mind, but a space defined by a series of relationships.[12] In this respect, the characteristics of an 'image' go beyond those of 'length and width' to encompass depth, a dimension opened, unsealed, and revealed by method. In looking at painting, Coleridge was particularly struck by the qualities of depth that it was capable of portraying. As Zuccatto points out, Coleridge singled out the qualities of depth and proportion in the frescoes attributed to Giotto at the Camposanto in Pisa.[13] Likewise, at moments in his description of Allston's painting, he repositions himself deep *within* the planes of Allston's picture so as to open a vista denied him as the spectator standing before it.[14]

Yet, as Coleridge points out in his 'Lectures on Aesthetics', the connection between the structural components that underpin that 'visual language to the understanding' and the surface through which it is conducted is successful as long as this transparency exists: as long as the surface (of the picture, for example, or Plato's letters) does not obstruct our perception or contemplation of the structural forms beneath it. If the contemplation of these forms is interrupted, or, as Coleridge phrases it in his 'Lectures on Aesthetics', if an imbalance causes an 'intrusion into our minds',

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[11] See also *BL*, ii. 215 in which Coleridge refers to the "forming form shining through the formed form".

[12] See also *BL*, ii. 23, in which Coleridge describes the image in relation to poetry: "It has been before observed, that images however beautiful, though faithfully copied from nature, and as accurately represented in words, do not of themselves characterize the poet. They become proofs of original genius only as far as they are modified by a predominant passion; or by associated thoughts or images awakened by that passion…".

[13] See Zuccatto, *Coleridge in Italy*, 66.

[14] See Coleridge's description of Allston's painting in *Notebooks* ii. 2830, and the discussion in Chapter Five.

this is an indication that it has not worked.[15] Allston provides an example of this loss of transparency from the standpoint of the painter in a letter to his cousin, William Algernon Alston dated 4 January 1831. In this letter, he briefly explains to Alston that it is difficult to project the length of time he might require to finish a painting. He writes:

> For instance – sometimes I get what the Artists call, "stuck," that is, I come to a part with which I cannot please myself, and which becomes worse and worse the more I work on it; my only remedy then is to lay it aside, <from time> and return to it after a time with a *fresh eye*, when I am generally able to *hit* at once what I might else have laboured for in vain.[16]

It appears as though those instances in which Allston is unable to proceed are marked by his inability to achieve this transparency.[17] The increasing opacity of the surface components (which become 'worse and worse' with greater exertion) hinder, rather than reveal, the visibility and intelligibility of the relationships that comprise the structural components of the work. However, after putting the painting away for a while, he is able to approach it with 'fresh eyes', which enable him to penetrate that opacity and again work those elements into a transparency of the original conception. The extent to which the painting corresponds to (and, as a consequence acts as a clue for) the original conception is *felt* by the artist, just as one *feels* the 'habit of foreseeing' in the arrangement within the educated man's speech. Allston seems to unconsciously emphasize this in his description of the achievement of that correspondence in terms of 'hitting' that for which he labours. His use of the word 'hit' marks a significant transition from neo-classical ideas in which the power of a

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[15] S.T. Coleridge, "Lectures on Aesthetics" 1825, SWF ii. 1321. In this instance, Coleridge refers to the intrusion as being caused by an imbalance of 'likeness and difference', where an increase in resemblance is able to "destroy or at least injure, its beauty-enhancing effect, and make it a fantastic intrusion of the... Accidental and Arbitrary – and consequently a disturbance of the Beautiful...".
[16] *WA* to William Algernon Alston, 4 January 1831. See *Corresp.*, 296.
[17] The most notorious example of Allston's becoming 'stuck' was his inability to finish *Belshazzar's Feast*. See Joy S. Kasson, *Artistic Voyagers: Europe and the American Imagination in the works of Irving, Allston, Cole, Cooper and Hawthorne* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1982) 43, 64. As Kasson notes, this painting had become his 'albatross' and "Allston's inability to finish *Belshazzar's Feast* has often been compared to Coleridge's creative blocks, which left so many poems in fragments".

painting to 'hit' one (at one blow, as Reynolds wrote), is no longer located in the 'moment' selected by the artist as his subject, but in the extent to which the picture corresponds to its conception.

Allston refers again to this 'advantage of forgetting' in his *Lectures*, in which he conveys an anecdote about Titian recounted by Marco Boschini, the seventeenth-century Venetian writer:

> ...during the progress of a work, he [Titian] was in the habit of occasionally turning it to the wall, until it had somewhat faded from his memory, so that, on resuming his labor, he might see with fresh eyes; when (to use his expression) he would criticize the picture with as much severity as his worst enemy. If, instead of the picture on the canvas, Boschini had referred to that in his mind, as what Titian sought to forget, he would have been, as we think, more correct (*LA*, 107).

According to Boschini, it was the material manifestation of his conception – the shape already achieved -- that Titian had wanted to forget for a time. However, according to Allston's reading, the casualty of memory ought not to be the picture already achieved, but rather the conception in his mind. In shedding his mind of this conception, the artist could measure the extent to which the picture itself was capable of conveying the truth of that conception. In a related passage, Allston argues that artists often have difficulty judging their own paintings

> ...simply because we do not always *see* them, -- that is, as they are, -- but looking as it were *through them*, see only their originals in the mind; the mind here acting, instead of being acted upon. And thus it is, that an Artist may suppose his conception realized, while that which gave life to it in his mind is outwardly wanting. But let time erase, as we know it often does, the mental image, and its embodied representative will then appear to its author as it is, -- true or false (*LA*, 108).

According to Allston, the artist must shed the 'mental image' (or the potential of the picture) so that it does not discolor his judgement of the *actual* picture. The difference here (from the critic who judges the extent to which he can see through the surface of the picture to its depth and its conception), is that the artist does not require the work of art to get there. The artist must determine whether the picture itself

conveys the 'life' that was drawn upon to create it, without the artist himself making up for the deficiency through infusing that 'life' into it, in accordance with his 'mental image'.[18]

By 'mental image', Allston does not mean a 'picture in the mind', as suggested by the pictorial tradition, but rather something more like the spatial relationship suggested by Coleridge, for whom an 'image' represents a condition of relation. For Allston, this image functions more or less as the 'Rule' that guides the artist in the making of his picture. The extent to which the painted elements reflect or correspond to this 'mental image' determines the extent to which the artist has, in Allston's words, 'hit the mark'. For Allston, this does not exclude the necessity of more conventional kinds of rules (to which he refers as '*expedient fictions*'), as he makes clear in his invitation to the reader to join him in tracing the Artist's movements on the canvas:

> His method of proceeding may enable us to ascertain how far he is assisted by the science, so called, of which we are speaking. He adjusts the height and breadth of his figures according to the canon, either by the division of heads or faces, as most convenient. By these means, he gets the general divisions in the easiest and most expeditious way. But could he not obtain them without such aid? He would answer, Yes, by the eye alone; but it would be a waste of time were he so to proceed, since he would have to do, and undo, perhaps twenty times, before he could erect this simple scaffolding; whereas, by applying these rules, whose general truth is already admitted, he accomplishes his object in a few minutes. Here we admit the use of the canon, and admire the facility with which it enables his hand, almost without the aid of a thought, thus to lay out his work. But here ends the science; and here begins what may seem to many the work of mutilation: a leg, an arm, a trunk, is increased, or diminished; line after line is erased, or retrenched, or extended, again and again, till not a trace remains of the original draught. If he is asked now by what he is guided in these innumerable changes, he can only answer, By the

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[18] For Allston, a good critic of paintings must possess imagination. See *WA* to James McMurtrie, October or November 1817, *Corresp.*, 111. He writes, "Whether this conception will please the matter of fact critics I doubt; nay I am certain that men without imagination will call it stuff!". Not only was imagination important for the formation of a good critic, but so also was a knowledge of nature. See *WA* to Henry Pickering, 23 November 1827, *Corresp.*, 246 to whom Allston wrote: in "Studying the works of other men we are in effect appropriating to ourselves their experience; in this way we may be said to multiply our eyes, and to see a thousand things that might otherwise elude us; in studying nature, we are enabled to separate in Art the true from the factitious: thus we become learned in both. In no other way can a sound critic be formed, much less a sound artist.

> feeling within me. Nor can he better tell *how* he knows when he has *hit the mark.* The same feeling responds to its truth; and he repeats his attempts until that is satisfied (*LA*, 135-136).

In this passage, Allston argues that the painter's knowledge of conventional rules prevents any obstruction in the application of paint to the canvas, in that the artist is able 'almost without the aid of a thought, thus to lay out his work'. The artist can continue to keep the whole in view, even as he works on each part due to the 'facility' of application such training provides. Yet while conventional rules enable the application of paint to the canvas, it is a 'feeling' that oversees the arrangement. Allston characterizes this feeling as 'intuitive', arguing that the 'only efficient Rule must be found in the Artist's mind – in those intuitive Powers, which are above and beyond, both the senses and understanding'(*LA*, 111). For Allston, the 'intuitive power' enables one to 'separate the essential from the accidental, to proceed also from a part to the whole; thus educing, as it were, an Ideal nature from the germs of the Actual'(*LA*, 132). As Allston's description of the 'work of mutilation' suggests, the ability to distinguish the accidental from the essential relies on its embodiment –on its having been applied to the canvas. It cannot be predicted, but is known only as it is *enacted.* Thus it is not the transference of an image from the mind to the canvas in a conventional, neo-classical sense, but rather the ability to capture the potential of the Ideal within the Actual. It is 'feeling' that guides the artist in knowing the extent to which the Ideal has been matched upon the canvas, the extent to which he has 'hit the mark'. The source of this power, is *recognized* by the consciousness, if not *known* to it.

Allston's description of an intuitive power that guides the artist calls to mind similar passages in the *Biographia Literaria* in which Coleridge refers to the intuitive power of the philosopher and provides an example of a 'primary intuition' from geometry. Most studies of these concepts within Coleridge's writing tend to proceed

from his adaptation of ideas expressed by the German philosophers Immanuel Kant and Friedrich Schelling. However, rather than focus on the extent to which Coleridge relied upon or adapted their philosophical thought, it might be more useful in this context to look closely at the way in which Coleridge proceeded to 'picture' the concepts that shaped his philosophical thinking. In paraphrasing, or drawing upon philosophical material (either from the German Idealists or from ancient philosophy), what is striking is Coleridge's choice of visual or spatial images in the communication and application of those concepts. This is evident, for example, in the distinction he makes between the 'philosophic consciousness' and the 'spontaneous consciousness' in the *Biographia.* In picturing these concepts, Coleridge writes first that the philosophic consciousness lies 'beneath', the spontaneous consciousness, but then revises this to 'behind', thus suggesting not only a third spatial dimension, but also the potential for transparency within that space.

While every man is possessed of the 'philosophic consciousness', he argues, it is not possible for this consciousness to shine through the surface before it, that surface consisting of the more common 'spontaneous consciousness'. Coleridge expressed this through the following metaphor:

> The first range of hills, that encircles the scanty vale of human life, is the horizon for the majority of its inhabitants. On *its* ridges the common sun is born and departs. From *them* the stars rise, and touching *them* they vanish. By the many, even this range, the natural limit and bulwark of the vale, is but imperfectly known. Its higher ascents are too often hidden by mists and clouds from uncultivated swamps, which few have courage or curiosity to penetrate. To the multitude below these vapors appear, now as the dark haunts of terrific agents, on which none may intrude with impunity; and now all *a-glow*, with colors not their own, they are gazed at, as the splendid palaces of happiness and power. But in all ages there have been a few, who measuring and sounding the rivers of the vale at the feet of their furthest inaccessible falls have learnt, that the sources must be far higher and far inward; a few, who even in the level streams have detected elements, which neither the vale itself or the surrounding mountains contained or could supply (*BL*, i. 237-239).

While Coleridge would later feel 'ashamed and humbled' at this 'unhappy allegory or string of metaphors', this image does provide an illustration of his attempt to illustrate

aesthetic concepts in spatial terms. Coleridge begins almost as if describing the scene at Olevano, but having transformed the fragments into a more cohesive picture. There is a clear difference in the kind of language that Coleridge uses in contrasting the way the multitude see as opposed to how the philosopher sees. In describing those parts of the scene accessible to the multitude, Coleridge employs vivid imagery that is focused on the pictorial qualities of the scene, not the 'continuous running undersong' or structure, but on sensual qualities and their direct link to image-forming in the mind. 'To the multitude', Coleridge writes, those inaccessible places may kindle dark associations fuelled by superstition, as 'vapors appear, now as the dark haunts of terrific agents, on which none may intrude with impunity'. Subject to association, the way in which the multitude views the landscape before them is subject to constant change, an effect heightened by the phrase 'appear as' which conveys a sense of illusion, or deception. These images captivate the eye as the superstitions they suggest captivate the mind: as the opaque vapors, 'now all a-glow, with colors not their own,...are gazed at, as the splendid palaces of happiness and power'. Likewise, the multitude is confined to the surface of the scene, their vision circumscribed by vapors they are unable to penetrate. The shift from one to the other is almost instantaneous, as is indicated by his use of the word 'now'. Contrast these images to the vocabulary that characterizes the few philosophers within that multitude who see with different eyes. There is a sense in which their power of vision is harnessed in thought, rather than emotive response. This is indicated by Coleridge's use of words like 'measuring', 'sounding', 'learnt', and 'detected', scientific terms that sound the depths of the images before them. They look higher and 'inward' and are able to penetrate the surface in ways denied the multitude, thus participating *in*, rather than gazing at the landscape. Significantly, the penetration of the philosophic consciousness through the planal boundary into the spontaneous consciousness is enabled by knowledge. It is this knowledge, or preparation that allows the

philosopher to intuit an intelligent design – one that is transparent through the objects rather than obscured by 'opaque vapours'.

As Coleridge relates in his story of the Chamois hunter, one cannot expect to 'imitate' him directly, but must first acquire the knowledge and physical skill that the hunter himself possesses. Only then is he capable of 'imitating' the hunter. Yet unlike the sources of that knowledge, which one can come to know in a more systematic way, it is impossible to know the source of intuitive knowledge. To those who attempt to pursue this source in a scientific way, Coleridge directs a quotation from Plotinus:

> I might oppose to the question the words with which Plotinus supposes NATURE to answer a similar difficulty. "Should any one interrogate her, how she works, if graciously she vouchsafe to listen and speak, she will reply, it behoves thee not to disquiet me with interrogatories, but to understand in silence, even as I am silent , and work without words" (*BL*, i. 241).

Despite his reservations about the translation (Coleridge offers his own in a note) he does include it in the body of his text. Coleridge describes the attainment of this knowledge as one that occurs through the eye, rather than the word: 'interrogatories' thus give way to silence, as one is told to 'understand in silence, even as I am silent, and work without words'. While Coleridge disputed the translation of the term 'understand' in this context, the parallel between the silent work of nature and the silent work of her inquisitor was one emphasized in his own translation. One cannot help, in light of the *ut pictura poesis* tradition, associating the 'silent' way in which nature works with the 'silence' of a painting. It is possible, then, to extend this function to the philosophical critic, who must also 'work without words' when viewing the painting. This passage has surprisingly modern relevance, especially if we think of it in light of contemporary arguments for the necessity of language in the understanding of painting.

Coleridge draws on the visual imagery in Plotinus once again in making an additional point about the sources of intuitive knowledge. It is not

> a thing subject to place and motion, for it neither approached hither, nor again departs from hence to some other place; but it either appears to us or it does not appear. So that we ought not to pursue it with a view of detecting its secret source, but to watch in quiet till it suddenly shines upon us; preparing ourselves for the blessed spectacle as the eye waits patiently for the rising sun (BL. i. 241).

Once again, Coleridge's choice of quotation reveals his tendency to, in this case, articulate the source and effects of this power in visual terms. Intuitive knowledge has neither origin nor destination, it either 'appears' or it 'does not appear'. It follows that the source of intuitive knowledge ought not to be sought after, or 'detected', but that one must 'watch in quiet' until it 'suddenly shines', waiting for this as 'the eye waits patiently for the rising sun'.[19] Words like 'appear', 'watch', 'shines', 'spectacle' and 'eye' emphasize the spatial quality of this power. This is not, however, to discount language by any means: while the source of intuitive knowledge cannot be pursued through language, it can shine *through* it.

An example, or perhaps illustration of this notion in practice is offered by Washington Allston in recounting his first encounter with the Apollo Belvedere:

> If I may be permitted to recall the impression which it made on myself, I know not that I could better describe it than as a sudden intellectual flash, filling the whole mind with light, -- and light in motion. It seemed to the mind what the first sight of the sun is to the senses, as it emerges from the ocean; when from a point of light the whole orb at once appears to bound from the waters, and to dart its rays, as by a visible explosion, through the profound of space (*LA*, 100).

Allston describes the impression of the statue as a primarily 'intellectual' one – as a 'sudden intellectual flash'. It is not only the presence of light, but 'light in motion' that fills Allston's mind upon viewing this sculpture. His description of it only in

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[19] This notion of 'waiting' factors into the way in which one *looks* at a painting. For Coleridge, a viewer who spends time in contemplation of a picture is rewarded by a 'dawning' of sorts, a sense of recognition that strikes one all at once, rather like the artist's realization that he has, indeed, 'hit the mark'.

terms of light and the eye, and as appealing to intellect is distinctly different from the descriptive style used by connoisseurs like Winckelmann, who had directed his attention to the details of the statue rather than the whole of its effect: 'In the face of Apollo pride exerts itself chiefly in the chin and nether lip; anger in the nostrils; and contempt in the opening mouth; the graces inhabit the rest of his divine head, and unruffled beauty, like the sun, streams athwart the passions.'[20] Like Winckelmann, Allston too uses descriptive language, but the object of that description differs: for Winckelmann it resides within the details of a sculpture (as was the case with connoisseurs generally), whereas for Allston, it resides in the intellectual impression of the sculpture as a whole.[21]

Allston's description of the intellectual impression of the sculpture helps us to understand the relevance that Coleridge saw in geometry as a visual means of articulating intuition in both its creative and critical function. Coleridge drew upon the much more tangible example of geometry in order to point out to his reader an instance of an intuition that is determined by a point outside it – a point, as it were, located firmly within Coleridge's metaphorical landscape. His example is, of course, largely adapted from Schelling, but is relevant nonetheless as it emphasizes not only Coleridge's proclivity to 'illustrate' and 'exhibit' his points through recourse to geometry, but also provides the underlying 'shape' of intuition in the example. The primary construction from which Coleridge works is 'the point in motion', or the line, which, in its original state is undetermined: it is unknown whether it moves 'in one and the same direction' or 'whether its direction is continually changed' (*BL*, i. 250).

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[20] See Winckelmann, *Reflections*, 255.

[21] See Winckelmann, *Reflections*, 255. Winckelmann's gesture toward this sculpture is emphasized through his use of the present tense (as the sun streams) as well as the simile itself. In using the present tense, he also seems to be positioning himself next to his reader, almost turning his reader into a viewer, with Winckelmann himself functioning as the 'elbow friend' gesturing to the picture. As Matheson points out, this was a common posture of the connoisseur. See Matheson, "Royal Academy", 48.

Yet this point can be *determined* in two ways: either by a point without, which results in a straight line, or it is self-determined, thus falling back upon itself and enclosing space in a circular shape. In the case of the former, a parallel can be drawn with Coleridge's example of a 'sequential arrangement' of colors or letters; in the latter, a parallel may be drawn between this shape and those who 'foresee' the whole in each part. The latter, Coleridge says, does not 'strike[s] out into the strait', but rather, 'changes its direction continuously' (*BL*, i. 250). This line is therefore 'determined and undetermined; undetermined through any point without, and determined through itself' (*BL*, i. 250). Thus, Coleridge concludes, 'geometry... supplies philosophy with the example of a primary intuition, form which every science that lays claim to *evidence* must take as its commencement' (*BL*, i. 250). This example provides an illustration of a progressive transition: one that is embodied not only in the circle (which is determined and undetermined), but also in Coleridge's image of the 'self-unravelling clue' where the intuition of the whole lies within each part.

Coleridge draws upon this mathematical example in distinguishing the kind of intuition required by geometry from that required by philosophy. He argues that philosophy, unlike geometry, cannot 'appropriate to every construction a correspondent, *outward* intuition'. The direction of philosophy is determined by the 'inner sense':

> ... in philosophy the INNER SENSE cannot have its direction determined by any outward object. To the original construction of the line, I can be compelled by a line drawn before me on the slate or on sand. The stroke thus drawn is indeed not the line itself, but only the image or picture of the line. It is not from it, that we first learn to know the line; but, on the contrary, we bring this stroke to the original line generated by the act of the imagination; otherwise we could not define it as without breadth or thickness. Still however this stroke is the sensuous image of the original or ideal line, and an efficient mean to excite *every* imagination to the intuition of it (*BL*, i. 250).

Whereas in geometry, the direction of the point in motion, or the line, can be determined externally (by a point without), this construction is impossible in

philosophy. In explaining his point, Coleridge directs his reader to the visual image of a line drawn before him on the slate or sand. He says that this stroke 'is...not the line itself, but only the image or picture of the line'—it is the 'sensuous image of the original or ideal line' (*BL*, i. 250). This image is not the original (we don't come to *know* the line from its image), but rather, 'on the contrary', Coleridge says, we bring this stroke to the 'original' or ideal line that is 'generated by an act of the imagination'.

In approaching this passage from the criticism of painting, we can define this 'ideal' as that 'which the artist *ought* to have produced', as Coleridge suggests in his 'Essays on the Principles of Genial Criticism' (PGC, 360). In other words, defining the qualities of a line (or a work of art) necessitates the presence of an 'other' – in this case that 'mental image' or ideal to which we 'bring' the lines drawn upon the canvas. Importantly, this action is not a comparison, where the ideal and the actual image are placed side by side, but rather, is determined by the extent to which the ideal shines through the actual – the extent to which it has achieved what Coleridge has referred to as 'transparency'. A practical (and perhaps two-dimensional) illustration of this can be found in van Gogh's 'imitation' of Millet: we do not come to *know* Millet's original from van Gogh's imitation, but in bringing van Gogh's painting *to* Millet's painting, we are able to define the qualities of van Gogh's painting within a self-determined context (i.e. as an imitation of Millet).

It is in this sense, perhaps, that Coleridge referred to Michelangelo's *Last Judgment* within the pages of his notebook as an example of the true ideal in art. Kathleen Coburn writes that 'It would be of interest to know more specifically what Coleridge meant by 'the true Ideal' in painting, by knowing which figure he meant'.[22] While attempts to do so are speculative, it is possible to see how his awareness of

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[22] See S.T. Coleridge, *Notebooks*, i. 2828. Coburn suggests one or two figures as possibilities, but concludes that it is impossible to identify which with any degree of certainty.

painting, particularly line and color, shaped the way in which he would articulate his notion of the ideal. In the *Biographia Literaria*, Coleridge defines the ideal as follows:

> The ideal consists in the happy balance of the generic with the individual. The former makes the character representative and symbolical, therefore instructive; because *mutatis mutandis*, it is applicable to whole classes of man. The latter gives it its *living interest*; for nothing *lives* or is *real* but as definite and individual. To understand this completely, the reader need only recollect the specific state of his feelings, when in looking at a picture of the historic (more properly of the poetic or heroic) class, he objects to a particular figure as being too much of a *portrait*; and this interruption of his complacency he feels without the least reference to, or the least acquaintance with, any person in real life whom he might recognize in this figure. It is enough that such a figure is not *ideal*: and therefore not ideal, because one of the two factors or elements of the *ideal* is in excess. A similar and more powerful objection he would feel towards a set of figures which were *mere* abstractions, like those of Cipriani, and what have been called Greek forms and faces, i.e. outlines drawn according to a recipe. *These* again are not *ideal*; because in these the *other* element is in excess. "*Forma formans per formam formatam translucens*," is the definition and perfection of *ideal* art (*BL*, ii. 215).

In this passage, Coleridge defines the ideal as a balance between the general and the individual, where the general assumes a defined form, a 'character representative and symbolical', while the particular grants that form its '*living interest*'. Coleridge turns to portraiture to explain the way in which this balance, or ideal, is capable of being upset by an excess either of the general or particular. An ideal portrait is capable of engaging the viewer's intellect through his senses, thus allowing him to achieve a state of complacency. This state depends upon the extent to which the elements of the picture (the general and the particular) are balanced —the extent to which they achieve the same kind of transparency that is implied in Coleridge's notions of a 'continuous running undersong' or that 'visual language to the understanding'. However, as Coleridge warns, if either element appears in excess, this transparency soon turns opaque and the rise of 'complacency' in the viewer is interrupted.

Transparency emerges again as an important aspect of achieving the Ideal in art, especially in light of the last line of this passage, when Coleridge refers to the '*Forma formans per formam formatam translucens*,' or 'forming form shining through the formed form'.[23] In this line, which the editors suggest was written in Latin for emphasis, Coleridge uses the Latin 'translucens' which means transparent or translucent – a distinction that Coleridge collapses here, but quietly asserts again later in his 'Lectures on Aesthetics', where translucent characterizes the forming form 'shining through' the formed form, and transparent characterizes the relationships present within the 'formed form' itself. This recurs in Coleridge's 'Essays on the Principles of Genial Criticism', in which Coleridge uses a related phrase, 'forma informans', the informing form, or the 'form that forms from within' (PGC, 377n). In explaining this phrase, Coleridge provides his reader with an 'illustrative hint' which

> may be taken from a pure chrystal, as compared with an opaque, semi-opaque, or clouded mass on the one hand, and with a perfectly transparent body, such as the air is, on the other. The chrystal is lost in the light, which yet it contains, embodies, and gives a shape to; but which passes shapeless through the air, and in the ruder body is either quenched or dissipated (PGC, 377).

In this passage, Coleridge seems to redefine transparency just as he did 'image' previously, where the ambiguity of 'translucens' allows it to be defined by its context – thus the crystal is not 'perfectly transparent' on the one hand, nor is it 'opaque', 'semi-opaque' or 'clouded'. The translucent quality to which Coleridge refers seems to be based not on the degree of cloudiness that is there, but basically a quality of clarity in conjunction with mass (thus suggesting depth). In an ideal work of art, the particular must be lost in the general (which it yet contains, embodies and gives shape to). In an ideal work of art, the general passes through the particular – there is a kind of transparency there though there is this difference in terms of mass. In a work of art that is not ideal, this is lost because the particular dominates over the general. The

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interruption of that balance (where the crystal is no longer able to 'pass shapeless through the air', the glass no longer able to pass shapeless through the water) means that the transparency is gone, and the work no longer 'ideal'.

The image of transparency/ translucence is important to Coleridge not only in articulating the ideal, but also the components and forces at work within that Ideal. This is evident in his a letter sent to Allston in which he considers the Ideal in the context of the language of nature, expression, and a rather complex construction involving the will and the deed. In his letter to Allston he writes:

> First, that *equal* to the Best in Composition, & I most firmly believe, *superior* in the charm of coloring, you would *commend* your Genius to the universally intelligible of your... EXPRESSION! – Second, that you never for any length of time absent yourself from Nature, and the communion with Nature: for to you alone of all contemporary Artists does it seem to have been given, to know what Nature is – not the dead Shapes, the outward *Letter* – but the Life of Nature revealing itself in the Phaenomenon, or rather attempting to reveal itself – Now the power of producing the true Ideal is no other, in my belief, than to learn the Will from the Deed, and then to take the Will for the Deed. The great Artist does what Nature would do, if only the disturbing Forces were abstracted.[24]

In this passage, Coleridge encourages Allston to dedicate himself to Expression in his art, and to never absent himself from Nature. In describing Nature, Coleridge relies again on the example of letters, contrasting their surface and their depth. Nature is not the 'outward *Letter*', not the object, but rather the 'Life' (arrangement) rising through the object. Coleridge obviously believes that Allston has produced the Ideal in art and will do so again. The passage culminates with an alternative definition of the ideal, which Coleridge expresses in terms of the 'will' and 'deed', rather than the 'general' and 'particular' that mark his definition in the *Biographia.*

The true import of Coleridge's advice to Allston can perhaps be better understood if we turn to his 'Lectures on Aesthetics' in which the notion of

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[24] S.T. Coleridge to *WA*, 25 October 1815. *The Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. E.L. Griggs, vol. iv, 1815-1819 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959), 607. See also, *Corresp.*, 84.

transparency rises again, but this time in connection with Beauty and Expression. In the 'Lectures on Aesthetics', Coleridge does not stop at defining Beauty in its simplest form (as multeity in unity), but rather enriches that definition through tracing the complex set of relationships within it. Thus, Beauty depends upon the extent to which the form of an object appears to be a product of an intelligent Will to the beholder. The Will, Coleridge argues, is a productive power in which both intelligence and action (Life, spontaneity) are manifest. The former is evident, while the latter is not only subordinate, but oftentimes latent. Beauty results from a combination of both, as the intelligent will is 'seen with pleasurable facility when it connects with the second'. Thus, Coleridge writes, 'every...beautiful Object must have an association with Life – it must...have Life in it or attributed to it – Life or Spontaneity, as an Action of Vital Power'.[25] However, the Will manifest as Life or Spontaneity alone (illustrated by Joseph Henry Green's example of 'free motion, or the lines which indicate the same') cannot, on its own, constitute Beauty, as it requires Intelligence. This recalls the importance Coleridge gave to the presence of Method in the making of art, where characterizations of Shakespeare as 'wild' failed to appreciate the method, the order and intelligence in his work.

As with his previous characterization of the 'continuous running undersong', or 'visual language to the understanding', Coleridge argues that the recognition of the Beautiful (of the combination of Intelligent Will and Spontaneity of Life as Will) does not result from the 'distinct consciousness' (i.e. from the understanding), but must be '*felt* in the result rather than noticed'. In illustration of this, Coleridge draws again on images of transparency and translucence. He writes:

> In those instances the Will is translucent thro' the Reason – there is a duplicity of Form which can only be rendered intelligible by the transparency of a ground Color thro' another superficial Coat. Elucidate by the sudden Light

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[25] S.T. Coleridge, "Lectures on Aesthetics", *SWF*, ii. 1312.

> which the apprehension of a master thought will <shoot> thro' a <long> Link of Reasoning – Ay, now – I see it, *all at once. This is quite BEAUTIFUL!* [26]

This passage can be drawn out with the aid of Coleridge's passage on the crystal, in which he gives a translucent quality to the crystal, which is lost in the light that it yet 'contains, embodies and gives shape to; but which passes shapeless through the air...'. It is similarly the case in this example, where the Will, like the Light, is translucent 'thro'' the Reason (i.e. through the crystal). The ability to detect, or recognize the presence of the Will (which is 'contained, embodied and given shape' to by the Reason), depends, in turn, on the achievement of transparency within the form – within the outward manifestation. Thus, there is a 'duplicity of Form which can only be rendered intelligible by the transparency of a ground Color thro' another Superficial Coat'. This 'duplicity of Form' is, of course, the combination of 'intelligence' and 'action' as it appears to the beholder, a combination that is held in a '*living* Balance' upon the page. The 'transparency of a ground color thro' another Superficial Coat' reflects the transparency achieved in the 'continuous running undersong', or the 'visual language of the understanding' referred to previously by Coleridge in his *Lectures*. It is also an illustration that approximates that of the crystal, where the transparency of a ground color under another superficial coat functions as a crystal in the air, or a filled glass falling in a pool of clear water. Coleridge's choice of this image may have its origins in his acquaintance with Allston, who revived the Venetian practice of adding tinted glazes over the ground colors on his canvas, thus producing a depth of color within the layers, a transparency in which light was given extra space to work.[27]

It is with this background in mind that we turn once again to the advice Coleridge penned to Allston in 1815. When Coleridge encouraged Allston to pay

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[26] S.T. Coleridge, "Lectures on Aesthetics", *SWF*, ii. 1313.
[27] For a more detailed explanation of Allston's technique, see Wright, "Technique in Painting", Appendix 5, *Corresp.*, 619-624.

particular attention to the development of Expression in his art, Coleridge did not mean emotive expression (as is usually invoked in contrast to imitation, which in turn has formed the basis for popular notions of periodization), nor did he mean 'expression' as it was commonly used within the Academy, as referring to the catalogue of facial expressions applied to figures on canvas.[28] In turning again to the 'Lectures on Aesthetics', it is clear that what Coleridge means by 'Expression' is that which, essentially, gives life to form. According to Green,

> This apparent disturbance – this tendency to fly off from the centre…is Expression, which, by seeming to disturb, actually manifests the existence of the equilibrium, and, as the motion in a beautiful fountain, gives it life without destroying the identity of form, and imparts variety without the sacrifice of unity.[29]

It is the duty of expression to disturb, not to the extent that it distracts one from the whole of the picture, or compromises the form, but it is the power which, as Coleridge said of landscape painters, repays the eye for turning back again.[30]

As that which gives life to Form, Expression is a principle component of Beauty. Beauty is the 'manifestation of Life sensibly', where that manifestation is conducted within the elements of color and line. According to Coleridge, the nature of 'Expression' (or 'Life sensibly manifested' in either color or line) depends upon whether this happens '*in universo*', or in particular. Life, in its universal manifestation, he argues, is Beauty as Expression. In this instance, Beauty is recognized as a manifestation of Expression in 'Color and Transparency'.[31] This is in evidence in Green's example, where the form of the fountain is enlivened by the motion of the water (recalling perhaps the 'light in motion' Allston experienced upon

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[28] See Charles LeBrun, *Conférence de M. Le Brun sur l'expression général et particuliére* [A Method to design the passions], 1734 trans. John Williams 1734, with an introduction by Alan T. McKenzie (Los Angeles: University of California, 1980).
[29] S.T. Coleridge, "Lectures on Aesthetics", *SWF*, ii. 1318.
[30] See Chapter Five for a brief discussion of this point.
[31] S.T. Coleridge, "Lectures on Aesthetics", *SWF*, ii. 1312.

viewing the Apollo Belvedere). By contrast, Life, in its *particular* manifestation, he argues, is 'Expression as Beauty', where expression is manifest not in 'Color and Transparency', but Form. In the latter, the *function* of expression is required, but the vehicle (color and transparency) is not, because the ability to enliven, to give life and spontaneity in the particular can be achieved through Line. Thus, the expressive powers function *as* Beauty. In his 'Essays on the Principles of Genial Criticism', Coleridge provides an example in Raphael's painting *Galatea* – one that will be explored more thoroughly in the following chapter. Of course, in excess (either working through color and transparency, or condensed into Line), expression is equally able to upset the balance of a picture – to interrupt the rise to complacency enabled by the presence of the intelligent Will. In excess, expression turns the transparency to opacity, so that the will no longer shines through the deed.

The visual images Coleridge uses in his discussion of beauty and expression can, in turn, help us to understand the definition of the Ideal articulated in his letter to Allston. Coleridge's definition consists of two parts: for the painter to achieve the ideal in art he must first 'learn the will from the deed', and secondly, he must 'take the will for the deed'. The first of these actions is clear enough, in that the artist, perhaps turning to Nature, must divine, or intuit her will from the natural phenomena around him. This would apply equally to the artist or critic as the beholder of a painting; he or she attempts to intuit or divine the artists will from the work. This is an action of learning, of instruction (rather like the philosopher in the metaphysical landscape, who conducts scientific inquiries and simultaneously intuits things beyond what they suggest).

The second part of Coleridge's advice is less straightforward. To take something for something else is a complex construction, and invites thinking about in simpler terms. To take the will for the deed, generally speaking, means to take the intention as the action. For example, to consider the intent (or will) to steal an apple

as the very act of stealing the apple. Thus, it *is* and *does* in the same moment, as we are asked to consider the intent (or will) in terms of the rules, context, and properties governing action, rather than those governing intention. Yet, importantly, while the boundaries between the 'will' and the 'deed' collapse in the temporal moment, there is a sense in which each retains its separateness, like the mass of a crystal, or the weight of glass in water. The act of 'taking' the will for the deed is therefore *mediated* by that presence (weight, mass, image, word), by the suggestion of difference that allows (and registers) the penetration of light rising from deep within it. Otherwise, without this mediating element, there would be only that 'perfect transparency' of air and water, or, alternatively, a heavy opacity. It is in this sense that the Ideal is a perfect imitation, in that it is 'Likeness in Difference & a union of the two' (*Lectures*, ii., 220).

It would certainly appear that Allston had followed Coleridge's advice, as developments in his painting and thinking about art attest. However, it is important to maintain some perspective on this, particularly with respect to the 'influence' Coleridge may or may not have exerted upon Allston. Rather than focus on the extent to which Coleridge did or did not influence the practice of Allston's art, it is perhaps better to consider the extent to which Coleridge provided a linguistic expression for the ideas with which Allston was experimenting in his art. Coleridge's aesthetic language (along with Wordsworth's poetry) perhaps refined in Allston's own mind his objective as a painter and confirmed his instinctive tendency toward a more meditative cast of painting.

The language that Coleridge seemed to provide Allston was an important part of the way in which he communicated his opinions and thoughts about the art. For example, in a late letter to John Cogdell, Allston wrote the following:

> There are few subjects so limited in composition so naturally adapted to awaken general sympathy; but it is one in which, from the very circumstance of its simplicity, every thing depends on the expression. I use this last word in

> its ordinary sense, as relating solely to the figures – their air, attitude and faces. This you already have in the modelled figures. And this would be enough if transferred to canvass. But there is another kind of expression which I hope you will endeavour to add – that of the elements; to make them, as it were, in sympathy with the human emotion.<This> In this consists no small portion of the poetry of our Art; and this is expressed in the character – that is, the forms, tone of colour, in short, the general effect – of the scenery.[32]

In this passage, Allston refers to Cogdell's having commenced the subject of Hagar and Ishmael. He tells Cogdell that if he is able to 'preserve the expression of [the] modelled group' it will make a 'picture of deep interest'. Allston's advice seems to echo that of Coleridge, and yet he applies it specifically to Cogdell's picture. Within his discipline, expression (as in Le Brun's use of the term) referred to the facial expressions of the figures depicted upon a canvas, thus his use of the word 'in its ordinary sense, as relating solely to the figures – their air, attitude and faces'. While this, Allston claims, is sufficient, he then directs Cogdell to another kind of expression, one described by Coleridge in his letter to Allston. This idea of expression, as that which gives life to form, had certainly made an impression of Allston both with respect to his painting and writing. For Allston, this kind of expression is conveyed by natural elements, which must be 'in sympathy with the human emotion', thus bringing together Coleridge's reference to Expression and language of nature. For Allston, it is in this sympathy that the poetry of art rests. Rather than apply the term 'character' to the figure alone, he expands consideration of it to the landscape – to the forms, tone of color and general effect of the scenery.

That Allston had absorbed this idea of expression rooted in color and transparency can be seen in his reference to Rembrandt, who, he claims, 'had no excellence in form, though no one ever surpassed him in expression', even in its

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[32] *WA* to John Stevens Cogdell, 21 October 1838. See *Corresp.*, 412.

widest sense. This is evidenced, Allston writes, in his painting *Jacob's Dream.*[33] Allston points to the simplicity of form within the picture, and the way in which the handling of light and color animates these forms, the figure of Jacob and the two angels which were 'more like angels than any thing I have ever seen on canvas'. He continues that they 'owed this to the back-ground, the midnight sky – the fathomless darkness – I might almost say, the permeable pitch, in which they moved, while the two hardly visible lines of light, which formed the <night> ladder, seemed to sway with the night breeze. Nothing could be more simple than few materials, yet did he contrive to make out of them one of the sublimest pictures I know'.[34] For Allston the contrast between the black pitch and the willowy/ wisp-like figures of the angels constitutes the strength of the expression of the picture. While Allston thought Rembrandt (in this case, Arent de Gelder) lacked strength in form, he did think him a master at depicting and arranging elements 'in sympathy with the human emotion'.

This connection between the figure and the landscape was the dominant feature of Allston's art upon his second return to the states in 1818, when he composed a series of pictures in which he experimented with the meditative cast of his subjects. Common to most of his paintings at this time was his retreat from the historical paintings that marked his stay in England and the continent. As Wright points out, in contrast to the crisp lines and definitive form of *Diana* or his *Rising of a Thunderstorm at Sea,* Allston began to 'depict his landscapes in a half-light, or early morning late afternoon or evening, giving them a hazy or dreamlike atmosphere.[35] Wright also points out the introduction of a solitary, inverted figure in his paintings—this is in evidence not only in anonymous figures like *The Valentine*, but also in

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[33] Current attribution identifies the artist as Arent de Gelder, the last student under Rembrandt's instruction. See Arent de Gelder, *Jacob's Dream* (1710/15), Dulwich Picture Gallery, London, England. For a digital reproduction, see: www.dulwichpicturegallery.org.uk

[34] *WA* to John Stevens Cogdell, 21 October 1838. See *Corresp.*, 413.

[35] Wright, "Boston 1808-1811", in *Corresp.*, p. 59. See also, Washington Allston, *The Rising of a Thunderstorm at Sea* (1804), Boston, Museum of Fine Arts. For a digital reproduction, see www.mfa.org.

portraits of family and friends, who were depicted in states of reflection, or looking into books, not outward from the canvas.[36] Allston carried on developing this aspect of his art both during his second period abroad, and upon his final return to the states in 1818. During this latter period, Allston produced two paintings that seem to exemplify his understanding of 'expression' in two ways: the first is in his tendency to want to give color a structural significance – one where color, rather than line, induced the kind of 'complacency', or meditation in the viewer (as is seen in his painting of the *Spanish Girl in Reverie*).[37] The second, his historical landscape *Elijah in the Desert*, seems to be a visual illustration of the advice that Coleridge had written to him – where the expression of a historical figure is depicted not within that figure, but in the landscape of which he is a part. In both of these paintings, Allston attempted to reflect in the landscape the mental state of his subject.[38]

In the *Spanish Girl in Reverie*, Allston was able to use color as a means of connecting the figure to the landscape, not through repetition of form, where the eye is lead through the canvas, and brought back again, but rather through fixing the eye to the canvas through color. The yellows and reds of the picture seem to emanate out of the Spanish Girl as much as they penetrate her wistful complexion. The painting seems to have been largely misread in Allston's own time, as is evident in a criticism of the picture written by the American Unitarian clergyman, William Ware:

> The Spanish girl gives her name to the picture, but it is one of those misnomers of which there are many among his works. One who looks at the picture scarcely ever looks at, certainly cares nothing for, the Spanish Girl, and regards her as merely giving her name to the picture; and when the mind recurs to it afterwards, however many years may have elapsed, while he can recall nothing of the beauty, the grace, or the charm of the Spanish maiden, the

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[36] Washington Allston, *The Valentine* (1809-11), private collection. For a reproduction, see Gerdts and Stebbins, *Man of Genius*, 44.
[37] Washington Allston, *The Spanish Girl in Reverie* (1831), The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. For a digital reproduction, see www.metmuseum.org.
[38] Washington Allston, *Elijah in the Desert* (1817-18), Boston, Museum of Fine Arts. For a digital reproduction, see www.mfa.org.

> landscape, of which her presence is a mere inferior incident is never forgotten, but remains forever as a part of the furniture in the mind.[39]

Ware downplays the presence of the central figure in the composition and is occupied instead by the landscape. And yet this is to miss the central point of Allston's experiment, which was to express, through the elements within the landscape, the mind of the girl in the beholder's own mind. The landscape is not disconnected from the 'maiden', but rather occupies her as she occupies it. It appears that Allston uses color, rather than line, to determine this connection, echoing the red and yellow tints of the girl with the reds and yellows in the background mountains and the sky. In some respects, though her eyes are directed away from the background, the color pulls her toward it – almost as if it is beckoning her retreat. This is accentuated by her slightly raised hand which holds a sprig of leaves. Whereas in Allston's earlier landscapes, a more obvious pathway through the landscape was available to the figures, in this picture, it is color that allows the girl to transcend the boundaries of line that fix her to the canvas.

In his picture *Elijah in the Desert*, by contrast, Allston seems to unite the elements of the picture not through color, but line. The colors are not muted, but strongly contrasted, not blended, but demonstrating the 'life' and 'spontaneity' of the design within the canvas. Again, Ware writes a commentary on this picture:

> It might have been more appropriately named an Asian or Arabian Desert. That is to say, it is a very unfortunate error to give to either a picture or a book a name which raises false expectations; especially is this the case when the name of the picture is a great or imposing one which greatly excites the imagination. Extreme and fatal was the disappointment to many, on entering the room, when, looking on the picture, no Elijah was to be seen; at least you had to search for him among the subordinate objects, hidden away among the grotesque roots of an enormous banyan tree; and the Prophet, when found at last, was hardly worth the pains of the search.[40]

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[39] William Ware quoted by Sarah Clarke, "Washington Allston", *The Atlantic Monthly: A Magazine of Literature, Art and Politics*, 15 (February, 1865) 135.

[40] William Ware quoted by Sarah Clarke. See Sarah Clarke, "Washington Allston", *The Atlantic Monthly: A Magazine of Literature, Art and Politics* 15 (February, 1865), 135.

Contrary to Ware's view that the prophet was 'not...to be seen', the mind of the prophet was overwhelmingly expressed within the elements in the landscape. Ware expected, rather like the majority of viewers who experienced such 'extreme and fatal' disappointment, that the *figure* of Elijah would dominate the picture plane. Ware failed to see that the true subject the painting consists not in the physical image of the figure, but the interaction between the figure and the elements of the landscape. The true subject, or as Coleridge might say, 'true ideal', is the inner consciousness and conflicting emotion within Elijah brilliantly and energetically expressed through the landscape. Allston had, in effect, achieved the 'unity' of the 'will' and 'deed' in both his conception and execution of this painting (one he thought his best). In this painting, Allston does not allow color to assume the responsibility of form, that is, induce what Coleridge referred to as 'complacency'. Rather, the formal structures are embedded in the canvas, while the movement of our eye across it is constantly 'disturbed' and the composition itself refreshed by the spontaneity of life and action given the piece by its coloring and rapid brush stroke.

These paintings provide a visual example not only of Allston's theoretical approach to the art, but also the way in which it shone through his practice. Ware's criticism is a useful counterpoint in understanding how the viewer might 'work without words' – might understand a painting not in terms of the 'story' played out on canvas, but in terms of its execution and expression. Cultivating the ability to *see* and communicate the method that shines through the surface of the painting is an essential part of this 'work' for the critic, one that Coleridge sought to articulate in his 'Lectures on Aesthetics' and his writing on method. Through phrasing the tension within imitation in terms of method and the correspondence between methods of production and response, Coleridge began to shape an alternative to conventional modes of criticism. As Jackson points out:

> Coleridge's Theory of Method serves two purposes. It is an analysis of thought, and as such comprehends both the constructions of philosophy and the creation of art; and it also fulfills for Coleridge the function to which we have already referred in that it provides a way of communicating thought which may be useful even if the thought in question is unacceptable, by helping us find acceptable substitutes and put them to use.[41]

Thus, Coleridge's theory is not only an analysis, but also a means of developing a vocabulary to communicate his analysis of critical as well as creative processes. Jackson phrases this in terms of Coleridge's search for substitutes, however the transparency of his thought -- the terms and the language that make it intelligible to us -- is not the result of his attempt to find substitutes, but rather, as Lord and Benardete put it, his attempt to imitate that process in language – to draw upon the mimetic power without seriously suggesting resemblance in the conventional sense. The way in which he builds, or 'pictures' concepts through language, allows the beauty and expression of the picture to, as it were, 'shine through' the language, rather than be tied to a sequential, or narrative, progression. In redefining concepts like imitation and intuition in terms of likeness, difference, transparency, depth, opacity and silence, Coleridge allows these terms to function suggestively within a critical text and yet, at the same time, keep them firmly anchored in a philosophical foundation. In this respect, Coleridge's writing on method underpins something of a new procedural model for art criticism in the period.

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[41] See Jackson, *Method and Imagination*, 36.

Chapter Seven

The Bristol Exhibition, 1814 and Washington Allston's *The Dead Man Revived by Touching the Bones of the Prophet Elisha*

Coleridge's attempt to devise a critical language through which the beauty and expression of the picture 'shine', can be seen to advantage in his commentary upon Washington Allston's painting, *The Dead Man Revived by Touching the Bones of the Prophet Elisha*, the centrepiece of Allston's 1814 Bristol Exhibition. Coleridge's commentary on this picture, concentrated in his series of essays, 'On the Principles of Genial Criticism', demonstrates not only the acquirements of his eye with respect to *looking* at painting, but also the way in which he used this as a foundation for addressing and responding to the threat of false criticism as it developed within the criticism of the sister art. In this chapter, Coleridge's response to this problem will join various other responses elicited by Allston's picture, among them, Hazlitt's notice of the picture in the 'Morning Chronicle', Robert Hunt's criticism of the picture in *The Examiner*, a notice of the picture given in a local newspaper, *The Bristol Gazette*, and Allston's own description of the picture, penned for the catalogue to the exhibition. Each of these different responses reveals a different disciplinary approach to Allston's work, and provides openings through which to examine the varied manifestations of the tension between pictorial description and the critical distance required for more authoritative interpretive structures.

On 25 July 1814, an exhibition of paintings by Washington Allston opened at Merchant Taylor's Hall in Bristol.[1] The exhibition consisted of eight pieces: the *Dead Man Restored by Touching the Bones of the Prophet Elisha*, *A Scene in an Eating*

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[1] See Gerdts and Stebbins, *Man of Genius*, 81-82. Gerdts points out that the location of Allston's show was unusual in that Bristol was a "provincial centre which lamented its own lack of patronage". However, many of Allston's friends and acquaintances such as Coleridge and Dr. King were resident in Bristol at the time and encouraged the endeavour.

House (1813), *Hebe* (before 1814), *Rising of a Thunderstorm at Sea, Casket Scene, Rain at Sea* (before 1814), *Diana Bathing*, and *Diana and her Nymphs in the Chase*. Allston had been working on the *Dead Man Restored*, the centerpiece of the exhibition, from the time of his return to London in the autumn of 1811.[2] In the spring or early summer of 1813, 'after working unceasingly' on this picture, Allston became very ill (a result of lead poisoning), and was recommended to take leave of the picture and stay in Bristol for some weeks. Upon his return to London, he finished the picture and sent it to the British Institution where it was widely praised as 'one of the finest historical paintings in the exhibition' and won a prize of two hundred guineas.[3]

In June that year, the picture was sent to Bristol for his small exhibition. Just before exhibiting the picture in Bristol, Allston reworked the color in the painting, and seems to have made some structural changes, Coleridge commenting that he had 'restored it to his original conception'.[4] Nearly two weeks after the opening of Allston's exhibition, an advertisement appeared in *Felix Farley's Bristol Journal* which announced 'the commencement of a series of Essays upon the FINE ARTS, particularly upon that of Painting; illustrated by Criticisms upon the Pictures of Mr. Allston...as well as other works of merit, in the possession of several gentlemen well known in our vicinity' (PGC, 353). Coleridge's 'Essays on the Principles of Genial Criticism' were his 'first extensive public attempt' to provide an example of criticism

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[2] See Wright, *Corresp.*, 66. The locations of the other paintings shown are: *The Dead Man Restored by Touching the Bones of the Prophet Elisha*, 1811-14, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia; *A Scene in an Eating House*, 1813, Milwaukee Art Museum, Wisconsin; *Hebe*, before 1814, location unknown; *Rising of a Thunderstorm at Sea*, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Massachusetts; *Casket Scene from "The Merchant of Venice"*, 1807, Boston Athenaeum, Boston, Massachusetts; *Rain at Sea*, before 1814, location unknown; *Diana Bathing*, 1814, location unknown; *Diana and her Nymphs in the Chase*,1805, Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

[3] See Wright, *Corresp.*, 66.

[4] Samuel Taylor Coleridge to J.J. Morgan, 7 July 1814. See Griggs, *Collected Letters, iii*, 516.

based on fixed principles.[5] These essays were yet another manifestation of Coleridge's fight against false criticism, this time directed to painting rather than poetry. Coleridge was certainly aware of the critical crisis that confronted painting, if not from friends like Beaumont, then certainly from Allston who was himself acutely aware of the lack of a credible language and methodology for speaking about the fine arts.

Coleridge's essays seem to have been prompted by his awareness of critical abuses toward painting as much as they were intended to provide publicity for the exhibition of his friend. In his introduction, Coleridge claims that they were offered as an alternative to the 'works that have hitherto appeared' which 'have been either technical, and useful only to the artist himself (if indeed useful at all), or employed in explaining by the laws of association the effects produced on the spectator by such and such impressions' (PGC, 359). The technical works to which Coleridge makes reference might well have been descendants of works such as William Salmon's *Polygraphice* or the *Artist's Repository and Drawing Magazine* which offered advice on perspective, composition, the blending and grinding of colours and other techniques for the practicing artist.[6]

The works based on asssociation to which Coleridge refers are Archibald Alison's *Essays on the Nature and Principles of Taste* and, in particular, Richard Payne Knight's *Analytical Inquiry*. Coleridge's response to Knight was motivated by his belief that criticism which derived from the accidental 'effects' a work of art might produce upon the viewer lacked authority. In Coleridge's mind, Knight's approach embodies each of the 'causes of false criticism' because his judgments were

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[5] J.R. de J. Jackson, *Method and Imagination in Coleridge's Criticism* (Routledge & Keegan Paul Ltd., London, 1969), 56. See also, Samuel Taylor Coleridge to J.J. Morgan, late July 1814, in which Coleridge writes, "I could not bear the thought of putting in an ordinary Puff on such a man – or even an *anonymous* one", deciding instead on a 'bold Avowal of *my* sentiments on the fine Arts...by continued reference to Allston's Pictures". See Griggs, *Collected Letters*, iii, 520.

[6] See Carol Gibson Wood, *Jonathan Richardson*, 12. See also, *The Artist's Repository and Drawing Magazine Exhibiting the Principles of the Polite Arts in their Various Branches*, 4 vols. (1785-1808).

made without 'reference to fixed principles'. In an effort to stem the proliferation of false criticism in the arts (as he endeavoured to do for literature) Coleridge proposes that this set of essays will be based 'on the PRINCIPLES of SOUND CRITICISM concerning the FINE ARTS, deduced from those which animate and guide the true ARTIST in the production of his Works' (PGC, 356). Soon after he declares that the 'specific object of the present attempt is to enable the spectator to judge in the same spirit in which the Artist produced, or ought to have produced' (PGC, 360).

From the outset, Coleridge makes it clear that the presence of the picture itself is an essential part of this judgment. He writes that the 'illustrations of his principles do not here depend on his own ingenuity -- he writes for those 'who can consult their own eyes and judgments' (PGC, 360). He then proceeds to list a number of sources, among them the 'various Collections as of Mr. Acraman (the father of the Fine Arts in this city) of Mr. Davies, Mr. Gibbons, &c.; to which many of our readers either will have had, or may procure, access; and the admirable works exhibiting now by Allston...'(PGC, 360). He asks the reader to draw upon these sources in establishing in his own mind whether the 'productions of human genius...delight us by chance' or, whether 'there exists in the constitution of the human Soul a sense, and a regulative principle...' which mediates our experience of those productions. Importantly, Coleridge does not provide 'word-pictures' or descriptions similar to those found in his notebooks, but rather takes a more formal tone indicative of his methodical approach to this question.

The instructive tone of his essays and his intent to *gesture* to various paintings is emphasized by the parallel that he makes between his *use* of these pictures and the way in which the geometrician uses diagrams to aid in his reasoning. He writes that the works exhibited by Allston 'would of themselves suffice to elucidate the fundamental doctrines of color, ideal form, and grouping; assist the reasoner in the

same way, as the Diagrams aid the Geometrician, but far more and more vividly' (PGC, 361). This also recalls Coleridge's notion of criticism as essentially demonstrative, and points to the disciplinary knowledge that Coleridge had gained with Allston in learning to *look* at pictures. Significantly, Coleridge invokes the geometrician again, contrasting the way in which the geometrician must always refer to a 'correspondent *outward* intuition' (BL, i. 250) with the philosophic critic and moralist, for whom such reference is a '*conditional* necessity', and who rely instead on 'facts of feeling and of inner sense' (PGC, 363).

Coleridge's emphasis on the artist in conjunction with his picture underpins a notion of taste which brings together the mind and the senses, as for Coleridge, taste is 'the intermediate faculty which connects the active with the passive powers of our nature, the intellect with the senses; and its appointed function is to elevate the *images* of the latter, while it realizes the *ideas* of the former' (PGC, 365). This definition challenges Knight's assertion of the connection between the image and its object, his claim that the 'beauty or grandeur of forms, whether in nature or in imitative art, is owing to that which they signify or express'.[7] It follows, according to Knight that '...there is nothing inherently pleasing in the relationships of forms to each other, any more than there is in the individual forms themselves'.[8] For Coleridge, the locus of criticism is found not in the response of the viewer to what the 'forms' in the work signify or express in themselves (like Plato's letters, or the letters on the page in the book), but rather in the arrangement of those letters, in the relationships between them which reveal the extent to which the artist has produced that which he *ought* to have produced.

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[7] See Funnell, "Richard Payne Knight", 12
[8] See Funnell, "Richard Payne Knight", 12.

Yet this transfer of the locus of criticism based on the development of new procedural models demanded a language that was not burdened by an inherited critical discourse. Coleridge did not want the vague connotations of 'stock' descriptive words to clutter his meaning and hinder the communication of his principles. He therefore set about redefining his terms before applying them. For example, Coleridge argues that beauty actually consists in the relations of forms, not only in what they 'signify or express'. For Coleridge, beauty consists in the 'relationships of forms to each other', it is that 'in which *the many*, still seen as many, becomes *one*' (PGC, 371). Coleridge immediately finds an illustration in the crystallization of frost on a window pane which resembles a tree. He exclaims:

> With what pleasure we trace the parts, and their relations to each other, and to the whole! Here is the stalk or trunk, and here the branches or sprays – sometimes even the buds or flowers. Nor will our pleasure be less, should the caprice of chrystallization represent some object disagreeable to us, provided only we can see or fancy the component parts each in relation to each, and all forming a whole (PGC, 372).

For Coleridge, it is not the nature of the object depicted, as it could be a tree, flower or 'some object disagreeable to us', as the beauty is located in the formal relationships that underpin that 'specific image'.[9]

Coleridge finds another illustration in an old coach wheel. The wheel is covered in tar and dirt, but Coleridge considers the figure in terms of the relationships that underpin the image, and claims 'there is Beauty in that wheel, and you yourself would not only admit, but would feel it, had you never seen a wheel before' (PGC, 372). The way in which one 'feels' the beauty of the wheel is the same way in which one 'feels' the 'pleasurable full control/ Of Grace' described in Allston's sonnet. The

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[9] Compare with a similar passage in Allston's *Lectures* in which he describes the pleasure one feels in looking at pictures of common objects, where a "dish of oysters or a pickled herring" could produce a "pleasure *almost* exquisite". He argues that "The real oysters, &c., were indeed so far true as they were actual objects, but they did not contain a *truth* in *relation* to any thing. Whereas, in the pictured oysters, their relation to the actual was shown and verified in the mutual resemblance". For Allston, the pleasure proceeds from the "imitated truth". See Allston, *Lectures*, 34.

'specific image' of the old tar-covered wheel does not detract from an appreciation of its structure. Coleridge describes the way in which the 'rays proceed from the centre to the circumferences' and 'how many different images are distinctly comprehended at one glance and forming one whole, and each part in some harmonious relation to each and to all' (PGC, 372). The beauty of this structure is evident to such an extent that, though it may be disfigured with tar and dirt, or it may not physically exist, we may imagine it to be the 'golden wheel of the chariot of the Sun' (PGC, 372).

If, for Coleridge, beauty consists in the harmonious relation of forms to each other and to a whole, it subsists in composition. Yet in any given 'composition', beauty may be safely joined either with that which is *naturally agreeable* (i.e. that which is agreeable to the senses not as a result of association, but resulting from a pre-existing harmony between the mind and nature, such as, Coleridge's example, the color green), or with the faculties of 'life and free-will', faculties which are 'superior to the highest impressions of sense' (PGC, 373). The latter is of special interest to Coleridge in light of the effects which are produced when the 'Beautiful, arising from the regular form is so modified by the perception of life and spontaneous action, as that the latter only shall be the object of our conscious perception, while the former merely acts, and yet does effectively act, on our feelings?' As an illustration of these effects, Coleridge directs the viewer to Allston's painting *The Dead Man Revived* and traces the compositional structure through the figures:

> ...beginning with the Slave at the head of the reviving body, then proceeding to the daughter clasping her swooning mother; to the mother, the wife of the reviving man; then to the soldier behind who supports her; to the two figures eagerly conversing; and lastly, to the exquisitely graceful girl who is bending downward, and whose hand nearly touches the thumb of the slave! You will find, what you had not suspected, that you have here before you a circular groupe. But by what variety of life, motion, and passion, is all the stiffness, that would result from an obvious regular figure swallowed up, and the figure of the groupe as much concealed by the action and passion, as the skeleton which gives the form of the human body, is hidden by the flesh and its endless outlines!

Even as Coleridge traces the figures, his own text is interrupted by the 'life and spontaneous action' which characterizes the figures. He describes the '*reviving* body', the 'daughter *clasping*', the '*swooning* mother', the soldiers who *support* her, the 'figures *eagerly conversing*' and the girl who bends downward, whose 'hand nearly touches the thumb of the slave'.[10] These expressions and movements belong to the 'specific image' and are the object of Coleridge's 'conscious perception', while in the circular group itself is the 'beautiful arising from the regular form'. For Coleridge, there is pleasure to be gained from following the figures, as he exclaims upon the discovery much like he exclaims to his 'companion' or reader in his description of Allston's painting *Diana and her Nymphs in the Chase* to 'take care'. This pleasure is not grounded in association, or in what the forms of the picture represent, but the way in which the forms within the picture are related to each other. The beauty of the picture consists in just this: in a particular set of relations which comprise a whole, the whole of which acts on our 'feelings' while our perception is occupied with the expression – with the action of tracing the heads, hands, movements, and gestures which both conceal yet comprise the circular group.

For Coleridge, the circular group is 'as much concealed by the action and passion, as the skeleton which gives the form of the human body, is hidden by the flesh and its endless outlines!' (PGC, 373). Coleridge's use of comparison in this description (the circular group is concealed as is the skeleton) is also interesting because he directs his comparison not to the individual forms within the piece, but to its structure. He does not use poetic devices or diction in a verbal imitation of the pictorial 'effects' of the piece, nor does he compare the characteristics or colouring of the figures on the canvas to other figures. He does not distort the viewer's potential experience of the picture through impressing a thin film of language upon it. He does

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[10] Italics mine.

attempt to use this aesthetic language to indicate the *transparency* of the picture – the way in which the structural components shine through the surface of the picture, and are acted upon by the 'Expression' within it. The expressive elements of the picture are traced and reflected in Coleridge's vivid use of language, while his employment of the 'habit of foreseeing' in first providing his reader with the example of chrystallization on the window pane, and secondly the old coach wheel, prepares his reader to *see* the formal aspects of the picture shining through the expressive elements. Allston's picture thus provides an illustration of 'Beauty as Expression', as Coleridge described it in his 'Lectures on Aesthetics'. In this instance, Beauty is recognized as a manifestation of Expression in 'Color and Transparency', in which, according to Green's example, the regular form of the fountain is enlivened by the motion of the water (recalling perhaps the 'light in motion' Allston experienced upon viewing the Apollo Belvedere). In Allston's picture, the concealed group points to the depth of the picture, the transparency of the conception and the artist's method, while at the same time, this concealed structure is played upon and enlivened by the actions of the figures in the painting, and the compositional reinforcement provided by Allston's use of color within the picture.

In Raphael's painting, *Galatea*, the effect is quite the opposite. Here, the 'beauty' or the relations among the circular forms are not hidden, but 'the circle is perceived at first sight', thus registering an important difference from Allston's painting where the hidden circle was not immediately perceived, but *felt*. In Raphael's work, the eye perceives more instantaneously the sheer 'multiplicity of rays and chords within the area of the circular group' and yet peruses these infinite circular structures more at ease, unhindered by the 'endless variety and sportive wildness' in the figures (PGC, 374). This wildness in both the figures and junctions of the figures strikes a balance for Coleridge between the 'two conflicting principles of the FREE LIFE and the confining FORM' (PGC, 374). This is perhaps more like Allston's

sonnet on Michelangelo, where the whole itself was immediately apparent to the intellect. Whereas in Allston's painting, the 'stiffness' of what might appear regular figures is 'concealed' by the 'life, motion and passion' of his figures, in Raphael's painting, the stiffness which may have resulted from the regularity of form is '*fused* and...almost *volatized* by the interpenetration and electrical flashes' of the 'free life'. In this painting, Coleridge seems to point to a manifestation of 'Expression as Beauty', where expression is manifest not in 'Color and Transparency', but Form. As argued previously, in this manifestation, the *function* of expression is required, but the vehicle (color and transparency) is not, because the ability to enliven, to give life and spontaneity in the particular can be achieved through Line. The 'life' of the picture that is given by the formal elements of the picture (rather than color) is emphasized by Coleridge's use of phrases that point to the variety imparted by that structure, thus, the 'elevations and depressions of the circumference', the 'endless variety, and sportive wildness in the component figures and in the junctions of the figures'. It is the 'confining FORM' that is volatized, fused by the 'interpenetration and electrical flashes of the 'FREE LIFE' (PGC, 374). It is rather like his other example, in which the light shines through a piece of reasoning, not at all obstructed by the letters or the words upon the page. There is no opacity, but all is clear, and the transparency is granted by the *form* itself, as one looks for the form through the form, as it were. Thus, in Raphael's picture, what shines through the surface seems to occupy the entirety of that surface, transforming surface into symbol.

In this respect, both Allston's picture of *The Dead Man Revived* and Raphael's picture *Galatea* provide an illustration not only of an 'intuition', but the manifestation of that 'intuition' or 'self-unravelling clue' which shines through Coleridge's notion of symbol.[11] The 'illustrative hint' given by Coleridge in the example of the crystal

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[11] For a helpful discussion of Coleridge's idea of symbol in a religious context, see J. Robert Barth, S.J., *The Symbolic Imagination: Coleridge and the Romantic Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton

discussed in the previous chapter was meant to demonstrate the existence of something 'to realize the form, something in and by which the forma informans reveals itself: and these, less than any that could be substituted, and in the least possible degree, distract the attention, in the least possible degree obscure the idea, of which they (composed into outline and surface) are the symbol'(PGC, 377). By 'these', Coleridge presumably refers to the 'eye' and 'ear'. As has been demonstrated above, with respect to the 'eye', the expressive qualities of color and line are those forces able to 'distract the attention' and 'obscure the idea' in the 'least possible degree', thus allowing that 'translucence' so integral to the work of art. This is evident not only in Allston's management of the circular group, hidden and at the same time enlivened by the expressive qualities of the figures of the composition, but also in Raphael's handling of the structural components of *Galatea*, where the underlying form rises through the surface to meet and transfix the eye.

Perhaps an even more literal, and simple, example of this can be found in Allston's coloring. Although color is typically aligned more with sense than an intellectual perception of parts to wholes as is beauty, for both Allston and Coleridge, color may function in a similar way to composition. For Coleridge, in the higher senses, color 'blends sensation and perception so as to hide perception in sensation' (PGC, 377). This concealment echoes, to some extent, the concealment of the circular group in Allston's composition. However, it is perhaps more physically evident in Allston's own practice of coloring. As Wright observes, in mixing his colors, Allston 'used a brush rather than a palette knife as the Italians did, which, he said, made 'mud' of the tints'.[12] Allston's departure from common practice can be traced to his time in France, while painting in the company of William Hazlitt in the

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University Press, 1977), which might also be of value in shaping comparisons with Allston's own religious thinking on the subject. See also Coleridge's definition of symbol in the *Lay Sermons*, 30.

[12] See Wright, *Corresp.*, 39.

Louvre. As Allston's biographer, Jared B. Flagg records, 'Allston met Hazlitt painting a copy from Titian. Hazlitt remarked on the singularly varied character of the tints. "It looks", said he, "as if Titian had twiddled his colors". This gave Allston the idea of "catching up each of the three colors and merely twiddling them together instead of grinding them with the knife"'.[13] Allston himself described this process in pages transcribed by Henry Greenough:

> The modern Italians mix their pearl tints with the pallette knife, which is death to all brilliancy of color. It makes mud of the tints at once. They no longer sparkle to the eye but become flat as stale beer. By mingling them lightly with the brush you make a neutral tint of ten times the force of one ground up with the knife, and if you were to take a magnifying glass and examine the tint you would find small particles of pure color, which give great brilliancy. You must have observed the difference in lustre between silks woven from different coloured threads and those dyed with a compound hue. A purple silk woven of two sets of threads one blue and the other red, cannot be matched by any plain silk dyed purple.[14]

Through intermingling flecks of pure color with the 'whole' or blended color of which they were constituents, Allston enhanced the luminosity of his paintings. From a distance, the viewer would not be able to detect the presence of the pure spots of colour, but would certainly experience them in the effect of the painting. In this respect, Allston mediates the clear and distinct parts (the 'disconnected' of 'pure' spots of color) with the whole of the smooth, blended colours. Thus Allston demonstrates in practice what Coleridge formulates in theory when he describes Beauty as a state wherein the 'parts are so numerous' that 'they cannot be perceived simultaneously without sinking from distinctness into clearness'. Allston achieves this 'state' in his colouring as the parts of pure color are also so numerous that they cannot be distinguished in the effect, but contribute to the *clarity* of the effect.

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[13] Jared B. Flagg, *The Life and Letters of Washington Allston* (London: Richard Bentley and Son, 1803), 186.

[14] From Washington Allston, "Color Book", Box 56, 6, Dana Family Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society. According to Wright, "the first twenty-five pages, the substance of which was apparently originally written by him, were copied by Henry Greenough, in whose handwriting they seem to be written; and very likely the remaining pages, which are in another hand, represent notes Greenough made from conversations they had". See Wright, *Corresp.*, 621.

In addition to his 'breaking in' of pure color into neutral tints, Allston also relied heavily on the practice of 'glazing'. He used colored glazes which he mixed from Asphaltum Indian red and Ultramarine or Prussian Blue, for example, to a neutral tint, and used them to regulate the tone of his pictures. As Greenough records, Allston observed that

> ...the effect of glazing is to deepen the tone. You may paint a bit of canvass over with a solid body of Ivory black which one would suppose is as black as paint can represent; but let it dry and then by repeated glazings of Asphaltum and Prussian blue over a portion of it, you will deepen the tone so much as to make your first coat of black look like slate-colour by the side of it. The variety of hues producible by glazing is infinite.[15]

Allston's use of glazing provides an illustration of the way in which the background structural component of color can come forward through the canvas so as to give a strong sense of depth to the picture through the tone of its colors.

While Coleridge's response demonstrates the way in which imitation might be drawn upon in criticism to 'describe' the picture without recourse to pictorial devices, Hazlitt draws upon imitation in a way that reinforces the presence of such devices. As John Kinnaird points out, Hazlitt's commentary upon art indicates his desire to 'give his readers the illusion of *seeing* the picture he describes – of feeling what he sees and of seeing what (and simultaneously *as*) he evaluates'.[16] This practice, evident throughout Hazlitt's practical criticism of particular works of visual art, was described by M.H. Abrams as a kind of 'critical impressionism'.[17] According to Abrams,

> Hazlitt's theory and practice, more than that of any of his fellow critics, also demonstrates another derivation from the Longinian emphasis on critical responsiveness and 'enthrallment', rather than judgment. Hazlitt typically applies his criticism, not to the analysis of design, ordonnance, and the inter-relations of parts, but to the representation in words of the aesthetic qualities and feeling-tones of a work of art.[18]

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[15] From Washington Allston, "Color Book", Dana Family Papers, Box 56, 8-9.
[16] John Kinnaird, *William Hazlitt: Critic of Power* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978), 134.
[17] See Abrams, *Mirror*, 135.
[18] See Abrams, *Mirror*, 134-135.

Examples of this can be found throughout Hazlitt's critical prose. For example, in his criticism of Watteau's *Fête Champetre*, Hazlitt writes, 'There is something exceedingly light, agreeable and characteristic in this artist's productions. He might almost be said to breathe his figures and his flowers on the canvas – so fragile is their texture, so evanescent is his touch'.[19] Likewise, in comments made upon the landscape in two pictures of Richard Wilson (*Apollo and the Seasons* and *Phaeton*), of which he writes, 'In looking at them we breathe the very air which the scene inspires, and feel the genius of the place present to us'.[20]

Hazlitt's use of language rich in metaphor, simile and alliteration reflects what Roy Park referred to as the 'transfiguration' of the *ut pictura poesis* analogy in the period. In arguing for a new emphasis to be placed on the individual (rather than the particular in terms of description), the parallel between painting and poetry was made more flexible, even, as Park argues, to the point of being discarded for the interpretive model to which it gave rise.[21] Kinnaird seems to pursue this point in arguing that pictorialism 'was not something that dies under the rising musical tides of Romanticism but something that Romantic vision reanimates and, in its criticism, redefines'.[22] He argues that the frequency with which words like 'Perspective', 'relief', 'light and shade', 'colouring', 'keeping', and 'gusto' appear in Hazlitt's criticism, 'suggests that painting and literature, if no longer aesthetic twins, were still 'sister arts', and in some respects more firmly and intimately linked than ever before by their complementary differences as expressions of imagination'.[23]

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[19] William Hazlitt, *Complete Works*, ed. P.P. Howe (21 vols., London: J.M. Dent and Sons, 1930-4), *ix*, 22.
[20] See Hazlitt, *Complete Works*, xviii, 24. See also, Richard Wilson *Apollo and the Seasons*, oil on canvas, Tate Gallery, London.
[21] See Park, "Ut Pictura Poesis", 163.
[22] See Kinnaird, *William Hazlitt*, 129.
[23] See Kinnaird, *William Hazlitt*, 129. For an extensive treatment of the connection between Hazlitt's dramatic criticism and criticism of painting, see Roy Park, *Hazlitt and the Spirit of the Age: Abstraction and Critical Theory* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), 137-158. Park draws attention to Hazlitt's critical vocabulary, which, he argues, "always evinces his respect for the differences as well as for the similarities between the two arts". See Park, *Hazlitt*, 143.

However, Hazlitt's use of words that demonstrate a visual and critical orientation to the work of art as opposed to an expression of its effects, indicates his sense not of the intimate link between painting and poetry, but also the necessity of achieving an art criticism to some extent autonomous from literary criticism. Unlike the language of 'critical impressionism' referred to by Abrams, this language was part of that 'lingua franca' of the connoisseur, a language Hazlitt wanted to reclaim and invest with new meaning and significance through practical application. This language derives from, and is used in the 'analysis of design, ordonnance, and the inter-relations of parts' rather than as a means of communicating the 'aesthetic qualities and feeling-tones of a work of art', and in this respect, reflects a sense of the particular and individual not only as it exists within the artist, but within the critic in shaping disciplinary languages and structures. Indeed Hazlitt's practical analysis of 'design, ordonnance, and the inter-relations of parts' within individual paintings reflects a response shaped by his own disciplinary orientation, his practice as a painter, and his immersion in painterly circles.

This language was integral to Hazlitt in shaping what Kinnaird refers to as an 'authoritative criticism', one used 'to protect and perpetuate the proper evaluation of excellence' in the fine arts. An example of this can be seen in his criticism of the British Institution exhibition in 1814, in which Hazlitt includes his criticism of Allston's picture, *The Dead Man Restored.* In his review, which appeared in the *Morning Chronicle* on 5 February 1814 (some five months before the opening of Allston's Bristol Exhibition), Hazlitt begins by observing what he sees as the inferiority of this exhibition in comparison to the previous two. He regrets the neglect of 'pleasing representations of common life, and natural scenery', subjects that reflect the most successful efforts of the 'modern English school', for the 'pursuit of prize-

medals and *epic mottos*, which look well in the catalogue'.[24] Hazlitt's suggestion is that the look of the picture is subordinate to the 'look' of the words that communicate its subject in the catalogue, thus placing the picture and the text in a peculiar relation to one another.

It is not only the epic historical subject matter to which Hazlitt objects, but also the execution of this style. He refers to the 'clay figure' (presumably figures painted after models moulded from clay) that appears in such compositions, and the regularity, or even predictability of the canvasses before him: 'the bones and muscles of the man, the anatomical mechanism, the regular proportions measured by a two-foot rule – large canvasses covered with stiff figures arranged in decent order, with the characters and story correctly expressed by uplifted eyes or hands according to old receipt-books for the passions…', a reference to the rules for the expression of emotion set forth by Charles Le Brun. What is lacking in Hazlitt's eyes could perhaps best be expressed by Coleridge's reference to the 'FREE LIFE', the life and spontaneity expressed by the picture. What is wanting, Hazlitt argues, is 'a Prometheus to give life to the umbrous mass, to throw an intellectual light over the opaque image, to embody the inmost refinements of thought to the outward eye, to lay bare the very soul of passion'. Hazlitt's contrast between 'intellectual light' and 'opaque image' recalls Coleridge's notion of the transparency of the intellectual intuition through the materiality of paint.

For Hazlitt, critical judgement is not, as for connoisseurs like Beaumont and Price, guided by the extent to which a painting is 'poetical', but rather is based on the extent to which a painting is, in its purest sense, painting. For Hazlitt,

> …that picture is of little comparative value, which can be completely *translated* into another language, of which the description in a common catalogue is as good, and conveys all that is expressed by the picture itself: for

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[24] See Hazlitt, *Complete Works*, xi, 187.

> it is the excellence of every art to give what can be given by no other, in the same degree.[25]

Hazlitt seems to reflect, or echo in a stronger form the developing discontent voiced by Beaumont and Price with respect to the practice of description. For Hazlitt, just as a good painting cannot be translated (it must possess an 'excellence...given by no other') that excellence must be the object of a critical language and methodology suited to it. It must call forth from criticism the language and critical tools that open up the art of painting to itself, criticism that is communicative of that excellence in painting, and which cannot be applied with equal force or effectiveness to another art.

Hazlitt's observations on criticism within this piece are also strongly oriented to the viewer of the painting, rather than to the artist or his intention. For Hazlitt, painting must reflect not only the correspondence between the artist and his conception, but must not compromise the idea in the mind of the viewer. He observes,

> Much less is that picture to be esteemed which only injures and defaces the idea already exiting in the mind's eye, which does not come up to the conception which the imagination forms of the subject, and substitutes a dull reality for high sentiment; for the art is in this case an incumbrance, not an assistance, and interferes with, instead of adding to the stock of our pleasurable sensations.[26]

For Hazlitt, a picture can actually inflict damage upon an idea in the 'mind's eye', one that ought to be complemented, broadened, and enlivened by the artist's conception. Like a poor cinematic or dramatic adaptation of a much admired book, Hazlitt argues that art that 'injures and defaces the idea already existing in the mind's eye' is more an incumbrance, than an assistance to the viewer. For Hazlitt, art that serves more an incumbrance than assistance is that which is generally encouraged by connoisseurs

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[25] See Hazlitt, *Complete Works*, xi, 187.
[26] See Hazlitt, *Complete Works*, xi, 187-188.

and institutions like the British Institution, which reward even failed efforts in history painting rather than reward excellence in the pursuit of other genres.

Given this context, Hazlitt proceeds to point out paintings in the exhibition that appear to be exceptions to his remarks, among them Edward Bird's painting of *Job*, and Washington Allston's *Dead Man Restored by Touching the Bones of the Prophet Elisha.* Hazlitt does not engage in 'critical impressionism' in his commentary on Bird's painting or Allston's painting, but rather proceeds in a style reminiscent of the beauty and blemish mode of criticism. With respect to Bird's picture, he states that 'The great fault of this picture which displays much sense, character, study, and invention, is the heaviness and monotony of the colour'.[27] One gets the sense that Hazlitt does not require definition or argument in language to underpin his judgement, merely the presence of the picture to confirm his observations. Hazlitt refers to the action of the figures in Bird's painting as 'equally appropriate and striking', and observes that 'the drapery of this last figure is remarkably loose and flimsy, or what the painters, we believe, call *woolly*'.[28] Curiously, Hazlitt sets himself apart from painters ('we believe') and solidifies his position with the reader in his choice of the pronoun 'we'. Yet in leaving the question of whether the story is illustrated 'with chronological propriety or not...to the critics', Hazlitt also positions himself away from the critic, instead asserting his possession of an artist's sympathy and training.[29]

Thus, while Hazlitt's observations on the work before him are, more or less, guided by his selection of faults and praiseworthy elements in the pictures (his instruction to painters as well as to those who look at paintings), his criticism is enlivened by the refreshed definitions that he gives to the language in which it is

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[27] See Hazlitt, *Collected Works*, xi, 189.
[28] See Hazlitt, *Collected Works*, xi, 189.
[29] See Hazlitt, *Collected Works*, xi, 189.

expressed. The meaning of the critical terms used by Hazlitt is established by the context in which he uses these words (unlike Coleridge who often sought after definitions to inform the context). This is evident in his criticism of Allston's picture *The Dead Man Revived.* In his criticism of Allston's picture, Hazlitt writes:

> Mr. Allston's large picture of *the dead man restored to life by touching the bones of Elisha,* deserves great praise both for the choice and originality of the subject, the judicious arrangement of the general composition, and the correct drawing and very great knowledge of the human figure throughout. The figure of the revived soldier in the foreground is noble and striking; the drapery about him is equally well imagined and well executed. There is also a very beautiful head of a young man in a blue drapery with his hands lifted together, and in the act of attention to another, who is pointing out the miracle, which has much of the simple dignity and pathos of Raphael. With respect to the general colour and expression of this picture, we think it has too much of the look of a French composition. The faces are in the school of Le Brun's heads – theoretical diagrams of the passions – not natural and profound expression of them; forced and overcharged, without precision or variety of character. The colouring, too, is without any strongest contrasts or general gradations, and is half-toned and half-tinted away, between reddish brown flesh and wan-red drapery, till all effect, union, and relief, is lost. It would be unjust not to add, that we think Mr. Allston's picture demonstrates great talents, great professional acquirements, and even genius; but we suspect that he has paid too exclusive an attention to the instrumental and theoretical parts of his art. The object of art is not merely to display knowledge, but to give pleasure.[30]

In this passage, Hazlitt addresses first the more formal aspects of art, commending Allston on his subject, the composition, and his management of drawing, which, according to Hazlitt, reveals his knowledge of the human figure. From that initial judgement, Hazlitt proceeds, directing the eyes of his reader to the figures in the canvas with short descriptive phrases and words indicating his judgement of them. Importantly, Hazlitt makes the most cursory of gestures to the canvas through language, assuming the availability of the painting to his reader. He points to the 'revived soldier' in the 'foreground' who is 'noble and striking', observing that the drapery is 'equally well imagined and well executed'. He then proceeds to the 'very beautiful head of a young man in a blue drapery with his hands lifted together',

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[30] See Hazlitt, *Collected Works*, xi, 188.

looking to another 'who is pointing out the miracle, which has much of the simple dignity and pathos of Raphael'. His reference to Raphael is born more of association than comparison, as Hazlitt does not compare Allston's figure to any figure of Raphael, but merely suggests a similarity of execution and style, not unusual in a painter looking to Raphael in learning his art.

Hazlitt then turns away from any hint of the action within the picture to a reflection on the picture in general. Despite the absence of what one might think of as 'critical impressionism', Hazlitt infuses life into his criticism through devising different ways of describing what appears on the canvas. He charges the faces as being 'theoretical diagrams' rather than demonstrating 'natural and profound expression', they are 'forced and overcharged, without precision or a variety of character'. Hazlitt does not revert to stock terms in his description of these figures, nor of the coloring, but builds an effective critical language from demanding of language that it reflect his observations on the picture. He builds this through contrasts between terms like 'forced and overcharged' with the more subtle 'precision' and 'variety' of character. This building of contrasts is also achieved in his description of Allston's colouring, which 'is without any strongest contrasts or general gradations, and is half-toned and half-tinted away, between reddish brown flesh and wan-red drapery, till all effect, union, and relief, is lost'. His reference to the lack of both 'strong*est* contrasts' and 'general gradations' echo the lack of a range of definition in Allston's work. Equally with his reference to the colors as 'half-toned and half-tinted away', Hazlitt provides a specific description that underpins his more general judgement as to the weakness of the colouring.

Allston was in the habit of reading criticisms published on his own work, as is evidenced by his correspondence.[31] He was certainly aware of this review, alluding to it in a letter to Samuel F.B. Morse, dated 5 July 1814 before the exhibition in Bristol and immediately after his painting was exhibited at the British Institution. In his letter to Morse, he writes:

> Perhaps you will be surprised to hear that I have been retouching it. I have just concluded a fortnight's hard work upon it, and have the satisfaction to add that I have been seldom better satisfied than with my present labor. I have repainted the greater part of the draperies – indeed, those of all the principal figures, excepting the Dead Man – with powerful and positive colors, and added double strength to the shadows of every figure, so that for force and distinctness you would hardly know it for the same picture. The "Morning Chronicle" would have no reason now to complain of its "wan red".[32]

Allston had read Hazlitt's review, although it is uncertain whether Allston knew it to be from the pen of Hazlitt, this because he refers not to Hazlitt by name, but to the 'Morning Chronicle'. The criticism seems to have struck a chord with Allston, as he began to rework various elements of the painting even after the painting (as it was) had won first prize at the British Institution that year. The work involved was considerable, and demonstrates the value that Allston accorded this criticism. His eagerness to rework the painting may also have stemmed from the fact that Allston made considerable changes to the picture *before* it was shown at the Institution. Hazlitt's criticism might very well have confirmed his own thoughts as to the faults of the picture as a result of these changes, further spurring Allston to make the changes in accordance with it.

It is perhaps not a little ironic that Allston's second set of changes (spurred by Hazlitt's criticism) produced the picture so admired by Coleridge, as remarks of his made upon viewing the painting shortly before the exhibition in Bristol attest. Coleridge remarked that Allston had 'restored it to his original conception',

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[31] For example, in a letter to Samuel Finley Breese Morse, Allston refers to the location of his picture *Morning in Italy*. He writes, "You saw the dead color of it last summer. I inclose a short notice of it from the *Examiner*". See *WA* to Samuel Finley Breese Morse, after 16 June 1816 in *Corresp.*, 93.

suggesting that Allston had made the first set of changes before the exhibition at the British Institution.[33] Coleridge was struck by Allston's second set of alterations on the picture, writing to J.J. Morgan that he

> ...was more than gratified by the wonderful Improvement of the Picture, since he has restored it to his original Conception. I cannot by words convey to you, how much he has improved it within the last Fortnight. Were it not, that I still think (tho' ages *might* pass without the world at large noticing it) that in the figure of the Soldier there is too much motion for the distinct Expression, or rather too little expression for the quantity & vehemence of Motion, I should scarcely hesitate to declare it in its present state a *perfect* work of art. Such Richness with such variety of Colors, all harmonizing, and while they vivify, yet deepen not counteract, the total effect of a grand Solemnity of Tint, I never before contemplated.[34]

While Coleridge, like Hazlitt, was critical of the figure of the Soldier, he expresses his dissatisfaction with the figure in terms entirely different from those of Hazlitt. He refers to what he sees as 'too much motion for the distinct Expression', then corrects himself, asserting that there is 'rather too little expression for the quantity & vehemence of Motion'. Importantly, Coleridge's notion of 'expression' in this context is rather close to Hazlitt's notion of 'gusto' – that which gives life and spontaneity to the work upon the canvas. For Coleridge, there is an imbalance between the expressiveness of the figure and the motion in which he is engaged, an imbalance that fails to mar his obvious enjoyment of the other qualities of the picture. As opposed to the 'wan red' and lack of distinction with respect to the colors pointed out in the earlier conception by Hazlitt, Coleridge remarks upon the effects produced by Allston's reworking of the canvas, the 'Richness' and 'variety of Colors, all harmonizing, and while they vivify, yet deepen not counteract'. His reference to the quality of the color and the contrasts within and amongst the colors that produced that

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[32] *WA* to Samuel Finley Breese Morse, 5 July 1814. See *Corresp.*, 73.
[33] Samuel Taylor Coleridge to J.J. Morgan, 7 July 1814. See Griggs, *Collected Letters*, *iii*, 516.
[34] Samuel Taylor Coleridge to J.J. Morgan, 7 July 1814. See Griggs, *Collected Letters*, *iii*, 517.

'Solemnity of Tint' demonstrate the spontaneity of Allston's response to Hazlitt's criticism.

Allston became increasingly critical of this picture as time progressed, indicating that his interests had shifted in another direction. In his later correspondence, Allston would register this dissatisfaction as *The Dead Man Revived* would come to be replaced by *Elijah in the Desert* as his favourite. In a letter to Henry Pickering Allston writes:

> Though I have finished many pictures which I did not wish to paint at the *precise time* when they were done, I have yet never undertaken one *subject which I did not feel*; and it has ever seemed to me impossible that I could *otherwise* produce a picture worthy any one's possession. I know not whether my own feelings mix more with my works than those of other Artists do with theirs, but I am well convinced that my hand would be powerless were I to attempt a subject foreign to them. The feelings with which I painted the *Group* you allude to have long since passed away from me; and as a work of art I cannot now approve of it; to copy it therefore, with its present imperfections, would be painful; and to amend it, without any sympathy or pleasure in the subject, would, I more than fear, be impossible.[35]

Allston writes that it would be impossible for him to make changes on the picture as those feelings that guided him in the original execution of the picture had 'long since passed away'. His disapproval of the picture demonstrates his growing artistic maturity, and indicates his desire to move forward rather than back. The reasons for Allston's disapproval, and his own understanding of the 'imperfections' of the piece were later communicated to Joseph Cogdell, whom Allston thanks for his praise of the picture. Allston agrees for the most part with Cogdell's criticism of the picture, making a single exception

> to the remark, <that> of the heads of the two Feretrori being too small. Whatever of *style* the character of the design may possess is owing, I think, to this <principle> proportion. It is grounded on a sound principle, extracted from the study of the Antique and the Old Masters, particularly the latter. Michael Angelo owes much of his grandeur to this principle. He has pushed it indeed much farther than I should dare to follow it. I have been much struck however with the justness of your objection to the introduction of the Wife of the Reviving Man; it is so just, that were I to compose the subject again, I

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[35] *WA* to Henry Pickering, 13 July 1821. See *Corresp.*, 186.

> should omit her. The incident [her fainting] is *dramatic*, and, as such, does not harmonize with the miracle, which is *epic*.[36]

Allston is easily able to defend his work against Cogdell's charge of the disproportion of the heads of the two figures. He explains to Cogdell that any fault must progress from features other than the compositional structure, which is based on sound principles, yet he agrees wholeheartedly with Cogdell's observation on the figure of the wife of the reviving man, which, being '*dramatic*', distracts one from the epic subject matter of the work. It is an instance in which the individual appears to encroach too strongly upon the general, thus lessening its impact.

Allston's painting of *The Dead Man Revived* was also reviewed in *The Examiner* by Robert Hunt shortly after Hazlitt's review appeared in the *Morning Chronicle*. Unlike Hazlitt, Hunt immediately places his consideration of Allston's painting in its political context, (which seems to echo Coleridge's concern about the anti-American tendencies which he felt were responsible for the poor showing at Allston's exhibition). Hunt writes that this painting '...makes us deeply regret that the brother natives of two such countries as Great Britain and the American Republic, should be engaged in any other war than that of social and intellectual rivalry, the only rational hostility of sentient beings'.[37] It was by no means uncommon for Hunt to begin a notice of Allston's pictures in this way. Echoing this sentiment, he writes in his review of Allston's *Angel Liberating St. Peter from Prison* that his work is an exception: 'Mr. Alston's work...is creditable to the native of a country which displayed so glorious an energy in the successful demand of its popular rights....But the vigor of the American pencil hitherto bears no sort of proportion to that noble vigor of heart and hand, which places the American people among the finest in the world'.[38] While Hazlitt and Hunt were generally at odds with respect to their views

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[36] *WA* to Joseph Cogdell, 1 July 1806. See *Corresp.*, 229.
[37] Robert Hunt, "Fine Art: British Institution", *The Examiner* (13 February 1813).
[38] Robert Hunt, "Fine Art: British Institution", *The Examiner* (1 February 1816).

on the arts, there is certainly a sense of their joint awareness of the effects that the political constitution of the states had on the development of the arts on the other side of the Atlantic.[39]

Nevertheless, after prefacing his comment with this remark, Hunt commences his description of Allston's picture. He begins with pointing out the faults that lie within the picture. He concedes that the 'faces and forms in this picture are all impressed by a strong, and highly natural feeling', but continues that there 'is rather a monotony in the countenances of the three chief spectators of the miracle'. Likewise, he wonders whether the figures 'above and beyond the man in the fore ground, are not deviations from perspective precision, as to prominence of size and colour'. However, unlike Hazlitt, who creates descriptive terms that might better respond to and communicate the materiality of paint upon the canvas, Hunt engages in a more subjective description of the work in which he seeks to confirm the merit of the picture through its ability to elicit vivid descriptions from his pen:

> But these are venial errors, when compared to the life, the impassioned feelings, that breathe throughout; to the astonishment and fear, to the mute gazing, and shrinking at the awful resuscitation. The female in a fit at the terrific sight, while her daughter clings to her with mixed emotion of fear and filial concern is an impressively natural incident. Equally so are the two youths engaged in a conversation of enquiry and surprise, one with his finger of one hand significantly laid on the other, the second with his arms emphatically stretched forth.[40]

Hunt does not share Hazlitt's detachment from the picture plane, or his restraint in mingling description with the structural features of the picture. Rather, he seems to participate in the picture through his description of it – his 'sympathy' with the picture emerges from the letter of the story as it is manifest in form. It is as though Hunt dictates the action in the picture, a verbal narrative which reflects his experience of

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[39] I have briefly explored the political implications of the 'imitation' of European culture by American artists like Allston in my Mphil, which also contains a brief examination of the differences in critical language on either side of the Atlantic in response to Allston's art, which I have been unable to include here due to limitations of space.

[40] See Hunt, "Fine Art: British Institution", *The Examiner* (13 February 1814).

the picture *at that moment*, rather than in a moment of reflection. This is emphasized by his use of the present tense and his animation of the figures within the painting, for example, his reference to the 'female in a fit at the terrific sight, while her daughter clings to her with a mixed emotion of fear and filial concern'. Yet this powerful description, this step into the picture, is immediately retracted as he again asserts his distance form the picture in calling it 'an impressively natural incident'. Hunt gradually works himself up into an even more vivid description, infusing the painting with his own experience of it in language:

> Excepting the disproportioned length of the reviving man, too much praise cannot be given for his admirably painted character, the contraction of the toes, the dimly beaming eyes, starting with faint dawnings of consciousness and sensation, the anatomical drawing, and the mixed carnation and livid hue of his flesh, in which the hitherto stagnant stream of life is beginning to thaw under the warmth of that hallowed and wonder-working flame, which beams on the skeleton of Elisha, -- a conception truly poetical and explanatory of the returning vitality.[41]

Hunt's description is a peculiar mix of figurative language and observations as to the artist's acumen in expressing his figures on the canvas. It seems as though his more formal observations about the picture thwart, or hinder the full force of his more figurative description of the picture. The phrases set apart by commas in the beginning of the description ('the contraction of the toes, the dimly beaming eyes, staring with faint dawnings of consciousness and sensation') are punctuated, or rolled back by his observation of the 'anatomical drawing', from which commences another effort at more vivid description ('the mixed carnation and livid hue of his flesh, in which the hitherto stagnant stream of live is beginning to thaw…'). Phrases like 'disproportioned length', 'admirably painted character', and 'anatomical drawing' seem to negate the effects of alliteration in the *s* sound of 'stagnant stream' and the 'w' of 'warmth' and 'wonder-working'. Thus Hunt's criticism of Allston's work demonstrates the tension between his desire to assert the painting as a 'poetical

conception' almost literally, through responding through poetic language himself, and his inclusion of more formal details, his imitation of the close eye of the connoisseur, which punctuates this tendency for poetical description. His analysis is dependent upon the actions conveyed within the figures in the painting, unlike Coleridge's which derive from the relations of the figures to each other, and the compositional elements which are foregrounded.

This tension between description and criticism, and the search after a standard of criticism can also be seen in *The Bristol Gazette* of 4 August 1814, in which appears an article devoted to 'Mr. Allston's Exhibition of Paintings'. The sequence in which Allston's pictures will be discussed within the article, the contributor informs his reader, will be taken 'according to their numbers in the catalogue, not regarding their priority in point of excellence'. The contributor begins with 'No. 1, *The dead man restored to life, by touching the bones of the Prophet Elisha'*, and provides the Biblical reference for the source of the story (2 Kings).[42] Unlike Coleridge, the contributor of this article immediately informs the reader that this picture had received first prize at the British Institution. Also unlike Coleridge's description of Allston's picture (but curiously like his description of the view from the hillside in Olevano), the contributor states its size ('about fifteen feet in height and twelve in breadth'). The contributor states that the story is 'explained in the text above quoted and so amply and judiciously narrated in the catalogue as to require no enlargement here'. Thus again, in a move somewhat akin to the *Annals of the Fine Arts*, the contributor refers the reader to the catalogue.

This painting is the subject of the longest commentary of all the paintings reviewed. This is perhaps owing to the fact that it was a historical picture, thus reflecting established hierarchies. The contributor begins:

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[41] See Hunt, "Fine Art: British Institution", *The Examiner* (13 February 1814).
[42] "Mr Allston's Exhibition of Paintings", *The Bristol Gazette* (4 August 1814).

> In the fore-ground, the body in the act of reanimation, the two slaves at its head and feet and the figures standing above the body, compose a group in the highest style of sublimity. The expression of face, of attitude, of form, are all equally grand. Even selecting this part of the picture from the rest, it is impossible to look on it without partaking the terror and astonishment of the slave. The act of reanimation in the body, cannot be mistaken for the contest between sleep and the common awakening power, but is clearly discovered to be the striving of life, with absolute death. This miracle is denoted by the painful motion of the muscles, the half closed, yet stretched-out eyelid, by every finger and every joint of the body. The one great effect intended by the artist, is to show terror, modified by the various circumstances and characters of the various persons introduced and so to produce on the mind of the spectator the same feelings, united to a sense of the beauty and the sublimity of his art.[43]

In the passage above, two things are noteworthy: firstly, the contributor signals to the reader that he will be looking closely at the picture, in some sense emulating a connoisseurial style. He begins in the foreground with the principle figure of the dead man and remarks on the principle group, which demonstrates the 'highest style of sublimity'. It is interesting to note that the definition of sublimity invoked here is one rooted in fear and terror as opposed to that more quiet, or contemplative notion of the sublime described in Allston's sonnets. Secondly, the contributor seems to measure the success of the picture in terms of its success in producing a state of terror in the viewer to match that experienced by the slave. The contributor aligns the viewer with the slave, claiming that it is impossible to look upon the incident without *partaking* in the terror shown by the slave. Curiously, the contributor discovers the power of the 'reanimation' not reflected in the structure of the picture as a whole, but locates it in the smallest of parts – in the muscles, the eye-lid, and in the fingers and joints. The contributor also clarifies this as the intention of the artist – to 'show terror' and so 'to produce in the mind of the spectator a similar feeling'.

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[43] "Mr. Allston's Exhibition of Paintings", *The Bristol Gazette* (4 August 1814).

The contributor continues along a similar vein, his comments on the picture guided by what he has identified as the aim of the artist – to excite 'terror'. He continues:

> The object and the cause of this terror is the miracle, to heighten the effect of which, not one face nor one attitude is introduced, but contributes its part. The child clinging to its aged parent, the distant and dim view of the centinels in the back-ground, are all indicative of fear and alarm. Even the quiescent and Raphaelesque face of the young man on the right of the piece, who has not yet been made sensible of the miracle, contributes by its contrast with the others, to the effect of the whole. – Our paper will not allow us room to point out every touch of nature in this piece, or to follow the artist in his different expressions of the passion.[44]

The contributor traces the circular composition of the main group of the painting, noting the importance of each figure, each part in contributing to the whole. Yet there is a sense in which the contributor finds the promise of continued description laboured, as he confines himself to the main compositional features, claiming, as had the contributor to the *Annals of the Fine Arts*, that there would not be space enough to point out the 'different expressions of the passion' in the picture. The contributor seems to engage in a scientific approach to the picture, determining the cause of the expressions of terror within the picture to be the miracle. Yet significantly, he does not revert to the Biblical story (the literal subject of the picture), but instead points to the way in which the compositional and structural elements within the picture all contribute to the sense of simultaneous terror and wonder provoked by the miracle. He points to the balance between those aware of the incident and those unaware, a balance of contrasts that contribute to the sense of the whole within the picture.

The scientific cast of the contributor's commentary on the painting is emphasized in the following passage, in which he adopts a more connoisseurial approach to the painting. The subject, scarce enough in the previous passages, has

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[44] "Mr. Allston's Exhibition of Paintings", *The Bristol Gazette* (4 August 1814).

virtually disappeared from the consideration of the contributor, as he focuses on the surface of the canvas. He writes:

> But we must cease (on account of room) to speak of parts, and go on to speak of the whole as a work of art. The drawing is quite in the *grand style* of the old Italian school. The composition and grouping, such as could only have been executed by the most refined taste, but above all in the grace of form, and in the Venetian richness and harmony of the coloring, we think the artist has no living superior. Take away the other excellencies of the piece, abstract the effect of expression, of correctness in drawing, even of grace in composition and in form yet we should not hesitate to say, that as a flat surface alone, containing an unmeaning mixture of colors, it would still give exquisite delight. The deep, strong, stark body of the colour in the back-ground is so admirably contrasted, and yet in such perfect harmony with the richness, variety, and beauty of the colors in the fore-ground, that, even if the picture meant nothing, and told nothing, it would still be beautiful. But taking in the various excellencies already noticed, the grandeur of the design, and the unity of the effect, we must consider it as the most perfect and Titianesque piece of art of modern times.[45]

In this passage, the contributor claims once again to stop speaking of 'parts', and moves on to consider the 'whole as a work of art'. He employs words that form that 'lingua franca' of the connoisseur, referring to the '*grand style*' of the Italian school, the 'grace of form', and the 'harmony of the coloring'. Coleridge would have been pleased with his attention to the 'composition and grouping' of the figures within the piece. The contributor also draws upon that 'store of knowledge' in referring to the 'Venetian richness' of the coloring, and the stylistic attributes in common with, or derived from, the Italian school. Yet the true significance of his remarks is found in his increased attention to the picture not only 'as a work of art' (as connected to its subject), but considered as autonomous *from* its subject. When the contributor writes that one could 'Take away the other excellencies of the piece, abstract the effect of expression, of correctness in drawing, even of grace in composition and in form yet we should not hesitate to say, that as a flat surface alone, containing an unmeaning mixture of colors, it would still give exquisite delight', he is not merely falling in with

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[45] "Mr. Allston's Exhibition of Paintings", *The Bristol Gazette* (4 August 1814).

the proponents of 'color' within the terms of the color-design controversy, but asserting the value of the composition as it is manifested in the colors gracing the 'flat surface of the picture' against the substance of its subject. This is emphasized by the contributor's comment that: 'even if the picture meant nothing, and told nothing, it would still be beautiful'.

Curiously, the *Gazette* description of the picture in this respect could not be further removed from a description of the picture penned by Allston himself for the catalogue to accompany the exhibition at Merchant Taylor's Hall. As Hazlitt had pointed out in an earlier passage, it was generally the province of the catalogue to include somewhat laboured descriptions of the painting that, in his mind, attempted to '*translate*' it into language. Allston's description of his painting for the catalogue is no exception, and it stands in strong contrast not only to the descriptions of his painting given in the *Gazette*, but also to Coleridge's critical remarks on the painting, and the fluidity and sophistication of Allston's own commentary upon individual paintings made later in his *Lectures*.

In the Exhibition Catalogue for the showing of the picture at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in 1816 (the passage is identical to that in the Bristol catalogue), the Biblical source of the picture is provided after which a note that 'The following description is taken from the pen of Mr. Allston:...'. Unlike later descriptions of other paintings that Allston includes in his *Lectures on Art*, this description of his own work is fairly detached, dry, and informative. He sets out in a way and style that almost undermines the power of the picture, the elements that will come together and respond to each other in the painting. His description is as follows:

> The Sepulchre of Elisha is supposed to be in a cavern among the mountains; such places in those early ages being used for the interment of the dead. In the fore ground is the man at the moment of re-animation, in which the Artist has attempted, both in the action and the colour, to express the gradual recoiling of life upon death, behind him, in a dark recess, are the bones of the Prophet, the skull of which is *peculiarized* by a preternatural light; at his head and feet are

> two slaves, bearers of the body; the ropes still in their hands, by which they have let it down, indicating the act that moment performed; the emotion attempted in the figure at the feet is that of astonishment and fear, modified by doubt, as if still requiring further confirmation of the miracle before him, while in the figure at the head, is that of unqualified immoveable terror. In the most prominent groupe above, is a Soldier, in the act of rushing from the scene; the violent and terrified action of this figure was chosen to illustrate the miracle by the contrast which it exhibits to that habitual firmness, supposed to belong to the military character, shewing his emotion to proceed from no *mortal* cause. The Figure grasping the soldier's arm, and pressing forward to look at the body, is expressive of terror, overcome by curiosity. The group on the left, or rather behind the Soldier, is composed of two Men of different ages, earnestly listening to the explanation of a Priest, who is directing their thoughts to Heaven, as the source of the miraculous change...[46]

Allston almost spells out for his reader the figures and actions in which they are engaged at that moment – as if attempting to lay out in a narrative style the action that takes place spatially upon the canvas. He reveals that he has attempted 'both in the action and the colour, to express the gradual recoiling of life upon death', perhaps the most suggestive line in the entire description, as the brilliancy of color and composition barely survives his attempt to *explain* the expressions on the faces of his figures in line with established conventions for catalogue descriptions. This description also seems to undermine and almost make a matter of academic decision that which Allston had referred to as the importance of the mixture of emotion that guides his hand in the production of such a picture. His description does not penetrate his picture, but merely records the events on its surface, and in this respect is fundamentally contrary to the growing sophistication with which he described pictures in his *Lectures on Art*.

In the next chapter, I would like to look more specifically at Allston's *Lectures*, demonstrating the way in which, from his own disciplinary perspective, Allston contributed to this developing language of art criticism and the fight against

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[46] Washington Allston, "Exhibition at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. Mr. Allston's Picture of the Dead Man restored to Life by touching the bones of the Prophet Elisha" (Philadelphia: John Bioren, April 1816). [From the archives of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts]

the proliferation of false criticism it entails. In looking ahead to Allston's later writing on art, it is evident that he becomes more adept at allowing the compositional structures and colors to 'shine through' his language as they 'shine through' his pictures. This extends not only to painterly devices, but also to the poetry of Wordsworth and the philosophical and aesthetic thought of his great friend Coleridge, which shape Allston's articulation of the various aspects of his art.

Chapter Eight

Washington Allston and the *Lectures on Art*, 1850

In the previous chapter, I focused on the Bristol Exhibition as means of examining contrasting ways in which imitation was used in a critical capacity with respect to art. While Coleridge relied upon the mimetic power as a means of drawing out the relationships that underpin forms of resemblance, critics like Hazlitt and Hunt relied upon imitation in a more conventional sense, as more pictorially representative. Significantly, however, both approaches took as axiomatic the view that art criticism ought to be a *gesture* to the picture itself, rather than act as a means to replace, usurp or repeat it. Placed within this context, Allston's writing on painting in his *Lectures on Art* appears to be an amalgamation of the two.[1] In responding to the problems of criticism from within his own discipline (problems related to connoisseurship, the colour-design controversy, neo-classical critical abuses), he naturally turned to the language and procedural models he had inherited as a practising artist and student of the Royal Academy. However, his response was also heavily shaped by two literary giants, Wordsworth and Coleridge. Allston drew upon Coleridge's carefully constructed aesthetic language as a means of underpinning his attempt to reform the way in which one looks *at* a picture as well as *through* it, to the structural relationships deep beneath it. Likewise, Allston looked to Wordsworth's poetry as a means of bringing to life descriptions not only of paintings, but of the process of painting, especially when he found philosophical language incapable of doing so.

The fullest exposition not only of Allston's ideas, but his writing on and criticism of art can be found in his *Lectures*, as Allston did not write for newspapers

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[1] Allston began writing his *Lectures on Art* in 1830 according to Richard Henry Dana, and read them to Professor Cornelius C. Felton and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow in 1842-43. See Wright, *Corresp.*, 600.

and periodicals, and was emphatic on this point throughout his lifetime. When requested by William Hayward, an American art collector and print seller based in New York, to write positive reviews of paintings owned by Hayward that were included in the Boston Athenaeum exhibition of 1839, Allston refused.[2] He wrote to Hayward,

> I have just received you letter of the 27th inst. – It gives me real pain to refuse any request from one whom I so sincerely regard. But <the rule of conduct which various considerations have long since induced me to lay down for myself in relation to all Collections of Pictures, brought before the public, is one which I cannot depart from without violating a solemn resolution: that [two or three indecipherable words]> is never to <express any written opinion.... Concerning any Collection of pictures brought before the public. My motive for this resolution I believe is well known to my friends...[3]

In this draft letter, Allston includes the reasons that prompted this decision on his part. He continues:

> My two principle motives for coming to this resolution, were 1st <*first,*> not to injure any mans property by unfavourable criticism (which truth might compel me to make) 2d not to make myself directly or indirectly responsible for the originality or merits of any picture offered for sale. If I must speak on any occasion, I must speak the truth, on my conscience. In many cases the qualified commendation which truth might compel would be equivalent <with> to most people to condemnation.[4]

Allston's concerns about writing on the work of living artists demonstrates the power that critics held over the lives of painters. Given the critical climate, he feared that his wish to be honest in points of criticism, however mild, could very easily result in disproportionate damage to the prospects of the painter.

Moreover, as this passage suggests, Allston was concerned with the unpredictability of the art market, refusing to be 'responsible for the originality or merits of any picture offered for sale'. Some years before, Allston experienced this directly with one of his own paintings, *Alpine Landscape*, which had been purchased

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[2] See Wright, *Corresp*, 558n. Note that full text of Allston's *Lectures on Art* may be accessed via the Gutenberg Project:< www.gutenberg.net>.
[3] *WA* to William Hayward, draft, 28 May 1839. See *Corresp.*, 417.
[4] *WA* to William Hayward, draft, 28 May 1839. See *Corresp.*, 417.

by the American merchant Francis Bayard Winthrop for five-hundred dollars. Winthrop wrote to Allston expressing some displeasure at having sold the painting some six years later for two-hundred dollars, and suggested that Allston make up this difference by sending him 'a small picture'.[5] In his reply, Allston points out that 'fluctuations' in the prices of paintings were 'all too common', and observes that 'Pictures as often bring more than they are worth, as less; so that a sale cannot with certainty determine their degree of me[rit]. Indeed I think the merit of a picture can be determined only by the united general opinion of real critics'.[6] The difficulty facing artists in the valuation of their pictures was a real one, he suggests, but not without its checks: 'When an artist values his productions he is necessarily obliged to depend on his own judgement; the result of which he then submits to the public; and it is their province to determine whether or not he rates his work according to its real merit'.[7] After rather humbly suggesting that if any fault were made as to the estimation of value, it was his own, Allston agrees to 'comply' with Winthrop's wishes and send to him 'a small picture'. This perhaps provoked him to repeat to Hayward his wish to keep himself 'entirely free from becoming in any way a party to the disposal of pictures offered to the public'.[8]

Apart from refusing commentaries on the disposal of pictures for sale, Allston also refused to publish notices in the papers. In a letter to John Cogdell dated 27 February 1832, Allston writes: 'You observe in one of your letters that, 'the columns of the Evening Gazette are open to me.' In this you are mistaken. I never wrote a line for the Paper; I do not even know the name of its Editor; nor have I seen the paper for

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[5] *WA* to Francis Bayard Winthrop, 27 Dec. 1817. See *Corresp.*, 112.
[6] *WA* to Francis Bayard Winthrop, 27 Dec. 1817. See *Corresp.*, 112.
[7] *WA* to Francis Bayard Wintrhop, 27 Dec. 1817. See *Corresp.*, 112. Allston reassures Winthrop that he is not like those who "proportion their prices *to as much as they think the[y] can get*".
[8] *WA* to William Hayward, 28 May 1839. See *Corresp.*, 418.

some years.'[9] Apart from Gilbert Stuart's obituary and one published notice of Stuart's paintings of the first five presidents, Allston contributed nothing:

> I never write for the Newspapers on any subject. I have been often solicited to write notices on various works of art that have come before the public; but these requests I have uniformly declined. Nor can I write now, for it is several years since that, for certain *imperative reasons*, I came to the resolution <that> never to write either notice or criticism for Newspaper, Magazine, or Review, on any work <of> by a living Artist; and this resolution I have repeatedly expressed in public.[10]

Allston preferred to deliver any criticisms by letter or in conversation, as he did, in fact do with Cogdell's own picture of Hagar and Ishmael. Judging by the easy tone with which he handled Cogdell's work, Allston was not a severe, but honest critic – one who genuinely tried to employ what Coleridge had taught him about the criticism of pictures, namely to never criticize a picture based on faults alone.[11]

Despite his reluctance to publish in public formats, Allston left behind a rich store of writing on art in both his correspondence and his unfinished *Lectures on Art*. As previously noted, the fullest exposition of his views on art and his attempt to grapple with the problems inherent in the criticism of art, can be found in these *Lectures*. However, this work has had something of a chequered past as far as its reception and arguments for its contemporary relevance are concerned. When Allston's *Lectures on Art* were published posthumously in 1850, his work was praised by Cornelius C. Felton in the *North American Review* as 'a golden legacy to the art and literature of our country,' one which would 'sink deeply into the mind of the age' and whose influence would 'slowly but surely extend throughout the whole domain of

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[9] *WA* to John Stevens Cogdell, 27 Feb. 1832. See *Corresp.*, 315.
[10] *WA* to John Stevens Cogdell, 27 Feb. 1832. See *Corresp.*, 315. Gilbert Stuart's five presidents are located at the National Gallery of Art, Washington DC: *George Washington* (c. 1821), *John Adams* (c. 1821), *Thomas Jefferson* (c. 1821), *James Madison* (c. 1821) and *James Monroe* (c. 1817). The notice written by Allston has not been located.
[11] *WA* to John Stevens Cogdell, 27 Feb. 1832. See *Corresp.*, 315. In his criticism of Cogdell's piece, Allston does point out some faults, but reassures Cogdell not to be frightened, as they are merely the "faults of inexperience", easily remedied with "more practice and the study of good models".

American culture'.[12] This was to be one of relatively few reviews of Allston's literary publication before it did sink, as Regina Soria points out, but into the 'dusty shelves' of library stacks rather than in the mind of a nation.[13] Contrary to Felton's prophetic vision of the shaping power which Allston's work might exert over American culture, William Gerdts and Theodore Stebbins argue that his reputation as a 'man of genius' and as America's 'finest' painter became discredited largely as a result of negative critical attention in the latter part of the nineteenth-century.[14] For example, at the 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago, an exhibition of American art included a retrospective in which the body of work by Allston, Benjamin West, Gilbert Stuart and the Peales was treated as more of a 'historical summary' of the arts in the Federalist period than actual 'artistic achievement'.[15] In a review of this exhibition for *The Nation*, William Coffin cited Allston specifically as a painter whose art proved 'how little there was in his painting to justify the reputation ascribed to him by his biographers'.[16] This view was not uncommon, and had been anticipated by Mariana van Rensselaer in her review of an exhibition at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston in 1881, in which she had difficulty understanding the critical acclaim that surrounded Allston in his lifetime, arguing that he was 'by no means the potent artist our fathers thought him'.[17]

Despite a short-lived resurgence in critical interest marked by Edgar Preston Richardson's invaluable biography and exhibitions at both the Chicago Art Institute in 1945 and the Detroit Institute of Fine Arts in 1947, cultural historians and critics alike

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[12] See Cornelius Conway Felton, Review of Washington Allston's *Lectures on Art and Poems*, in *North American Review* 55 [July 1850] 168.
[13] Regina Soria, "Washington Allston's *Lectures on Art*: The First American Art Treatise," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 18 (1960) 333.
[14] See Gerdts and Stebbins, *Man of Genius*, 9. Gerdts and Stebbins provide an extensive chronology of Allston's critical reception, some points of which I have selected and included for context.
[15] See Gerdts and Stebbins, *Man of Genius*, 9.
[16] William Coffin, Review of the *Colombian Exposition III* in *The Nation* (17 August 1893) 116; cited in Gerdts and Stebbins, *Man of Genius*, 9.
[17] Mariana van Rensellaer, "Washington Allston, A.R.A." *Magazine of Art* (1889) 150.

continued to see Allston as having achieved 'no great style of his own,' in either art or literature.[18] If, as van Rensellaer points out, his paintings could have had 'no notable influence upon American art,' at least his 'life and character had an immense and happy influence upon the reverence for and appreciation of art in America'.[19] William Howe Downes shared a similar view insisting that Allston 'was not so great a painter as appears to have been commonly believed during his lifetime'. Yet Downes, like van Rensellaer, concedes that Allston did '[make] the profession of painter more respected than it had been in Boston before his day, for he was distinctly a gentleman...[and] insisted upon its dignity'.[20] Allston continued to be criticized as an 'artistic failure' whose reach over American art and culture was felt through the 'quality and aspiration' of his life rather than through his actual 'artistic achievement' as late as 1960.[21]

However, critical opinion began to shift once again, this time in Allston's favour when in 1967 Nathalia Wright released a facsimile reproduction of Allston's *Lectures on Art, Poems* and his Gothic novel *Monaldi*.[22] Wright's 'edition' was the first in over a century, as none followed the first printing of Allston's *Lectures on Art* in 1850 or his small volume of poetry, *The Sylphs of the Seasons* in 1813.[23] The appearance of this volume demanded a fresh evaluation of Allston's life and work, a demand met in 1979 when Frank Goodyear organized an exhibition placing Allston's

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[18] See Edgar Preston Richardson, *Washington Allston: A Study of the Romantic Artist in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948).
[19] See Van Rensellaer, "Washington Allston" 15.
[20] William Howe Downes, "Boston Painters and Paintings", *The Atlantic Monthly* 62 (1888) 261.
[21] Russel B. Nye, *The Cultural Life of the New Nation* 1776-1830 (New York: Harper and Row, 1960) 287.
[22] Washington Allston, *Lectures on Art and Poems, 1850; and Monaldi 1841*, introduction by Nathalia Wright (1850, 1841; reprint ed., Gainesville: Scholar's Facsimiles and Reprints, 1967). This is a facsimile reproduction of the original, ed. Richard Henry Dana, Jr. (New York: Baker and Scribner, 1850).
[23] Washington Allston, *The Sylphs of the Seasons, with Other Poems* (London: W. Pople, 1813). According to Wright, an American edition was published in September of later that year in Boston and Cambridge by Cummings and Hilliard, see *Corresp.*, 593.

art in an 'international context'.[24] Through drawing attention to his connections with artists and literati in England, France and Italy, Goodyear pointed out that Allston's painterly and scholarly works were operative in the worldly dialogues of philosophy, aesthetics and politics and were not the failed efforts of an isolated dreamer.[25] Since Wright's release of the *Lectures*, a number of scholarly books and articles have been published which recognize the complexity of Allston's paintings with regard to the European influence of Poussin, Claude Lorraine, the Venetian colorists and the Royal Academicians.[26] This work focuses on Allston's artistic response to the varied traditions of renaissance, classical and neo-classical art through addressing both his direct replication of traditional motifs and, less obviously, the allusions to traditional references encoded within his canvas.[27]

However, despite the resurgence of interest in Allston's painting, there remains very little scholarship (and still no annotated edition) of Allston's *Lectures*. As Regina Soria argues in her article, there are many possible reasons for this lack of interest, most of which stem from her belief that 'Washington Allston was not identified with the time in which he lived'.[28] To this, she argues, can be added the fact that his *Lectures* remained unfinished, and that Allston wrote 'in a lyrical, figurative style (the language, after all, of an artist) which obscures the stringent logic of his arguments, a style in great contrast with the more concisely philosophical one used by Coleridge'.[29] Indeed, rather than be bolstered by this connection with Coleridge, Allston's work seems to have suffered as a result, many arguing that

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[24] Gerdts and Stebbins, *Man of Genius*, 5.
[25] Gerdts and Stebbins, *Man of Genius*, 5.
[26] See Joy S. Kasson, *Artistic Voyagers: Europe and the American Imagination in the Works of Irving, Allston, Cole, Cooper and Hawthorne* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1982); Barbara Novak, *American Painting of the Nineteenth Century* 2nd edn. (New York: Harper and Row, 1979) and James Thomas Flexner, *The Light of Distant Skies* (New York: Dover, 1969).
[27] See Bryan Jay Wolf, *Romantic Re-Vision: Culture and Consciousness in Nineteenth-Century American Painting and Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982) 52.
[28] See Soria, "First American Art Treatise", 332.
[29] See Soria, "First American Art Treatise", 333.

Allston's treatise was more or less an exposition of his friend's ideas rather than his own.

However, as Soria argues, this was certainly not the case, as despite the fact that 'Coleridge's ideas helped him gain a deeper insight in Romantic ideals, and encouraged him in his style... Allston was never dominated by Coleridge'.[30] That the material from which Allston drew in composing his *Lectures* was by no means confined to Coleridge, though certainly enriched by him, is evidenced, of course, by Allston's education at the Royal Academy, where he attended lectures given by the Royal Academicians Henry Fuseli and John Opie, and was acquainted with Benjamin West. Throughout his *Lectures* and correspondence, Allston displays a thorough knowledge not only of Reynolds's *Discourses*, but of the tradition with which Reynolds engaged: thus, as Soria points out, 'One is strongly inclined to assume that beside Winckelmann's work, those of the mannerisitic Bellori, and of the academic Des Piles and Du Fresnoy, he must have also read such Renaissance works as Lomazzo's *Art of Painting*, Zuccaro's *The Idea of Sculptors, Painters,* etc., through which (rather than through Coleridge) the Scholastic and Neo-Platonic positions regarding art might have become familiar to him'.[31] This is supported by the fact that his *Lectures* were modelled on Renaissance and Baroque treatises, and as Soria points out, 'are divided like them into theory and practice, and based on clearly defined metaphysics'.[32]

As both his small volume of poetry and his poetic style attest, Allston was also well read in a range of subjects, especially philosophy, literature and literary criticism. In an appendix to her volume of Allston's correspondence, Wright provides

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[30] See Soria, "First American Art Treatise", 331.
[31] See Soria, "First American Art Treatise", 332. See also, Roger des Piles, *Cours de Peinture par Principes* (1708); Charles Alphonse du Fresnoy, *De Arte Graphica* (1667); Giovanni Paolo Lomazzo, *Trattato dell'arte della pittura, scoltura et architettura* (1584) and Frederigo Zuccaro, *L'idea de Pittori, Scultori ed Architetti* (1607).
[32] See Soria, "First American Art Treatise", 332.

a summation of his reading. Among the volumes Allston borrowed from the Harvard Library were: Hugh Blair's *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*, David Hume's *Essays, Moral, Political, and Literary*, Henry Home, Lord Kames's *Elements of Criticism*, Plutarch's *Lives*, and histories of Greece and Rome. She notes that he also took out a number of books not directly related to his course-work, among them, works by Goldsmith, Johnson, Shakespeare, Spencer and Tasso, two volumes of *The Spectator*, Walpole's *Anecdotes of Painting in England*, Pope, Crabbe, Thomson, and Macpherson's *The Poems of Ossian.*[33] He also read 'magazines of a general literary nature, both English and American, and Boston newspapers'. Allston was also well acquainted with the critical writing of William Hazlitt, two volumes of which (possibly his *Sketches and Essays* (1839) and *Criticisms on Art and Sketches of the Picture Galleries of England* (1843)) he had borrowed from Convers Francis, to whom he returned the volumes in 1843.[34]

Allston called upon this rich literary tradition in his efforts to engage and correct the causes of 'false criticism', a problem he acknowledges in the pages of his 'Introductory Discourse' to the *Lectures*.[35] In these pages, one finds a familiar echo of Coleridge, as Allston disparages critics who 'would show their superiority by detecting faults, and who frequently condemn the painter simply for not expressing that at which he never aimed' (*LA*, 31). This echo is sustained as Allston raises concerns about the misattribution of certain qualities, such as Beauty, to certain works of art, observing that 'critics are generous in declarations of beauty for some artists and parsimonious in others, where it is perhaps more warranted' (*LA*, 31). Such

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[33] For a more complete account of Allston's library and reading, see Wright, Appendix 4, *Corresp.*, 612-618.
[34] *WA* to Convers Francis, 16 May 1843. See *Corresp.*, 509. Allston writes, "I return you, *at last*, and with many thanks, your two volumes of Hazlitt...".
[35] See Washington Allston, "Introductory Discourse", *LA*, 9-74.

declarations remind one of the 'eloquent railings' of Coleridge's connoisseur in the Contributions to *Omniana*.

However, the problem of false criticism seems to take on an added urgency for Allston as a painter for two reasons: firstly, the criticism of art as a discipline itself distinguishable or even autonomous from that of literature was in its early stages of development, especially as regards the public accessibility to art 'criticism' in newspapers, periodicals and exhibition catalogues. Secondly, 'false criticism' tended to gloss over, or deny the gap between painting as the object of criticism and language as the critical vehicle. For Allston, the proliferation of false criticism was

> ...owing to the insufficiency of language, which in no dialect could supply a hundredth part of the terms needed to mark every minute shade of difference. Perhaps no subject requiring a wider nomenclature has one so contracted; and the consequence is, that no subject is more obscured by vague expressions. But it is the business of the Artist, if he cannot form to himself the corresponding terms, to be prepared at least to perceive and to note these various shades. We do not say, that an actual acquaintance with all the nice distinctions is an essential requisite, but only that it will not be altogether useless to be aware of the their existence; at any rate, it may serve to shield him from the annoyance of false criticism, when censured for wanting beauty where its presence would have been an impertinence (*LA*, 123).

In this passage, Allston seems to echo the concerns of Prince Hoare in pointing to the lack of a viable, critical language in which to write about art. He regrets that an art demanding of a 'wider nomenclature' must make do with one so 'contracted', one firmly fixed within the boundaries of an established, inherited critical language and methodology. He emphasizes the 'insufficiency of language' further, through pointing out that 'no dialect' – no language colored by sound and inflection -- is capable of reflecting 'every minute shade of difference'. The individual character of these 'shades of difference' is, in turn, contrasted with 'vague expressions', which Allston argues indicate the need for more specific definitions so as to prohibit the use of a single term to refer to vastly different and oftentimes conflicting stylistic traits. Yet, for Allston, as for Hoare, an old anxiety resurfaces, as Allston wonders whether

and to what extent artists are capable of creating and refining such a language – whether they may wield the pen as masterfully as the brush.[36] This anxiety is tempered by Allston's admission that the artist can, with impunity, 'perceive and note' the 'various shades' of language needed to correspond to the 'various shades' of the art itself. Allston admits that it is not necessary for the painter, or the critic of painting, to have an 'actual acquaintance with all the nice distinctions' of these terms, but that, importantly, even an imperfect knowledge of them will add to the effectiveness of his *gesture* to the work of art under discussion.

Later in the same passage, Allston looks more deeply into the causes of this 'insufficiency of language' and determines that it is rooted in the disjunction between the word (as commonly employed) and its meaning. Thus, one of the primary objectives in his *Lectures* has

> ...been not so much to insist on correct speaking as correct thinking. The poverty of language, as already admitted, has made the former impossible; but though constrained in this, as in many other cases where a subordinate is put for its principal, to apply the term Beautiful to its various degrees, yet a right apprehension of what Beauty *is* may certainly prevent its misapplication as to other objects having no relation to it (*LA*, 123).

Like Coleridge in his 'Essays on the Principles of Genial Criticism', Allston uses the term Beauty as an example, arguing that it can only be effectively applied if the connection between the word and its meaning – what Beauty *is* – is re-established. Only then can the correspondence between the word and its meaning extend to its object. Like the sudden penetration of Coleridge's 'master thought', the principle must ground the term, its meaning and its application. The fixity of this principle is made flexible by all the different 'shades' or manifestations that can occur. Thus, while Allston seems to argue that the 'poverty of language' has made the inability to

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[36] See *The Artist: A Collection of Essays*...ed. Prince Hoare, No. 1 (14 March 1807), 2-3 in which the contributor refers to the "English ARTIST" who "approaches the presence of his countrymen in a garb and character to which he is unaccustomed". Those contributing to the publication offer a "fair, honest account of the views which instigate the Artist to aspire at wielding that most perilous of all weapons, the Pen".

achieve 'correct speaking' a foregone conclusion, he does suggest that an opportunity for reform can be achieved through 'correct thinking' – that through employing a critical methodology, and in determining the root principles of critical terms, a new approach to the way we *look* may be achieved.

For Allston, critical reform was needed on two levels: firstly, the object of criticism had to be redefined so as to reflect a fundamental shift in the way one looks at pictures (i.e. in the 'spirit in which the artist produced or *ought* to have produced', in Coleridge's words, as opposed to the selection of 'faults and beauties'), and secondly, it required a language rooted in principles – one capable of gesturing to the picture without entailing the limitations of conventional neo-classical ideas or falling into the trap of pictorialism. Imitation was indispensable to Allston in both respects. As the principle that guides both the artist and the critic, imitation enabled the critic to 'incorporate his mind with the author' – to intuit that which the artist *ought* to have produced from that which the artist had, in fact, produced through tracing the artist's mind upon the canvas, a motion akin to 'unravelling' the clue. It was in this capacity, as Allston often remarked, that the critic must have imagination – to divine the 'ought' from the actual and measure the actual against the ought – to bring the line drawn in the slate or sand to its ideal line and thus discover and articulate its characteristics.

Imitation was essential not only in the intuition of the ideal, but also in the articulation of the extent to which that ideal 'shines through', or is obstructed by, the elements of the actual picture. Significantly, this is not something that can be stated in criticism, but something that the language of criticism itself must reflect. Thus critical language itself must be a gesture to the picture -- it must reveal both the 'forms of resemblance' and the relationships that underpin that resemblance. Yet in

doing so, it must sustain a balance between the sympathetic description demanded by the art object, and the distance required to maintain a degree of critical viability.

The difficulty in achieving this balance can be seen in at least two instances within Allston's *Lectures*: the first, in Allston's discussion of the concept of Invention in which he compares a painting by van Ostade to Raphael's *Death of Ananias*; the second, in his discussion of Composition, in which he compares two different 'systems' of lines used by Claude and Salvatore Rosa.[37] In deliberately bringing together a Dutch genre painter like van Ostade with an Italian master such as Raphael, Allston not only challenges the rigid and unforgiving distinctions inherited from the color-design controversy, but also signals a shift in the way in which paintings were used within structured writing on art. In contrast to common practice (as in Reynolds's *Discourses* and the *Lectures* of the Royal Academicians), Allston did not focus on artists themselves, or the general stylistic traits and the distinctions between them, but rather directed his attention to the close reading of specific images.[38] Allston himself was very much aware of the fact that a comparison between van Ostade and Raphael would be unexpected, but felt it imperative to bring together contrasting paintings as a means of demonstrating the existence of principles they held in common. Thus, just as Coleridge in his 'Treatise on Method' attempted to unite several disciplines by common principles, so also did Allston attempt to demonstrate that vastly different styles of painting could also be united by recourse to principles such as Invention, Composition and Form. It was Allston's hope that by locating the 'like' in the 'unlike', principles could be established which in turn might underpin a more effective critical vocabulary.

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[37] It is not clear whether the painting to which he refers is by Isak van Ostade or his brother Adriaan. I am inclined to say Isak (see later footnote for a possible source, although some details do not match). As with many other pictures at the time, it may have been attributed to van Ostade, but that attribution may no longer hold today.

[38] See Ralph N. Wornum, ed., *Lectures on Painting, by the Royal Academicians Barry, Opie, and Fuseli* (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1848).

In Allston's comparison of the two pictures, he calls upon the mimetic power not to create a specific 'word-picture', or as an exercise in ekphrasis, but rather to articulate the relationships that underpin the picture – in other words, not to create in words a 'likeness' of the specific image of the picture, but rather to use language to gesture to the image. In turning to the work of Ostade, Allston does not specify which of the Ostade brothers was the painter, nor does he provide a title.[39] However, he begins with what is a basic description of the components of the picture:

> The interior of a Dutch cottage forms the scene of Ostade's work, presenting something between a kitchen and a stable. Its principal object is the carcass of a hog, newly washed and hung up to dry; subordinate to which is a woman nursing an infant; the accessories, various garments, pots, kettles, and other culinary utensils (*LA*, 89).

This description is rather like a description of a stage set, one that prepares the reader for the more in-depth reading that Allston gives to the picture in the following passage. It also indicates the importance that Allston gave not to the elements themselves, but to their arrangement. He often argued, in the context of his discussion of imitation, that the significance of objects arises not from their objective nature, but the way in which they are arranged. He seems to echo this in his description of the picture – of the way in which Ostade 'imitated' that which was before him, imbuing these every-day objects with significance.

As Allston progresses in his description of the picture, there is a palpable shift from the rather dissociated tone he took in acquainting his reader with its contents:

> Let us now look into the picture and follow Ostade's *mind*, as it leaves its impress on the several objects. Observe how he spreads his principal light, from the suspended carcass to the surrounding objects, moulding it, so to speak, into agreeable shapes, here by extending it to a bit of drapery, there to an earthen pot; then connecting it, by the flash from a brass kettle, with his second light, the woman and child; and again turning the eye into the dark recesses through a labyrinth of broken chairs, old baskets, roosting fowls, and

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[39] However, judging from the description, it could be *Interior with a Slaughtered Pig* (1639) signed Isak van Ostade and located at the Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen, Munich. See Bob Haak, *The Golden Age: Dutch Painters of the Seventeenth* Century, (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc, 1984) for a reproduction, although some details do not correspond.

> bits of straw, till a glimpse of sunshine, from a half-open window, gleams on the eye, as it were, like an echo, and sending it back to the principal object, which now seems to act on the mind as the luminous source of all these diverging lights (*LA*, 89-90).

The shift is signalled by Allston's invitation to the reader to 'look into the picture and follow Ostade's *mind*', thus asserting a correspondence between our act of viewing, and the artist's act of making the picture, a correspondence heightened by Allston's use of the present tense, and his conversational, rather than judgmental tone. In this respect, he not only gestures toward, but invites his reader to 'incorporate' his mind with that of the painter. In this respect, Allston's remarks can be distinguished from those commonly employed by the connoisseur, who also gestures to the picture in the presence of his 'elbow friend', but in a way which increases, rather than collapses, the distance between the viewer and the picture.

In the course of his description, Allston describes the light within the picture as having a compositional, almost material quality as it is 'spread' and 'moulded...into agreeable shapes'. These shapes appear first in a sequence, as the light is spread 'here by extending it to a bit of drapery', 'there to an earthen pot', where it is then connected 'by the flash from a brass kettle' to a second light, from which it proceeds to the figures, and finally retreats to the background of the picture via a number of objects (broken chairs, old baskets, roosting birds and bits of straw). There is a transition as Allston moves from the way in which the artist spreads the light, to the way in which the light 'turns the eye' to various locations within the picture. This sense of a sequence, of a progression, is emphasized through his use of connecting words like 'here', 'there', 'then', 'with', and 'again' – words that seem to override the natural stop which a break in the sentence might entail, thus prolonging the gaze and not interrupting the motion of the eye. It is as if the language must mirror the 'running undersong' of the light within the picture. His use of these words

also emphasizes his presence beside us in pointing out, or gesturing to the features within the painting.

These connecting words culminate in the word 'till' which signals an interruption in the sequence. The 'glimpse of sunshine' streams in and 'gleams on the eye', directing it back to the principal object which 'now seems to act on the mind as the luminous source of all these diverging lights'. Thus the sequenced arrangement gives way to a spatial arrangement, one which Allston describes using the analogy of sound – an echo. Yet, significantly, an echo is a sound requiring space— sound travelling through the transparency of air. The presence of this light enlivens the arrangement and marks the sense of a centre (a 'source') and elements of light that radiate from that centre – a source to which all other sequences relate and are held together. This light acts rather like that purplish color identified by Coleridge in his description of Allston's painting *Diana and her Nymphs in the Chase* – it, too, acts as the 'keystone' of the picture as the purplish hue was the 'keystone' of its colors. While Allston initially invited us to look with him at the picture, and guided us through the painting following a sequence suggested by the light, there is a sense in which once the picture becomes an *arrangement*, that is, once the unity of parts and wholes has been realized, we surrender our will to the picture (to the manifestation of the 'mental image' of the artist as a whole, rather than in the parts achieved through the 'work of mutilation'), and are carried on by it. It is something like a visual analogue to the 'continuous running undersong' which, as Coleridge wrote, carries on the eye and is unobstructed. It is important that this light acts not on the senses but on the mind in a structural capacity – it reveals the relationships and the relation of parts to wholes within the picture.

Allston continues the description into a second section as he moves from his initial view of the painting to a growing understanding of the whole through the parts:

> But the magical whole is not yet completed; the mystery of color has been called in to the aid of light and so subtly blends that we can hardly separate them; at least, until their united effect has first been felt, and after we have begun the process of cold analysis. Yet even then we cannot long proceed before we find the charm returning; as we pass from the blaze of light on the carcass, where all the tints of the prism seem to be faintly subdued, we are met on its borders by the dark harslet, glowing like rubies; then we repose awhile on the white cap and kerchief of the nursing mother; then we are roused again by the flickering strife of the antagonist colors on a blue jacket and red petticoat; then the strife is softened by the low yellow of a straw-bottomed chair; and thus with alternative excitement and repose do we travel through the picture, till the scientific explorer loses the analyst in the unresisting passiveness of a poetic dream (*LA*, 90).

Allston marks another transition in pointing out to his reader that 'the magical whole is not yet completed'. In this passage, he moves away from light as it functions in a compositional capacity (with respect to form) to the way in which it enlivens the picture, this time in combination with color. In doing so, Allston provides an example of the way in which color and light function in an expressive capacity. The unity of these 'parts' into a whole is *felt* and only after it is felt and recognized, can one set about examining the effect. Color and light can only be separated as a result of 'cold analysis', an interruption of that first sympathy with the artist in which one follows the motion and movement in the canvas. This motion is reflected in the tempered flow of Allston's sentence, which ends abruptly with this phrase. The desire to examine the effect, to pursue it in terms of its physicality, marks a counterpoint to the magic 'charm' of the picture. This marks for Allston that difficult juncture or tension between examining the material aspects of the picture – in which consists the *method* of the artist, with the 'magic' of its effects.

Yet the charm returns, and in describing this return, Allston focuses on the expressive quality of the painting. He achieves this through drawing attention to the alternation of 'excitement and repose' with which we continue our journey through the picture: we 'pass from the blaze of light on the carcass', are 'met on its borders', we 'repose awhile on the white cap' and are 'roused again' by the colors on the

mother's jacket and petticoat. Color acts, in many respects, as that 'disturbing force' which, as Coleridge wrote, distracts and refreshes the repeated motion that our eyes make in following the form of the picture. The disturbances caused by color enliven the form, leading to a more acute perception of the whole. This unity of color and light reveals what Coleridge referred to as the 'Life' of the picture, its expression, which contrasts to the way in which light functioned in the first passage, where it defined the structural arrangement of the picture. It is this unity of color and light that overwhelms the possibility of further interruption, as it urges us on through the picture until 'the scientific explorer loses the analyst in the unresisting passiveness of a poetic dream'. This is an apt illustration of the ability that some have, as Allston stated earlier, to see with their 'mind' rather than their 'eyes', and in this respect, echoes the state of 'complacency' referred to by Coleridge. The moment at which this excitement and repose have softened into one another marks the way in which the expressive and formal elements of the picture work together in what Allston would refer to as 'Harmony'.

Allston seems to pull himself out of the poetic dream, out of the poetic reverie by immediately placing himself in the position of his reader:

> Now all this will no doubt appear to many, if not absurd, at least exaggerated: but not so to those who have ever felt the sorcery of color. They, we are sure, will be the last to question the character of the feeling because of the ingredients which worked the spell, and if true to themselves, they must call it poetry. Nor will they consider it any disparagement to the all-accomplished Raffaelle to say of Ostade that he also was an Artist (*LA*, 90).

Thus, the third break occurs when Allston resurfaces from the dream and repositions himself in his lecture. Allston seems to be aware of the possibility that his descriptive language may be regarded as exaggerated, particularly if his reader hasn't joined him in viewing the actual picture (as opposed to a print) and yet at the same time, he reasserts the value of this language. It is, in a sense, the way in which Allston asserts the connection between color and poetry. Color *is* not only poetry for Allston, but

color *requires* poetry and poetic devices in language if it is going to be addressed, even if it is going to be part of the definition of invention. His retreat from this description of the picture coincides with his posturing himself as a teacher. Allston does well in instructing through urging the reader to follow the structure of light on the canvas, and other structures imposed by color (independently or in conjunction with form – or giving an added dimension to the compositional structure of form).

The second example is a description of Raphael's *The Death of Ananias*, a history painting which calls forth an approach that differs significantly from Allston's description of the painting by van Ostade.[40] However, the difference is not as one might expect. History paintings were generally judged according to the extent to which they facilitated or encouraged holy feelings or noble aspirations in their viewers. However, Allston's approach was different, as he redefined the way in which one 'looks' even at historical pictures – he applies the same *method* of looking to the historical picture. Allston begins in a similar way to his earlier description, providing the viewer with the elements of the scene.

> We turn now to a work of the great Italian, --the Death of Ananias. The scene is laid in a plain apartment, which is wholly devoid of ornament, as became the hall of audience of the primitive Christians. The Apostles (then eleven in number) have assembled to transact the temporal business of the Church, and are standing together on a slightly elevated platform, about which, in various attitudes, some standing, others kneeling, is gathered a promiscuous assemblage of their new converts, male and female (*LA*, 91).

Even in this short description, one is struck by the different demands made on the viewer by such a subject. In contrast to the Dutch genre picture, Allston's description of this picture includes an explanation of the background, and even justification for the choice of how the scene is represented: the hall is devoid of ornament because that is typical of the 'hall of audience of the primitive Christians'. He asserts the

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[40] Raphael Sanzio, *The Death of Ananias*, tempura on paper, mounted on canvas (1515), Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

chronological integrity of the picture (again, a point he had subtly made in his satirical poem 'The Two Painters'). In keeping with this, he is specific as to the number of Apostles and the reason for their appearance at the hall. He describes their position and their relationship to one another in the present tense which sets the description for the way in which he will make it come alive in the next section of the passage.

In the second section, Allston uses more vivid language, as after having set the scene he can participate in the picture in a manner similar to the one before. He writes:

> This quiet assembly (for we still feel its quietness in the midst of the awful judgment) is suddenly roused by the sudden fall of one of their brethren; some of them turn and see him struggling in the agonies of death. A moment before he was in the vigor of life, -- as his muscular limbs still bear evidence; but he had uttered a falsehood, and an instant after his frame is convulsed from head to foot. Nor do we doubt for a moment as to the awful cause: it is almost expressed in voice by those nearest to him, and, though varied by their different temperaments, by terror, astonishment, and submissive faith, this voice has yet but one meaning, -- "Ananias has lied to the Holy Ghost" (*LA*, 91).

In this passage Allston gives a sense of the silence of the picture and the corresponding silence of the assembly before our eye reaches the figure struck by surprise at the falling of Ananias. The scene comes to life as the figures 'turn' to see this man 'struggling in the agonies of death'. The 'vigor of life' can still be detected, Allston notes, by the portrayal of the 'muscular limbs' which are an indication of the way in which time is arrested yet with an eye to the moment before and the moment after. This is emphasized by the physicality of the description, as Allston uses words like 'sudden', 'struggling', 'muscular', 'vigor' and 'convulsed'. The reason for his agony is 'almost expressed in voice' as the gestures and motions of the figures express what we cannot hear spoken: that Ananias has lied to God. Realization of this is portrayed through the physical expressiveness of the subordinate figures, who express 'terror', 'astonishment' and 'submissive faith'. This attention to the expressivity of the figures and their connection to the narrative of the story is in stark

contrast to Allston's description of van Ostade's picture, where Allston invited us into the picture through its structural elements.

Allston continues his detailed reading of the subject in the second part of the passage, in which he continues to explore the connection between the emotions and the way that thoughts and emotions are physically embodied in the expressions and gestures of the figures. The 'action' of the picture, the subject and the spoken words carry us on until in the figure of John we 'find a spot of repose':

> --not to pass by, but to linger upon, till we feel its quiet influence diffusing itself over the whole mind; nay, till, connecting it with the beloved Disciple, we find it leading us back through the exciting scene, modifying even our deepest emotions with a kindred tranquillity (*LA*, 92).

Allston's language shifts from a narrative to a distinctly more poetical style, one heightened by his infusion of words from Wordsworth's 'Tintern Abbey' in this passage. Allston's use of words such as 'diffusing', 'connecting', and 'kindred tranquility' not only recall Wordsworth's poem, but also, and perhaps more importantly, signal a parallel between Wordsworth's encounter with the landscape and Allston's vision of the viewer's experience of a picture.[41] In 'Tintern Abbey', Wordsworth selects a 'spot of repose' under a tree from which to survey the landscape: 'These plots of cottage-ground, these orchard-tufts' which 'lose themselves' as they blend into the landscape. Significantly, the detail of the scene observed by Wordsworth does not disturb the effect of the whole, as he writes of the 'orchard-tufts': 'Nor with their green and simple hue, disturb/ The wild green landscape'(ll.14-15). Rather, the 'green' works within 'green', adding to the sense of the unity of the image – it is, in many respect, an example of that 'Likeness in Difference & a union of the two' referred to by Coleridge (*Lectures*, ii., 220). Thus the 'spot of repose' within a picture functions in a similar way, allowing the eye to rest as the mind absorbs the *whole* of the picture. The words 'quiet' and 'connects'

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[41] See William Wordsworth, *Lyrical Ballads*, 116-120.

also recall Wordsworth's reference to the cliffs that 'connect / The landscape with the quiet of the sky' (ll.7-8).

These 'forms of beauty' hold Wordsworth's gaze outward, suspending the motion of his eye as he meditates on that which these forms have given him. Wordsworth's reference to the living landscape (as opposed to the opacity of a landscape 'seen' with a 'blind man's eye'), is one which he *feels* rather than sees: the forms of beauty in the landscape have given him 'sensations sweet, / Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart' / And passing even into my purer mind / With tranquil restoration... (ll. 28-31). This sense of suspension is heightened towards the end of the stanza in which the senses, the blood, and body give way to a power more substantial as '...even the motion of our human blood/ Almost suspended, we are laid asleep/ In body, and become a living soul:/ While with an eye made quiet by the power/ Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,/ We see into the life of things' (ll.44-49). Allston's allusion to the lines within the poem seem to corroborate what he has attempted to put forth in a more philosophical form. Thus, Wordsworth's image of an 'eye made quiet by the power/ Of harmony' enlivens and gives a certain depth to Allston's own description of Harmony as the 'sovereign principle' in the fine arts (*LA*, 16).

Wordsworth's reference to the way in which such sensations pass into a 'purer mind', and the way in which this power of harmony allows us to 'see into the life of things' adds depth to Allston's observation that 'some persons see more with their minds than others with their eyes' (*LA*, 82). Indeed, Allston continues, 'it must be obvious to all who are conversant with Art, that much, if not the greater part, in its higher branches is especially addressed to this mental vision' (*LA*, 82). This is an essential feature of Allston's method of 'looking' at a picture, in that the mind is engaged through the senses, but the latter are, at some point, shed, allowing an intellectual engagement with the picture that consists of the contemplation of its

underlying structures -- the relationship of parts to wholes of which it is comprised. Allston referred to this power, this principle, as Invention. Invention is the picturing of the 'mental image' – the ability the artist has to arrange forms in such a way as to allow what Coleridge referred to as the 'Life' of the picture to shine through the canvas. Allston referred to this 'Life' as 'Human or Poetic Truth' (*LA*, 81), and it was this which the viewer could 'unravel' when looking at the picture. Thus this 'truth' guides not only the making of a picture, but also one's response to it. This 'feeling' confirms the truth of a picture, as Allston writes:

> Where no such feeling is awakened, and supposing no deficiency in the recipient, he may safely, from its absence, pronounce the work false; nor could any ingenious theory of the understanding convince him to the contrary. He may, indeed, as some are wont to do, make a random guess, and *call* the work true; but he can never so *feel* it by any effort of reasoning (*LA*, 81-82).

The importance of 'feeling' to the critical appraisal of a work of art is confirmed by Allston's own description of the paintings by van Ostade and Raphael. In these descriptions, it seems as though Allston felt it necessary to impart this 'feeling' to his reader, in the poetical cast of his language so as to confirm its role in his appraisal of the 'truth' of the picture. This 'feeling' does, however, conflict with the demands of 'cold analysis', as with his role as a 'scientific explorer' in examining the effects of the paintings before him.

Allston's attempt to balance the representational aspects of description with a critical eye to the principles that underpin that resemblance can be seen again in his 'Lecture on Composition'. In this lecture, Allston defines the terms upon which he draws in his description of the paintings, in this instance, he clarifies what he means by the 'parts' of a picture and the way in which the 'line' within the painting works to direct the viewer from one part of the picture to another. Allston refers to the 'Raising of Lazarus' by Jan Lievens, to point out that by 'parts', he means not the 'minutae of dress or ornament, or even the several members of a group, which come

more properly under the head of detail', but rather 'those prominent divisions which constitute the essential features of a composition' (*LA*, 148).[42] In this, Allston seems to provide his own disciplinary counterpart to Coleridge's example of the relationship between parts and wholes in an 'old coach wheel' in his 'Essays on the Principles of Genial Criticism'. Coleridge argued that beauty resulted from the relationship of parts to wholes, not from the incidental details that appeared in conjunction with them, so that a wheel covered with dirt and grime is as beautiful formally as that fixed to a golden chariot. However, if mishandled, details like dirt or polish are capable of obstructing our perception of the beauty of the object; alternatively, if handled well, these details may heighten our awareness of the relationship of parts to wholes through contributing to a sense of transparency within the picture.

Having determined the nature of 'parts', Allston proceeds to clarify the terms upon which he relies in articulating the way in which one should look at a picture, in this instance, what he means by 'line'. Allston claims that by a line in composition

> ...is meant something very different from the geometrical definition. Originally, it was no doubt used as a metaphor; but the needs of Art have long since converted this, and many other words of like application, (as *tone*, &c.) into technical terms. *Line* thus signifies the course or medium through which the eye is led from one part of the picture to another. The indication of this course is various and multiform, appertaining equally to shape, to color, and to light and dark; in a word, to whatever attracts and keeps the eye in motion (*LA*, 149).

In this passage, Allston draws a distinction between the original use of the term in geometry and the necessity of adapting it for use in speaking about the fine arts. Yet, unlike most discussions of line (especially those in the color/design controversy where line is associated with story, narrative and historical significance), Allston focuses on the 'line' as a means by which the artist makes his 'will' known, and exerts it upon the eye of the viewer. Yet importantly for Allston, and in a somewhat

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[42] Jan Lievens (1607-1674) *The Raising of Lazarus*, 1631, oil on canvas, Brighton Museum and Art Gallery.

unique move, this 'line' is not restricted to one's understanding of line in the geometric sense (as a point in motion), but rather expanding it to consist of light, shade or color. The 'motion' of this 'point' is not conventionally defined (as in a pencil line, or *outline*), but rather is visible through color and contrast. This is illustrated by his comments on the picture of Ostade as the direction of Allston's gaze was determined by the 'line' of *light* rather than any discursive line.

In illustrating this point, Allston contrasts the way in which the 'line' in a painting by Salvator Rosa determines our gaze with the way that a 'line' in the painting of Claude determines our gaze – again, bringing together two vastly different styles to illustrate a point that binds them. He writes:

> In the wild and stormy scenes of Salvator Rosa, they break upon us as with the angular flash of lightning; the eye is dashed up one precipice only to be dashed down another; then, suddenly hurried to the sky, it shoots up, almost in a direct line, to some sharp-edged rock; whence pitched, as it were, into a sea of clouds, bellying with circles, it partakes their motion and seems to reel, to roll, and to plunge with them into the depths of air (*LA*, 149).

In this passage, Allston looks not to any particular picture, but to Rosa's stormy scenes in general. The way in which the eye enters the picture is one frought with danger as the picture comes to meet the eye rather than the other way around. The movement of the eye is quick, and suffers the consequence of the stormy sea as a ship might, tossed about the canvas at the mercy of the gale (or will of the artist), 'dashed up' and 'dashed down' in strong verticals until the eye nearly crashes upon rock. The eye is pitched from the sea to the sky, a movement in which the 'depth' of the water is echoed and reversed in the 'depths of air'. Allston does not attempt to create a word-picture in his description, but rather focuses his attention on the way in which the artist controls the movement of our gaze, thus demonstrating the method within the picture. His language 'imitates' this movement in a highly suggestive way, one which highlights the expressivity of line within the picture.

Against this image, Allston contrasts paintings by Claude, in which the eye is gradually invited into the canvas. He writes:

> If we pass from Salvator to Claude, we shall find a system of lines totally different. Our first impression from Claude is that of perfect *unity*, and this we have even before we are conscious of a single image; as if, circumscribing his scenes by a magic circle, he had imposed his own mood on all who entered it. The *spell* then opens ere it seems to have begun, acting upon us with a vague sense of limitless expanse, yet so continuous, so gentle, so imperceptible in its remotest gradations, as scarcely to be felt, till, combining with unity, we find the feeling embodied in the complete image of intellectual repose, -- fulness and rest. The mind thus disposed, the charmed eye glides into the scene: a soft, undulating light leads it on, from bank to bank, from shrub to shrub, now leaping and sparkling over pebbly brooks and sunny sands; now fainter and fainter, dying away down shady slopes, then seemingly quenched in the some secluded dell; yet only for a moment, -- for a dimmer ray again carried it onward, gently winding among the boles of trees and rambling vines, that, skirting the ascent, seem to hem in the twilight; then emerging into day, it flashes in sheets over towers and towns, and woods and streams, when it finally dips into an ocean, so far off, so twin-like with the sky, that the doubtful horizon, unmarked by a line, leaves no point of rest: and now, as in a flickering arch, the fascinated eye seems to sail upward like a bird, wheeling its flight through a mottled labyrinth of clouds, on to the zenith; whence, gently inflected by some shadowy mass, it slants again downward to a mass still deeper, and still to another, and another, until it falls into the darkness of some massive tree – focused like midnight in the brightest noon: there stops the eye, instinctively closing, and giving place to the Soul..... (*LA*, 149-150)

In this passage, Allston refers to the presence of an entirely different 'system of lines'. As opposed to the pictures of Rosa, in which the painter's line moves us in strong vertical positions, the lines of Claude exert their influence upon the eye in a softer, circular motion. This 'system of lines' is different in that it provides a 'sense of unity', a matrix of sorts, a completion of parts to wholes that is not discovered after following a sequence (as Allston's eye had moved through the picture of van Ostade), but rather one that immediately 'feels' the whole, as it were. This sense of unity is impressed upon us 'before we are conscious of a single image'. In many respects, the different systems of lines, which are reflected in compositional elements within these paintings, continue along the distinction that Coleridge made between Allston's

picture of the *Dead Man Revived* and Raphael's *Galatea* where the unity of the whole and parts was made immediately apparent, rather than gradually discovered.

The unity of parts to wholes that marks the compositions of Claude is so effective because these structural elements are capable of impressing upon the viewer not only the 'will' of the artist, but also his 'mood'. Again, Allston resorts to words like 'spell', and 'magic' to denote a gradual movement from the perception of the whole to the intellectual enjoyment of it. Enabling this intellectual pleasure is this sense of 'limitless expanse', and the 'continuous', 'gentle' gradations within the composition that resonate through the viewer's mind. It is at this point, after noting the moment of 'intellectual repose – fulness and rest' that results from the intellectual apprehension of the structure of the picture, that Allston turns his attention to the expressive qualities of the composition. In this movement, Allston provides another example of the two elements (line or form and color) referred to by Coleridge in describing the ideal in art, and attempts to make them function more perceptibly within art criticism. He describes how the mind, occupied with the formal aspects of the picture, provides space which enables the eye to move into the picture. As with the picture of van Ostade, it is 'light' that leads the eye on, 'from bank to bank, from shrub to shrub, now leaping and sparkling over pebbly brooks and sunny sands…'. The movement of the eye continues in a single, uninterrupted sentence, in which that sense of returning (emphasized by Coleridge in his remark on the effects of landscape of elder painters) is achieved through Allston's use of repetition and alliteration. Allston's use of the word 'now' punctuates this movement, as if to signal to us a sudden turn of direction in viewing the picture.

His attempt to trace the movement of the eye around and around in circles, continually progressing ever further backward into the depths of the canvas, until the eye 'falls into the darkness of some massive tree' contrasts with the more surface-oriented movement of Rosa's sea pieces. It is as if Allston has converted the literary

devices required in making a 'word-picture' in creating a picture of the motion and movement of the eye as it follows the compositional lines upon a canvas, penetrating that canvas until, as he observes, the eye 'stops, instinctively closing, and giving place to the Soul'. For Allston, the process of viewing is not served by attention to parts alone, or to the faults and beauties within a picture, but must be guided by the artist, as the viewer is invited, urged and compelled to penetrate the layers and planes of the painting before him. This process of viewing consists of a movement from the intellectual apparition of the whole, to the way in which the eye is led by the expressive notes of the picture, to the way in which the eye closes allowing the enrichment of that intellectual apprehension to settle in the soul.

Immediately after this description, the reader is again rather suddenly transported back to Allston's lecture, as he writes:

> From these two examples of their general effect, some notion may be gathered of the different systems of the two Artists; and though no mention has been made of the particular lines employed, their distinctive character may readily be inferred from the kind of motion given to the eye in the descriptions we have attempted. In the rapid, abrupt, contrasted, whirling movement in the one, we have an exposition of an irregular combination of curves and angles; while the simple combination of the parabola and the serpentine will account for all the imperceptible transitions in the other (*LA*, 151).

This rather sudden interruption from the passage directly before, in which Allston described the 'motion given to the eye' by each painter, marks Allston's own transition into 'cold analysis' – it reflects his desire to *link* such descriptions to a credible critical observation about the compositional styles of the two painters. As with his reference to the 'separation of light and color' that occurs with 'cold analysis', so with his investigation of the geometrical structures that underpin the compositional styles of each: the effects of Rosa are achieved through his use of an 'irregular combination of curves and angles', while those of Claude are achieved through various combinations of the 'parabola and the serpentine' line. Thus Allston emphasizes the presence of two different 'systems', two different *methods* employed

by either painter. In doing so, he seems to undercut the poetical descriptions that he has provided, and sought a more authoritative and technical explanation for the effects produced in either picture. He looks, as it were, *through* the descriptions to the structural relationships beneath them.

Allston concludes his examination of these two systems of lines through asserting a parallel between the way in which line functions for the artist, and the way versification works in poetry:

> For lines here may be called the tracks of thought, in which we follow the author's mind through his imaginary creations. They hold, indeed, the same relation to Painting that versification does to Poetry, an element of style; for what is meant by a line in Painting is analogous to that which in the sister art distinguishes the abrupt gait of Crabbe from the sauntering walk of Cowley, and the "long majestic march" of Dryden from the surging sweep of Milton (*LA*, 151).

For Allston, stylistic differences between painters are located in their handling of line, just as similar differences between poets are located in their handling of metre. His positing of 'lines' as 'tracks of thought' releases them from their fixity on the canvas, and allows them to work as 'gestures' to something beyond, or through them. Thus, the 'system of lines' which conveys the arrangement of the forms upon the canvas, and which alternately excites and calms the eye, acts as the gateway to the 'author's mind' for the viewer. Here we see the resurgence of the notion that the critic must judge in the way the artist 'produced or *ought* to have produced' and for Allston, this can be deduced, or imagined, or *intuited* from following the lines that are provided by the artist – following the lines that embody the artist's 'will' – thus following the will *within* the deed.

It is through 'line' (and indeed color and light acting upon or as line) that the spontaneity of the artist's passion and the method manifest in his will are brought together. This, of course, echoes Coleridge's description of the 'free life' and 'confining form' in his description of *Galatea*, but also his description of metre in the

Biographia Literaria, the origin of which he traces 'to the balance in the mind effected by that spontaneous effort which strives to hold in check the workings of passion' (*BL*, ii. 64). Like Coleridge's description of our apprehension of a beautiful landscape, in which imitation is responsible for the order that shines through the naturalness of it, 'Passion itself imitates Order, and the *order* resulting produces a pleasurable *Passion*...(*Notebooks*, ii. 3231). Passion 'calls on' order, and this 'calling on' shines through that order, which in turn produces pleasure in the reader.

Allston's parallel between the function of line in painting and versification in poetry thus recalls the principle of imitation that binds them both together. Allston 'pictured' this principle not only in language (in his own attempt to balance his sympathetic descriptions with a language capable of conveying the structural components that underpin the picture), but also in his painting *The Sisters*.[43] The painting was named by Coleridge, and carries with it a double association, having been named during Coleridge's stay with the Morgans (his poem entitled 'The Two Sisters' was composed at this time). As Gerald Eager argues, '*The Sisters* is an image that pictures beliefs shared by Allston and Coleridge about basic relationships between the visual and verbal arts, for it also served as a representation of the sister arts of painting and poetry'.[44] Of the two 'sisters', Allston imitated the figure from Titian's *Woman With a Jewelled Casket* in his backward glancing figure, while the dark-haired figure was his own. Contrasting the 'stationary position' and forward glance of the right figure with the 'sudden turn' and backward glance of the figure imitated from Titian, Gerald Eager finds that these 'sisters' bring to mind 'a ritualistic dance' reminiscent of the dance of the Graces in Botticelli's *Primavera*.[45] The

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[43] Washington Allston, *The Sisters*, oil on canvas, *c.* 1816-17, Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University, Boston, Massachusetts. A digital reproduction can be seen at: < http://www.artmuseums.harvard.edu>. A print reproduction can be seen in Gerdts and Stebbins, *A Man of Genius*, 75.
[44] Gerald Eager, "Washington Allston's *The Sisters*: Poetry Painting and Friendship", *Word and Image* 6 (October/December, 1990) 299.
[45] See Eager, "The Sisters", 300.

Graces, he points out, traditionally represent the 'three-fold harmony of generosity, which consists of giving, receiving, and returning' a motion that seems to be embodied in Allston's two figures.

A fitting metaphor for this sense of 'giving, receiving, returning', for the reciprocal movement of the will and the deed, the ideal and the actual, likeness and difference can be found in Coleridge's phrase, '*Tragic Dance*'. Coleridge had used this phrase in making a distinction between 'imitation' and 'copy' in his *Lectures on European Literature*:

> It is sufficient that philosophically we understand that in all Imitation two elements must exist, and not only exist but must be perceived as existing – Likeness and unlikeness, or Sameness and Difference. All Imitation in the Fine Arts is the union of Disparate Things. – Wax – Image – Statues – Bronze – Pictures – the Artist may take his point where he likes – provided that the effect desired is produced – namely, that there should be a Likeness in Difference & a union of the two – *Tragic Dance* (*Lectures*, ii., 219-220).

The '*Tragic Dance*' to which Coleridge refers is, of course, that undertaken by the chorus in Greek Tragedy, a movement accompanied by a 'song' divided in three parts: the strophe ('turning, circling'), antistrophe ('counter-turning, counter-circling) and epode ('after song').[46] It is as though this 'unity with progression' is embodied in Allston's painting, where the backward glancing figure (which Eager suggests may be read as painting, seeing as she engages the viewer directly), provides a counterpoint, or 'turn', from the dark haired figure (which Eager suggests is poetry). The figure of Painting makes the 'sudden movement,' looking backward toward the viewer while the other figure, Poetry, retreats deeper into the canvas as though she were to 'lead' Painting into its depths. Their physical connection dominates the foreground of the canvas, and yet these sisters draw the viewer into the canvas, sustaining the viewer's gaze through the circular line achieved through the backward glancing figure and the

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[46] See <http:// faculty.gvsu.edu/websterm/Tragedy.htm>. See also Ley Graham, *The Ancient Greek Theatre* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991) and Reinhold Meyer, *Classical Drama, Greek and Roman* (New York: Barrons, 1959).

outstretched hand of the right-hand figure. Behind them is a framed window through which appears an expanse of bright blue sky.

This visual depiction of 'Likeness in Difference & a union of the two' is heightened by Eager's suggestion that the 'two figures in Allston's painting may be thought of as being related to each other in a way that is analogous to the two figures in Titian's *Sacred and Profane Love*, in which, as Edgar Wind argues, it is impossible to assign an identity to either, so completely is one 'infused with the qualities of the other'.[47] In this respect, the forward look and backward glance of these figures is released from the associations of their respective representations, allowing us to consider them as exemplifying the tension in imitation. In looking not directly through the open space to sky, but with her head turned slightly to the left, it would appear that it is impossible to grasp that space beyond the picture (i.e. that 'mental image') without a physical or material counterpart or expression (a 'specific Image' as it were). There is also a sense of the involvement of the viewer, as this action of giving, receiving and returning includes and confirms the viewer's participation in this 'harmony'.

This 'infusion' accounts for the tension that we experience in a critical capacity as well, where 'Likeness in Difference & a union of the two' is manifest not only in the resemblance of shapes and forms between the picture and writing about it – a resemblance conveyed through the use of poetical devices in descriptive terms, but is also manifest in the relationships that underpin that resemblance – where the structural unity beneath calls forth a mode of communication or language that is also 'like', but essentially 'unlike' (*Lectures*, ii. 220). Thus the mimetic power can be called upon in criticism with the realization that it is called upon not to make something that essentially resembles something else, but that is capable of reflecting

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[47] See Eager, "The Sisters", 302-303.

the relationships between things. As we have seen, Allston drew upon this power in effecting his own turn and counterturn in his movement from description, to cold analysis, and back again.

Conclusion

When William Blake scribbled 'Imitation is Criticism' in the margin of Sir Joshua Reynolds's *Discourses*, he left behind a phrase rich in interpretive possibilities. This is especially the case in considering imitation and criticism not in terms of equivalence (although suggested by Blake's use of the word 'is'), but rather in terms of the conditions governing our understanding of each. In other words, to consider imitation *as* criticism, as subject to the definitions, contexts and aims of criticism, and vice versa. With respect to image-text studies of the Romantic period, these conditions have generally been defined in terms of the *ut pictura poesis* analogy and the breaking of that analogy. As I have demonstrated, this 'presence of the past within the present', as Mieke Bal has referred to it, is evident in methodologies that tend to assume an analogy between art criticism and literary criticism (a reflection of the ancient analogy between poetry and painting), as well as those that assume a progression from imitative to expressive modes of making and response, a transition marked by the 'denial of mimesis' or the 'refusal of representation'.

The limitations of existing methodologies based on the analogy or the breaking of it have become all too apparent in their inability to move beyond comparative studies of paintings and poems to what Wallace Stevens refers to as that 'corpus of remarks about painting'. Lying deep within these remarks is the foundation for an alternative methodology, one that allows us to consider more fully the special demands made on art criticism by its object. As Mieke Bal points out, this kind of 'disciplinary input is indispensable if one is to avoid importing old problems into new attempts'.[1] Unlike the literary critic who is able to insert lines from the text of the poem into his or her critical discussion of it, the art critic is unable to provide

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[1] See Bal, *Reading Rembrandt*, 27.

this kind of space to the artist: he or she must describe the picture plane so as to direct the eye of the reader to those elements under discussion. This is not unproblematic, as descriptive excesses are capable of collapsing the distance necessary for an authoritative treatment of the art work.

The methodology that has allowed us to explore this tension between 'description and criticism' as it is manifest in the various responses to 'false criticism' made by artists, critics and connoisseurs within the preceding chapters, has been located in imitation itself. As I have argued in Chapter Two, that 'corpus of remarks about painting' has revealed an important tension between imitation as making something like something else, and as a means of characterizing the relationships that underpin those forms of resemblance – a notion of imitation illustrated visually, I have argued, by the 'after' construction in art. Unlike methodologies based on analogy, conversion or translation, this model allows us space in which to think of that 'corpus of remarks about painting' as one of many specialized languages, one not in opposition to painterly language consisting of color and line, but one that possesses a disciplinary history in which words are specifically adapted to the visual subject. Through drawing attention to the tension in the word in the interpretation of the image (rather than to the opposition between the word and image), this approach has allowed us to take as axiomatic the *presence* of the picture, and in doing so, has encouraged the reinterpretation of remarks about painting as a *gesture* toward that visual image. The restoration of the physical presence of the picture challenges the tendency to view art criticism as usurping, replacing, competing with, or 'speaking for' the visual image.

Adopting an alternative methodology based on imitation has enabled us to take full advantage of the interpretive possibilities of Blake's phrase, 'Imitation is Criticism'. The first part of this thesis has been informed by a reading of this phrase which places greater emphasis on imitation as a means of making something like

something else. Yet, the idea of similarity implied here does not mean a copy, or word-picture of the 'specific Image', but rather a similarity that might shine through a representation-based language capable of communicating the more formal qualities of a picture – qualities that began to emerge as the foundation for a more authoritative critical language with respect to the fine arts. The development of this language, as distinct from its more pictorial antecedent, could be seen not only in response to new interpretive models which stressed the painting (rather than the painter) as the object of criticism, but also in response to a developing disciplinary identity, one which confirmed the presence of another critical 'center' as it were.

In Chapters Three and Four I have attempted to illustrate these points through focusing on attempts to identify and correct the causes of false criticism in the fine arts made by artists like Reynolds and Hoare and connoisseurs like Beaumont and Price. Each recognized the importance of imitation in mediating an inherited critical vocabulary with new interpretive models, a process, as Meehan argues, essential to disciplinary development. Reynolds, for example, was acutely aware of the fact that definitions of imitation that neglected the representational aspects of the term meant the denial of the special features of painting that distinguished it from, yet made it a sister to, poetry. Likewise, satirists such as Stevens and Wolcott pointed out the necessity of the connection between descriptive language and a critical methodology to underpin it. Jaded by criticism ungrounded in either principle or the picture and distorted by descriptive excess, they called attention to the lack of a language and method the might provide the reader with well grounded observations about the picture. Connoisseurs like Beaumont and Price dealt with this tension in yet another way, through directing their energy toward adapting the practice of close observation and pictorial description to the surface of the canvas, rather than its subject. Both recognized the need to redirect descriptive efforts away from the subject (away from poetical attempts to render a painted subject in words) to the surface of the canvas, to

the application of paint, the arrangement of the composition and the definition of stylistic traits.

Having argued for the reversal of this 'denial of mimesis' and 'refusal of representation' in Part One, in Part Two, I have explored whether, as Catherine Lord and José Benardete ask, it is possible to call upon the mimetic power without seriously suggesting a physical resemblance between the object and its imitation. Whether, in other words, the critical dimension of imitation can be thought of as characterizing the relationships that underpin those forms of resemblance, without necessarily seeking to *resemble* them. In answering this question, Blake's phrase takes on new significance as it invites us to think of imitation in visual terms disconnected from any specific image. This, in turn, opens up a new perspective on the genius of criticism, one not rooted in 'word pictures' which rely upon poetic devices in approximating the picture, or in representation-based languages that describe the formal aspects at work upon the surface of the canvas. Rather, this notion of the genius of criticism is revealed in a language capable of communicating the 'truth' of the picture as it is manifest in its principles of execution – thus revealing the 'poetic truth' of the picture, as Washington Allston would say, not in poetical language, but rather in terms of the geometrical and compositional structures that underpin it. Imitation in this respect is not employed in replicating, recasting or describing the effects of the picture, but rather is called upon to reveal its underlying structure. It demarcates not so much the extent to which the words match or 'express' the image, but rather the extent to which the words *reflect* rather than describe the compositional relationships shining through the surface. The genius of criticism is therefore not measured in terms of the poetics of prose, but rather in terms of creating a language to hold and communicate these relationships within the picture *as* a picture.

This context has shaped consideration of the relationship between Coleridge and Allston. Oftentimes unfairly portrayed according to a dynamic of influence rather than innovation, their relationship was badly in need of revision, especially, I have argued, with respect to the different disciplinary perspectives that informed their respective responses to false criticism. In Chapter Five, I argued that both Coleridge and Allston were aware of the different languages required to communicate the 'specific Image' and the relationships that underpinned that image. For Coleridge, this was manifest in the ease with which he embarked on figurative descriptions of the scene before him (whether in nature or on canvas) contrasted with the impasse, the difficulty he encountered in attempting to describe the 'beauty' of the compositional elements that underpinned it. Likewise with Allston, who attempted to bring together both kinds of descriptive language within his sonnets.

Chapters Six and Seven are concerned more explicitly with the ways in which both Allston and Coleridge develop a critical language through which those structural elements may 'shine', a language capable of 'imitating' that structure, in a sense, one capable of drawing out the 'Likeness and Difference & a union of the two' described by Coleridge. In doing so, both Coleridge and Allston (as I have shown in Chapter Eight) were able to build a matrix of language, one consisting of example, definition and repetition transparent enough to allow the compositional aspects of the image to shine through it. This matrix of language did not reflect the look of the image, or resemble it in terms of the subject it expressed, but relied on the fact of its difference to call forth in more sophisticated terms, its likeness. The discussion of imitation in the preceding chapters can also be extended to their relationship in other ways, primarily through examining the implications of 'imitation' in terms of the political and cultural forces of their respective countries. For example, examining charges that Allston was an 'imitator' of European culture rather than an innovator of a truly 'American' art.

Through re-examining imitation in the context of image-text studies, I have attempted to establish an alternative methodology for the consideration of the relationship between Washington Allston and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, as well as provide an opening for the study of other subjects connected by what Eaves refers to as 'strong filaments'. Much has yet to be written, for example, on the searching after a practical criticism for the fine arts that might approximate, and yet remain autonomous from, the practical criticism of literature in the period. Through revising our understanding of this concept, it is hoped that new paths might be made accessible to what Eaves refers to as that 'wilderness' of image-text studies in the Romantic period.

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